

2021 UBF MLNC Lecture 2 (Asia,Oceania) / Seungwon Kim (Wochon UBF, Korea)
Philippians 3:1-21
Key verse 3:10

I want to know Christ

"I want to know Christ, yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,"

There was a test of legalism in the Philippian church to reach salvation by law, and on the contrary, hedonism's temptation to live according to its nature. In today's passage, Paul bears witness to his own goal and race to know Christ. This is because he was confident that the Philippian Christians would overcome the test and temptation and grow in the knowledge of Jesus when they followed his example. I pray that we may run the race of faith well by renewing our goal to know Christ.

Look at verse 1. "Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! it is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you." Why does Paul say "finally" when there's still quite a portion left in this letter? (NASB, KJV and Korean NKRV adopt "finally" instead of NIV's "Further.") "Rejoice in the Lord." For this one sentence is the conclusion of the whole letter. If you repeat the same story twice, it becomes boring. But to repeat the same sentence "Rejoice in the Lord" again and again is no trouble for Paul. Why? This is because the essence of Christian life is a life that rejoices in Jesus.

We often lose our joy. Is it because of the situation you can't be happy about? It is because we rejoice in the wrong objects. If we rejoice in money, we become sad when we run out of money. If we rejoice in people, we become frustrated when people leave. Someday money and people will all leave, but Jesus never leaves us. If you rejoice in Jesus, you can also encourage others even in prison by saying "Rejoice in the Lord!" The joy of the Lord keeps us safe in this wicked generation.

There is an enemy who takes away this joy. Verse 2. "Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh." The enemies are the Jewish legalists who claim that salvation is achieved only when a person keeps all laws and is circumcised. They cursed Gentiles as dogs, but Paul calls them dogs. They are not God's people, but evildoers. Showing off circumcision without obeying God is no different from a gang member boasting body tattoos. Those who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh - they are the circumcision, God's people(3).

Look at verse 4. "though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more." If salvation depends on human conditions, nobody can exceed Paul. He was circumcised on the

eighth day, the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Hebrew of Hebrews. In regards to the law, a Pharisee; and as for zeal, he persecuted the church, and as for the righteousness based on the law, faultless. In addition to being born privileged, he built the best career ever by his own effort. So no legalist could stand before him and show off.

But how does Paul consider his human conditions? According to verses 7 and 8, whatever were gains to him, he now considers loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, he consider everything a loss. It is because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. In the past, he persecuted Jesus because he thought the righteousness of the law was of outstanding value. He was blinded by ignorance and arrogance and went on an expedition to Damascus to persecute Jesus. On the way, he met Jesus, who came by the light of mercy and love. Since then, he has regarded Christ as having the greatest value.

What did he do then? He decided to abandon everything to gain Christ. Why throw away good things? No matter how good it is, you have to throw it away if it gets in the way of getting the best. Even the best qualification is like excrement compared to Jesus. (KJV and NKJV adopt "dung" instead of NIV's "garbage.") You have to discharge excrements in due time. There's no one who feels sorry for discharging excrements. People throw away their poo in the bathroom, feeling happy with their good bowel movement. When Paul found out that everything that was useful in the past was in the way of gaining Jesus and being found in him, he abandoned it without any hesitation. It was because his righteousness was not from the law, but through faith in Christ (9). The righteousness from the law is the righteousness of man by observing the law. Even if you do it a hundred times well, if you do it wrong once, everything goes up in smoke. Human righteousness cannot reach God's righteousness, and cannot avoid God's wrath and judgment. Christ was condemned by the law and died on the cross to justify us. If we believe in Jesus even if we have done nothing good, we receive God's righteousness as a gift and become children of heaven who play happily in God's love.

Paul had a clear goal in life. It was to know Christ. How did he want to know Christ? Verse 10. "I want to know Christ, yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death," Paul wants to know Christ by participating in Christ's resurrection and sufferings. The suffering of Christ is the pain of serving the arrogant and ignorant sinners. Jesus was abandoned by God for our sins on the cross. When we serve our children and sheep and go down the path of a shepherd who loves them, we are hurt by their sins. That hurt is the same kind that Jesus received. What happens if you suffer the same kind of suffering as Jesus? You get closer to Jesus than before, and your love for Jesus gets deeper, and your heart will resemble Jesus' heart. Without suffering, you cannot know the pain of Jesus who bore the cross. Without suffering, you cannot resemble Jesus. Without suffering, you cannot experience the power of resurrection.

Paul wanted to participate in Jesus' death. His death is a death that sacrificed himself for love. We also experience death when we try to love our children and sheep. When serving an arrogant and ignorant person, the shepherd must lose his pride, face, selfishness, and desire for power. That way, you can save one person. When you emulate(participate in) the death of Christ, the image of Christ is engraved in you. You can also experience the power of resurrection that makes you live and your sheep will also live through that power. For this reason, Paul wanted to attain to the resurrection from the dead (11).

Look at verse 12. "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it." Paul had achieved a lot and gained a lot. He had established many churches and raised up so many disciples. However, he did not say that he had obtained all this or had already arrived at his goal. It was because his goal was not to succeed in ministry, but to know Christ. Christ is the secret of God that we can never know fully even if we tried to know all our lives. No matter how much you gain Jesus, there is an endless and bottomless world of grace to gain more. Therefore, Paul does not consider himself to have taken hold of it. Instead, he does one thing. He presses on toward the goal, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead(13,14).

What was his goal? It was to know Christ. To learn and resemble Jesus was the hope of his calling. To complete that race and receive the prize of God was the aim of his calling. Therefore, he does not look back on what he did well or did not do well in the past, but only runs the race to know Jesus more, gain Jesus more, and obtain Jesus more than before. When a person holds on to the goal of learning Jesus and does not lose sight of that goal, he grows in the knowledge of Jesus for his lifetime. Cello virtuoso Pablo Casals practiced three hours a day even after he was 90 years of age, and when asked, "You're already a master, why do you keep practicing?" he replied, "Because every time I practice, my skills improve." If success is a goal, you can settle for a small achievement and get tired easily, but if you aim to learn and grow in the knowledge of Jesus, you can run with a lifelong passion. Learning and resembling Jesus is the true goal of faith and a source of happiness.

In winter 2008, I left Yonhee chapter, where I had been trained in faith through my respected Shepherd David Kim and went to Suwon to pioneer a new chapter. That year, I was exhausted after working hard for online cafe ministry in January and February, and teaching the Bible in English in India for a month in September. Since March, two children of mine have been diagnosed with hyperactivity and attention deficiency disorder and have been treated, but they cried every night to go back to Seoul because they could not adapt to the school they transferred to. Every day, I took my two children to the hospital and counseling center, and despair came over me like waves 12 times a day. 'Could I succeed as a UBF shepherd?' One day, the doctor saw the results of my psychological test and told me to take medicine because I was

diagnosed with depression. I felt like I was a complete failure, both as a father and as a shepherd.

The reason I couldn't quit as a shepherd at that time was because brother Kyung-hoon Kim was coming for Bible study with me. In the fall of 2010, brother Kyung-hoon, during a soccer match after the Sunday worship, suddenly fell with the goalpost after hanging from it. He lost seven teeth and suffered multiple facial bone fractures. I had to run immediately to him, who sat down covered in blood, but my body didn't move an inch. "Why did I become a shepherd and take responsibility for another man's life?" With regret and fear, I felt like I was standing alone on a cliff. But in the emergency room, he asked for a notebook and wrote, 'Help me repent, Shepherd.' His mother, who I thought would seize me by the collar and yell at me, grabbed my hand instead and comforted me, saying "You're very surprised, aren't you?" God seemed to hold me through the people of God's grace.

I was a model student, so I didn't know what weakness was. But I found out that there are so many children who are weak in the world and sad parents who take care of them while taking my two children to the hospital. I thought I was miserable because of my sick children, but as I swallowed my sorrow while taking care of them, my heart became infinitely humbled until I thanked them for one thing that they are alive. It turned out that the weakness was where Jesus was. 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.'"

When brother Kyung-hoon came to my house to dine with us, he shocked us by lifting up the head of my son by the hair to discipline him when he saw my son not listening to his parents. He just didn't know how to make a basic human relationship. I could never have served him if I had not known what weakness was. But as I take care of my weak child, he doesn't look different from my son, so I've been serving him one-on-one for 13 years now. Knowing his weakness, I told him he didn't have to stay in UBF, but he said he would stay. I said not everyone should be a shepherd, but he said he would be a shepherd. I didn't tell him to teach the Bible one-on-one, but he's helping one person in the midst of difficulties. He held my hand and said on the bus coming back from the student conference in 2013. "It was the luckiest thing of my life to meet you."

In 2014, I met brother Ho who couldn't graduate for 8 years. Whenever he went back after studying the Bible one-on-one, he said something that discouraged me, saying, "I don't think Christianity fits me well. I think Buddhism fits me well." Then the next week he showed up again. One day after studying the Bible, he told me. "When I see your life, I think there is God. I can't help but believe in God." When he studied by faith and graduated in 10 years, his family from Busan came to us with a box of gifts and served beef ribs.

I often felt humble about living as an unwelcome evangelist on campus. However, I

experienced that there was heaven in the life of a shepherd who loves one person on campus. One day, I went to the student hall to serve brother Ho, played the guitar, sang hymns, and studied the Bible, and came down from the student hall. At that moment, I was suddenly moved to tears to live as a one-on-one shepherd who served one person who no one took care of in this world. When we studied the Christmas passage that year, I asked him, 'What would be an example of the beautiful scent before God?' He replied, "A shepherd like you who comes all the way to the campus and teaches the Bible for me."

Brother Heon, who I have served since 2017, said he had no intention of believing in Christianity because he majored in social science. He always talked about philosophy during Bible study. Studying the Bible with him seemed futile. But one day he called and said he decided to believe in Jesus. He, who poured out his anger every time he studied the Bible, said something sweet to my ears that he also wanted to save people with Jesus' love. On my last birthday, he invited my wife and me to a restaurant to buy us a meal and prayed for the meal. 'Father God, thank you for sending Shepherd Seungwon to the world. Thank you for sending him to me as my shepherd.'

Learning Jesus in a lowly place made me feel free and happy, and I told campus students, "All the seniors who met me and studied the Bible became happy." "You can have a happy college life if you study the Bible with me." I became a happy mentor who delivers happiness. Also, the life of a shepherd who learns God's painful love in the Word of God is so happy, so I tell people, "I want you to live happily like me." Since no one can live a life of learning Jesus without suffering, I realize that it was God's grace to have pioneered a new chapter, and have served my weak children and lost sheep. I pray that I may learn Jesus' heart through hardships and grow constantly to become a shepherd who gives hope to the world.

Look at verse 17. "Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do" He told them to emulate himself (follow his example) because it was the happiest life to learn Jesus through hardships. If you pay attention to those who gain and rejoice in Jesus in hardship, you will know how to live a happy life. Look at verses 18, 19. Tears flow in Paul's heart because of those who live as enemies of Christ's cross. Those who reject the most noble Jesus, those who reject the hardships of learning Jesus and live according to the desires of the body, pursue the things of the earth, boast shameful lust, serve their desires as gods, and eventually perish.

Verses 20,21. "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." Roman citizens had the right to be tried by the emperor, the privilege of not being detained or beaten without trial. U.S. citizens are protected by the U.S. Embassy wherever they go. Likewise, heavenly citizens receive special care and protection from God. Those who do not have heavenly citizenship are destroyed after living a life of

lust, thinking only about the things of the world. However, heavenly citizens gain God's righteousness by faith, reach the holy sanctification of learning Jesus in adversity, and will turn into a glorious figure on the last day. Jesus comes to transform our lowly bodies into a body of glory like Jesus. Jesus died on the cross putting on a lowly body like us to give us citizenship in heaven. We often sigh because of our lowly bodies. We are not good at enduring hardships and often suffer from sin. But that's not always the way to live. When you put on the image of the Lord through hardship, the inner man becomes stronger and transforms into a complete body of glory on the last day. The hope of glory to be like the Lord in the future makes us endure the hardships of the present lowly body.

I've been running a tutoring center at home for the past two and a half years because of financial problems. I was ashamed that the full-time minister on campus was working for money, and I was sad that I felt kicked out of the staff meeting. My children suffered because the house was not a resting place. I often sighed because I was sad to serve elementary school students as customers to whom I didn't give a glance on the street. One day, a child saw a family photo on the floor and said, "There were times when you laughed." When I heard him say, I came to my senses. "These kids have been watching me grieve all this time."

I got a call one day. It was a call from Sh. Joseph Lee who was a 2nd gen but left UBF ministry 13 years ago. He said that he read my testimony on the internet and that he wanted to come to Wonchon chapter. He was a member of a large church and was surprised by the old and shabby appearance of the Wonchon center. However, he surprised me by saying that he would study the Bible, join in campus evangelism, and offer tithes. I got another call a month later. It was a call from brother Seek-bin who was introduced to Wonchon chapter while looking for a church to donate to from a huge amount of money that he earned from stock trading. I slumped down after receiving the call. 'God keeps watch over Wonchon center. He knows everything about us.' To me, who lived with a humble heart because I had no money, God seemed to be saying, "You are a precious person, so don't worry about money."

I thought about delivering milk or newspapers for money, but I ended up delivering personal daily bread testimonies. Every day, I was comforted by writing daily bread testimonies and shared the grace with several people, but unbeknown to me, my DB testimonies were being delivered to many others. When I woke up one morning, I received several messages from missionaries saying thank you for gaining strength and comfort through my DB testimonies. 'I can support the mission field with my DB testimonies!' I worked hard every day to get DB from the warehouse of the Word of God and supplied it. I got many friends who participated in Christ's suffering through DB delivery. I have never been abroad since I came to Suwon, but I have become an international shepherd who travels around the world every day through DB and serves countries with prayer.

My reality is that I'm still worried about my children's weaknesses, and I'm also at stake

and anxious about financial and pastoral issues. However, when I hold the Word of God in the midst of hardship and pray with faith, God's peace, which transcends all understanding, protects my heart. We don't have money. But don't we have the word of God? We don't have a good sheep. But don't we have faith? "Please send me the Daily Bread, shepherd. Dear shepherd, please share some spiritual water with me." Looking at those who ask me to give them the Word of God, I'm really honored, especially when UBF is known for providing the Word of God abundantly. I have no money and no house, but if I have the Word of God in me, faith, and the personality and scent of Jesus learned through hardship, I am a precious person. One 2nd gen confessed that through my daily bread testimony she woke up from her bed realizing that her weakness was not a sin but a gift given to her as a way to help others. I was really touched to think that an undeserving person like myself was able to live as a channel of grace like this.

For the past two years, I have served a brother who has faithfully come to Bible study even though he kept saying he would never be a Christian. I sang hymns, prayed, and delivered a message alone in front of him who was not responding. It was like performing a one-man show. It was like throwing eggs on a rock every week. Did the eggs of the Word that were thrown like that crack the rock? After refusing my offer to eat with him for a year and a half, he now empties all the dinner prepared by Shs. Hee-kyung every week. He didn't go home and taught my wife the bass guitar, and recently he bought us a book he was impressed with as a gift. I thought he'd turn down the offer to go to Suwon Hwaseong for sightseeing, but he sent a cute text message, saying, 'Yup. Good. ^' He may leave after receiving our love. But even if he leaves, the love we gave him will remain. The happiness of learning Jesus through the process of serving him will remain in our hearts.

The life of serving one person without a promise is sometimes lonely, but I am full of comfort because the Lord is with me in that lowly place. We are now in a lowly position to learn Jesus' sufferings, but we believe that we will appear shining next to the Lord in the future. Our missionaries, who are scattered around the world and participate in the sufferings of Christ and learn Jesus, are heavenly treasures, and great joy and glory of the kingdom of God. I pray that the glory and comfort of the incarnation of our Lord who came to this earth putting on the lowly body for us may be abundant upon the lives of our missionaries who serve the Lord in a place of hardship and love sheep and children. I believe that in the future, we will all put on the same glorious body as the Lord and praise him with joy and worship and serve God. In that hope, I pray that we may complete the race of faith to know, and gain Christ by participating in his sufferings.