

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"ONE THING: To Know Him"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Phil. 3:10-14; 3:1-9; 1:9-11; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; 4:6-10; Rom. 6:4-7; 8:16-19; Matt. 16:24; 1 Cor. 9:24-27

It is possible to spend a great deal of our lives pursuing good things and still lose sight of the one thing that matters most. We can become focused on doing the right things, checking the right boxes, building the right résumé, and even looking spiritually mature to everyone around us. But eventually we have to ask ourselves: What am I actually pursuing? Is my goal simply to be a better person? To feel like I am doing enough? To make sure I get a passing grade spiritually? Or have I encountered Messiah in such a way that something inside of me says, "More than anything else, I want to know Him"?

That is where Paul arrives in Phil. 3. He has already listed the spiritual trophies that once filled his display case—circumcised the eighth day, of Israel, from Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, zealous, and outwardly blameless in his observance of Torah. If anyone could have depended upon the flesh, Paul could have. But then he encountered the Master. Suddenly everything he once considered gain looked like rubbish compared with *"the surpassing value of knowing Messiah Yeshua my Lord"* (Phil. 3:8). Paul's pursuit was no longer, "Look what I have accomplished." It became one thing: **To know Him.**

1. I WANT TO KNOW HIM FULLY

Paul says, *"My aim is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the sharing of His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death—if somehow I might arrive at the resurrection from among the dead"* (Phil. 3:10-11). This is more than knowing facts about Yeshua. Paul wants to know Him in totality. He wants to know the *dunamis*—the power, capability, and transforming force—of His resurrection. He wants the resurrected life of Messiah working within him, bringing life where there was death and transforming him from the inside out. Paul writes elsewhere that *"we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory"* (2 Cor. 3:18). That is the goal. I do not merely want to *look* like Him on the outside; I want to **BE** like Him.

But there is something we cannot separate from resurrection: before resurrection, there was crucifixion. Paul says that he also wants to know Messiah in *"the sharing of His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death"* (Phil. 3:10). There is a *koinonia*—a fellowship, a sharing, a participation—in His suffering. Something in me has to die: my me-firstness, my selfish ambition, my demand to have everything my way. Yeshua said, *"If anyone wants to follow after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me"* (Matt. 16:24). When life squeezes us, we often pray, "Lord, get me out of this." But sometimes the better prayer is, "Lord, form me into Your likeness through this." I want to know Him when resurrection power is raising me to newness of life, and I want to know Him when following Him costs me something. I want to know Him fully.

2. I WANT TO TAKE HOLD OF THE ONE WHO TOOK HOLD OF ME

Paul continues, *“Not that I have already obtained this or been perfected, but I press on, if only I might take hold of that for which Messiah Yeshua took hold of me”* (Phil. 3:12). There is such beautiful humility here. This is Paul. He has encountered the risen Messiah. He has planted congregations. He is writing Scripture under the inspiration of the Spirit. Yet Paul does not say, “I have arrived.” He says, “I am still pursuing.” He has not reached the goal; he has not been made complete. And in the flow of this passage, the great aim he has just expressed is this: *“My aim is to know Him”* (Phil. 3:10). Paul knows Messiah deeply, but not yet fully. He wants more.

The literal Greek translation says, *“I want to take hold, inasmuch as I was taken hold of.”* He took hold of me, and now I want to take hold of Him. He knew me first. He loved me first. He reached for me first. He wrapped His arms around all of me, and now I want all of Him. Not simply the comfortable parts. Not merely the blessings. Not a reduced version of Yeshua that promises me health, wealth, comfort, and everything I want. I want the real Messiah—the One who humbled Himself, took the form of a servant, poured Himself out, suffered, died, and rose again. He took hold of me completely, and now the cry of my heart is, “Lord, I want to know You completely.”

3. ONE Thing: Forget What Is Behind and Press Toward Him

Paul says, *“Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself as having taken hold of this. But this one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal for the reward of the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua”* (Phil. 3:13–14). Literally, Paul says, **“But one.”** Two little words with a tremendous power punch. Paul pictures himself as a runner whose every muscle and nerve is stretched toward the finish line. He is not looking over his shoulder. He is not looking to the right or to the left. He is not distracted by everything going on around him. There is one thing before him: Messiah. “I want to know Him.”

And that means Paul has to lay down what is behind. That includes his accomplishments—the trophies, the credentials, the things that once gave him confidence. But I believe it also includes his failures. Paul had persecuted Messiah’s community. He had done things that could have haunted him for the rest of his life or paralyzed him in shame. Yet he refuses to spend the race looking backward. God’s grace is sufficient. So Paul strains toward what is ahead and presses toward the goal. Some of us need to stop living off yesterday’s accomplishments; others need to stop being defined by yesterday’s failures. Neither one is the goal. The goal is ahead of us. Messiah is ahead of us. There is still more of Him to know, more of His likeness to be formed within us, more resurrection life to walk in, and more of ourselves to surrender. **One thing: to know Him.**

CONCLUSION

When knowing Yeshua becomes the goal, so many other things begin to fall into their proper place. The fruit of righteousness becomes an overflow rather than a résumé. We begin to worship and live by the Spirit of God. We stop pursuing empty glory because we are looking at the One who emptied Himself. We begin considering others above ourselves because that

is what He did. We begin loving sacrificially because that is how He loved. We begin dying to self because we want to know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings, and we begin walking in newness of life because we know Him in the power of His resurrection. If we aim only at the externals, we can miss Him entirely. But when our aim is Him, our lives increasingly begin to look like His.

Maybe somewhere along the way your walk with God became primarily about what you do for Him instead of knowing Him. Maybe you have been looking backward—either admiring the trophies or reliving the failures. Maybe there is an area you refuse to surrender because knowing Him there would require something in you to die. Bring that to Him today. Lay down the trophies. Lay down the failures. Lay down the me-firstness. And say, “Yeshua, You took hold of me. Now I want to take hold of You. I want to know You—not merely know *about* You. I want to know You in the power of Your resurrection and in the fellowship of Your sufferings. Whatever is behind me, I am leaving it there. I am pressing forward. One thing, Lord: **I want to know You.**”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Phil. 3:10, Paul says, “*My aim is to know Him.*” What is the difference between knowing about Yeshua and genuinely knowing Him?
2. Why does Paul connect knowing the power of Messiah’s resurrection with sharing in His sufferings and becoming like Him in His death?
3. Paul admits in Phil. 3:12 that he has not yet “arrived.” What does his humility teach us about spiritual maturity and our continuing pursuit of Messiah?
4. What is one thing “behind” you—either an accomplishment you depend upon or a failure that still defines you—that may be distracting you from pursuing Messiah today?
5. When pressure, disappointment, conflict, or inconvenience “squeezes” you, what tends to come out? What would it look like for your instinctive response to become less like self and more like Yeshua?

Closing Prayer

Lord, more than anything else, we want to know You. Forgive us for the times when our faith has become about checking boxes, building spiritual résumés, comparing ourselves with others, or simply trying to look right on the outside. Yeshua, You took hold of us first. You loved us first. You gave Yourself for us. Now awaken within us a deeper hunger to take hold of You and to know You completely.

Teach us to know You in the power of Your resurrection and in the fellowship of Your sufferings. Put to death the me-firstness within us and raise us to walk in newness of life. Help us leave behind both the trophies and the failures that keep our eyes turned backward. By Your Spirit, transform us from glory to glory into the likeness of Messiah. Lord, I want to live with one consuming pursuit: **to know You, to walk with You, and to become like You in the deepest part of me.**

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.