

Title: Know  
Date: January 7, 2024  
Subject: Seeing Life Clearly: Four Resolutions for Christian Living -- Know  
Scripture: Philippians 3:7 - 14

2024. Can you believe it's here? Some people are really into the new year, so much so...they've already broken the resolutions they made...a week ago. Got to start the New Year right after all.

Even before the New Year started, prognosticators issued their predictions for 2024 – the Presidential election and its ramifications; the number of hurricanes; what the stock market will do; inflation under control or get worse; the NFL draft; the international scene; will Jesus Christ return? and so on and so on.

Guesses. Lots and lots of guesses, some more insightful than others. The truth is no one knows what this New Year will hold (Ecclesiastes 8:7). We need to remember we're mists that appear for a little while before vanishing and need to say, "If it's the Lord's will, we'll live and do this or that" (James 4:13 - 16) to show that we're depending upon God. We can make plans, but we can't boast or brag about tomorrow and our plans (Proverbs 16:9, 27:1; Luke 12:19, 20). Jesus taught that we shouldn't be anxious or worry about tomorrow but focus on the present day as every day has enough trouble of its own, not adding tomorrow's trouble to the present day (Matthew 6:34). Basically, take one day at a time. Our times are in God's hands (Psalm 31:15).

What do we need to do? How do we focus on one day at a time?

This morning is the beginning of a four-part sermon series on Seeing Life Clearly: Four Resolutions for Christian Living. Each will have a one-word title with all of them rhyming. I'll let you guess what future ones might be. We'll see how good your prognostication skills are.

The first resolution is to know. The biblical idea of knowing includes head knowledge, an intellectual agreement with ideas (knowledge about the Bible and Jesus), but it goes far beyond this. Knowing is an understanding of the value and importance which leads to an apprehension of truth. It's appropriated in that it's applied to the person. Participation in relationship. Experience. There's a sense of intimacy.

It's insufficient to get a prescription from the doctor. It won't take care of the illness if we chew it up and swallow it. We need the medicine. Similarly, the road sign that tells the distance to the next city isn't the same as being at the city. It's the difference between being outward and detached as opposed to being inward and personally connected.

READ Philippians 3:7 – 14.

There are two aspects of knowing. The first is to . . .

#### I. **Know** Christ as Savior vv. 7 – 9

This is the beginning. Paul uses himself as an example. There was a time when he didn't know Christ as his Savior. In his pre-Christian life he felt he had lots of things going his way: "My whole life revolved around being a Jew. It all started with being born a Jew. I didn't come in the back door by converting to it. Shortly after

I was born, my parents had me circumcised according to Jewish law. I traced my heritage to the tribe of Benjamin, a tribe that remained after exile. I was a Hebrew in every way - language, attitude, lifestyle. I was trained by one of the best teachers and at the top of my class. As a Pharisee, I knew all the laws and the specifications on how those laws were to be fulfilled. I could quote the entire Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. I was so zealous that I persecuted anybody who named the name of Jesus Christ. I put them in jail and even voted for their death. I rigorously and scrupulously adhered to the Mosaic Law as a means to merit God's favor. I was on the fast track to being welcomed by God.”

“Then ...I met Jesus. And everything changed. All that stuff I was depending upon didn't and couldn't measure up to knowing Christ because those things didn't and couldn't make any difference in getting to God.”

Some people would say it's nice that Paul found his way as everyone has to find their own way and all ways are equally as good. They may liken comparing the various belief systems to comparing apples and oranges and say that apples and oranges are both fruit. That may be okay if you want to make a fruit salad, but it doesn't help in the spiritual realm.

There are people who try other ways to get to God and be with him in heaven. Some feel God's going to let everybody in. They think their sins aren't a problem, like the people in a prayer letter from the Wolof team in Senegal. Some believe they'll make it because they're good people or they've done so many good works or they're better than others. Others think they'll make it because they've done Christian kinds of things like read the Bible, go to church, pray, help the needy. Those are all good things but aren't the determining factors for getting to heaven.

Jesus said there'll be people who will say they should enter the kingdom of heaven because they spoke in his name, drove out demons in his name and performed miracles. Jesus said he'll tell them plainly “I never knew you.” Only those who do the will of his Father will enter into the kingdom (Matthew 7:21 – 23).

Scripture tells us the wisdom of the world is insufficient for knowing God (1 Corinthians 1:20-21). NIV Study Bible: “All humanly devised philosophical systems end in meaninglessness because they have a wrong concept of God and his revelation” (note on 1 Corinthians 1:20).

People of Jesus' day were and people today are confused about how to gain eternal life. They thought they needed to do a bunch of morally good works. Jesus said, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent...For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life” (John 6:28, 40).

Jesus defined eternal life: “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). In another spot: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). Life comes through Christ.

Right standing with God isn't achieved because of something Paul had in himself as he could have claimed he had it already. And if he couldn't get it with his amazing pedigree, then who could? It had to come from outside him even as a drowning person can't save themselves by pulling up on their hair.

The answer to humankind's problem is the righteousness of Christ. He's perfect, without sin and in a right standing with God and offers his righteousness to people. It's acquired by faith. We accept, receive it as we receive a gift.

Follow along as we go through the verses again. V. 7 "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ." V. 8 "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." The Amplified phrases it as "the priceless privilege *and* supreme advantage." Continuing in V. 8: "I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him." Nothing else compares to knowing Christ.

Brandon Lake in the song Graves Into Gardens: I searched the world But it couldn't fill me. Man's empty praise And treasures that fade Are never enough. Then You came along. And put me back together. Here in Your love. Oh, there's nothing better than You. There's nothing better than You. Lord, there's nothing, Nothing is better than You." And the song repeats that phrase another 16 times. Gives the impression the songwriter feels it's might important. Paul would have liked the song. Can imagine him singing "There's nothing better than Jesus Christ and nothing comes even close."

A second song was going through my head. It speaks to this point and transitions to the next one. It's by George Beverly Shea who sang it in numerous Billy Graham Crusades. "I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold. I'd rather be His than have riches untold. I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land. I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand. Than to be the king of a vast domain And be held in sin's dread sway. I'd rather have Jesus than anything This world affords today. I'd rather have Jesus than worldly applause. I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause. I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame. Yes, I'd rather be true to His holy name."

## II. Know more of Christ

v. 10 in the Amplified: *And this, so* that I may know Him [experientially, becoming more thoroughly acquainted with Him, understanding the remarkable wonders of His Person more completely] and [in that same way experience] the power of His resurrection [which overflows and is active in believers], and [that I may share] the fellowship of His sufferings, by being *continually* conformed [inwardly into His likeness even] to His death [dying as He did].

Paul was extremely grateful for the gift of eternal life he received in Christ, but he wasn't satisfied and content. He didn't think he needed more to be saved. He had vast biblical knowledge, but he wanted to know the person to whom scripture pointed - Jesus Christ. Be more intimately acquainted. "I want to know him."

In another Scripture Paul wrote that his goal was to encourage Christians and unite them in love "so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge... For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority" (Colossians 2:2, 3, 9, 10). He wanted believers to "continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him" (Col 2:6, 7), "being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Col 3:10).

The mystery of God is Christ, the one who is fully God and fully human. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in him. No need to go someplace else for supplemental material. Chew on that for a while.

“I want to know the power of his resurrection.” Since believers have died with Christ, have been crucified with him, united with him in his death, we also are united with him in his resurrection to life (Galatians 2:20, Roman 6:5). God views us as justified. He’s declared that we’re not guilty. He doesn’t hold our sins against us. We’ve received forgiveness of sins. Paul wants to know and live that out.

“I want to know the fellowship of sharing in sufferings, becoming like him in his death.” Jesus was obedient to the Father and humbly submitted himself to death on the cross (Philippians 2). Believers are to be humbly obedient and follow Christ.

Greg Herrick links them: “These are not two completely unrelated ideas. Sharing in Christ’s sufferings is the lot of every Christian as they live in a fallen world. This struggle includes every force from within and without that would hinder our intimacy with Christ and the progress of the gospel. Paul is not referring here to our participation in Christ’s sufferings on the cross as if somehow our sufferings could contribute to Christ’s atoning work. Such an idea is foreign to the apostle who pronounced the whole world unworthy sinners and taught that salvation, including the faith to believe, was by grace (Rom 3:10-20; Eph 2:8-9). What he means is that we share in Christ’s sufferings since he too lived and walked in a fallen world. The relationship between experiencing resurrection power and suffering is that the former becomes most evident in the context of the latter. His power through us is seen most strikingly in the midst of our struggles (2 Cor 4:7-12)” ([bible.org/seriespage/11-true-righteousness-part-ii-study-contrasts-judaizers-and-paul-philippians-39-11](http://bible.org/seriespage/11-true-righteousness-part-ii-study-contrasts-judaizers-and-paul-philippians-39-11)).

“I want to know... somehow attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Paul wasn't doubting that God has promised a future glorification for all those who know Christ. He wasn't uncertain of being part of the resurrection to heaven where he'll be with Christ forever. His interest and fascination were: How is it going to happen? What's it going to be like? What will the ultimate transformation be like?

The great apostle willingly admits he hasn’t fully attained the knowledge of Christ: “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). He didn’t claim to be perfect. He viewed himself as far from it. But that wasn't a reason to give up as some people do when the goal is in the far distance.

Paul adopts a different attitude. He's determinedly looking heavenward. V. 12 “I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me,” V. 13 “forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,” V. 14 “I press on toward the goal.”

We need to know Christ and know him more because we live in a culture where the system is fighting against Christians. We're in the role of countercultural revolutionaries. We're trying to swim upstream. And sometimes we're trying to fight through our own complacency and our misplaced affections.

Vernon Grounds writes of an incident: “Thomas Naylor was teaching business management at Duke University. He asked his students to draft a personal strategic plan. He reports: "with few exceptions, what they

wanted fell into three categories: money, power, and things— very big things, including vacation homes, expensive foreign automobiles, yachts, and even airplanes." This was their request of the faculty: "Teach me how to be a money-making machine." Grounds comments: "That's not exactly an exalted ambition! No thought of humanitarian service and no thought of spiritual values! Yet, what those students wanted was what many people want—maybe what most people want. The apostle Paul's overriding ambition was totally different. His consuming desire was to know Jesus and become increasingly conformed to His holy example" (Our Daily Bread, Philippians 3:10, The Highest Goal).

Students at a British university were discussing the question, "What do you want to be?" Some of the answers—a champion athlete, an influential politician, a noted scholar. One student cautiously and quietly, yet clearly, said something that caused thoughtful silence: "You may laugh at me, but I want to be a saint."

A saint. Not as in someone who is venerated, but a saint -- to be like Christ.

For this week: a homework assignment. Nah. A Christian life assignment. The book of 1 John is a book about knowing. It uses the word 42 times in 105 verses. The challenge is to read the short letter everyday in addition to the Bible reading you're doing. It will take 16 to 20 minutes. Or you could do a chapter a day.

I did my own test. I read 1 John aloud as I walked around the fellowship hall. I read at a comfortable pace I could maintain while walking and not get out of breath. It took 15 minutes. Then I sat to read, not out loud. Not speed reading where you take the finger and just slide it down the page. It took 7 minutes.

Don't try this at home. No. Do try this at home, or at work while on break, but not while you're driving. Then you could listen to an audio version or the other times as well. See how long it takes you to read, but immensely more important, see what you gain about knowing God. There may be questions that arise. Great. God never said we're going to fully understand everything. There are some things that we need to ponder.

In the days of steam engine locomotives, if the engineer ordered "full speed ahead" or "full steam ahead!" it meant pour in the coal to get the boiler running at maximum. The expression spoke to using all possible energy, enthusiasm, strength. The best-known use of the phrase came during the Civil War. Admiral David Farragut of the Union fleet was charged with capturing one of the last remaining Confederate ports. During the Battle of Mobile Bay, one of his ironclads had been sunk by torpedoes or mines. The other captains slowed their ships. Farragut ordered his ship to ignore the possible risks and "full steam ahead!" He made it, the other ships followed and he achieved the victory.

Paul had a consuming ambition, a tenacious desire and yearning – "I want to know Christ - more and better." It was full speed ahead, full steam ahead – with the energy, enthusiasm, power, strength he could muster. How's that for a resolution?