

Paul H. Dixon: Thank you, Tammy. Always a blessing to hear our young people minister in chapel. I want to thank them as they fulfill this responsibility week by week. I trust you had a great day yesterday. I did. We thank the Lord for his blessings upon the ministry at the Clintonville Baptist Church.

A number of our young people are from that church over there in Columbus. Pastor George Hattonfield, who has ministered in this chapel, has an exceptional ministry to the students at Ohio State. I suppose yesterday we had somewhere in the neighborhood of 75 or 80 Ohio State students in the service yesterday morning.

Some of our graduates, of course, over there, working in their graduate programs. We had three to come on professions of faith yesterday morning. One man, an elderly gentleman. Another young man, and then a mother who came. We thank the Lord for his blessings in both of the services.

I would appreciate your prayer support. We'll be leaving tomorrow afternoon to visit in Cleveland on the industries there for the Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges Wednesday and Thursday. I'll be speaking to a Rotary club on Wednesday in Cleveland. Then staying over to speak to the Willow Hill Christian School.

A banquet on Friday night, driving back Saturday to preach to the Sword Bearers Conference on Saturday afternoon. Flying out Saturday afternoon to speak Sunday in Charleston, West Virginia. It's an extremely full week, and I do appreciate those of you who from time to time indicate prayer support.

We're looking forward to this week in chapel. Tomorrow, Mr. Clyde Slown, owner of the Master Chemical Corporation in Toledo, a friend of the college, he is coming. Every year we have had him to come I suppose the last three or four. Professor Monroe has had him in a class. He gave a presentation on America and free enterprise.

I have observed this the last two years, and was so impressed that I asked him to do it for our entire college family, tomorrow, in chapel. We believe this is important. Important to our nation. This college, we take a strong stand on free enterprise. We refuse the federal and the state funds for the operating of this institution. One of the few colleges in the country that takes this kind of a stand. We want to hear this tomorrow.

Then Dr. Ernest Pickering of Emanuel Baptist Church in Toledo will be at Grace Baptist for missionary conference the latter part of the week, and be speaking in chapel on Wednesday and Thursday. We'll be having class meetings on Friday.

One of the obvious strengths of Cedarville College is the excellent faculty God has enabled us to put together. We are amazed at the splendid people who come our way. The Lord giveth and regretfully the Lord taketh away. It is with

mixed emotion that I want to inform the entire college family that beginning with the fall of 1982, Professor James Grier will begin serving as the dean of Grand Rapids Baptist Theological Seminary.

We rejoice with him in this promotion, but he has been a vital part of our educational process here at Cedarville College. Though we are confident the Lord will send another capable person to replace him, we will miss him greatly. We'll be saying more about this of course during the year. Dean Johnson wanted me to announce that though he will be leaving, he wants to inform the students that Professor Grier is going to be just as tough all year long as you would anticipate. As I said, we'll want to be saying more because we do deeply appreciate this man and the contribution he has made to the college.

You want to pray for him and for his family of course as we move through the year and as he begins thinking regarding all these responsibilities. I think they've been looking for a dean for about three years. Someone said recently that we had a responsibility at Cedarville to help all the other colleges. I said, "Not to that degree." Of course, he is going to the seminary.

We have been in the midst of a series of messages on approving all things that are excellent. Last week the message was on the excellence of discipleship. I appreciate the emphasis throughout the week on this important subject. Today I would like to speak on the excellency or the excellence of knowing Christ.

Will you turn with me again to Philippians, chapter one, for just a brief review, and then to chapter three. In this prayer of Paul, he says in the ninth verse, "This I pray." An insight into the apostle's prayer life. The specifics of this prayer for his people that, "Your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. That ye may approve, put to the test, things that are excellent."

As we suggested last week, things that differ and it is not a matter of choosing good over the evil. But rather it is choosing the best over the good. Someone has suggested in a translation approving things that are more. That somehow they have greater value over something else that you are weighing as a priority in your life.

Someone else has said, "It is approving things that are preeminent." With that in mind, I think it interesting to go to chapter three and pick it up with verse one. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you, it is safe."

Well, it's constantly reviewing. Beware of dog. Beware of equal workers. Beware of those who mutilate, for we are the circumcision which worships God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath what he might trust in the flesh, I'm more. Circumcised the eighth day of the

stock of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin and Hebrew of the Hebrews is touching the law of Pharisee.

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless. But what things were gained to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Ye doubtless and I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. For whom I've suffered the loss of all things and do count them but done that I may win Christ again.

Again, it has been suggested that it might read, "I count all things but loss for the preeminence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." Cedarville College is a place of learning. It is where we are constantly accumulating a body of knowledge. I would like to think that this will be a lifelong pursuit and priority for all of us. The using of the mind, taking advantage of that, that is taught, but also that is learned by experience as we pass through life.

But somehow, in the midst of the accumulating of all of this knowledge, our main objective must be to know Christ. For no other knowledge compares to this in sheer beauty, in value or satisfaction. Where you're outlined this morning, again, it is very simple. I would suggest that you write down Roman numeral one. What does it mean to know Christ?

Oh, you say, "Everyone knows what that means. We're saved and we say, I know the Lord." I wonder if we really understand what that means. Now to know Christ is obviously a key concept in salvation. Too long in salvation, have we emphasized the emotional response. Somehow communicated that when you get saved, the mind is not important. That is foreign to the word of God.

Keep a finger in Philippians three and turn to Matthew 13. If you are to understand evangelism, you must understand the parable of the seed. If I were to give you one keyword in that parable, it is the word "understanding."

In verse 13 of Matthew 13, Jesus said, "Therefore speak I to them in parable because they see, see not and hearing, they hear not. Neither do they understand." Circle it. "Understand." Just skipping around, verse 18, "Hear ye therefore the parable, the sower. When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and casteth it away." Circle that, "Understandeth it not."

Verse 23, "But, he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and," circle it, "understandeth it." If you read the passage, the only one that gets converted is the one who understands it. Those who make emotional decisions without proper understanding are not saved. There are many people who make emotional decisions, but don't come to know the Lord. There must be a use of the mind as well as the emotions.

John, chapter seven, verses 25 through 29. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, "It's not this he whom they seek to kill. But though he speaketh boldly and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know ..." There it is again. Do they know indeed that this is the very Christ? How be it we know this man when he is? But once Christ cometh, no man knoweth when he is. Then cried Jesus in the temple, as he taught saying, "Ye both know me, and you know wince I am, and I am not come of myself. But he who sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him. For I am from him and he hath sent me."

Here were people if you were to ask them, "Do you know God?" Oh, they said, "Yes. We are students of Old Testament scripture. We are religious leaders. We know God." He said, "You don't know him." They knew facts about him, but Jesus condemned them for not knowing the sovereign God.

John 17, verse three. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." Very concise. To the point. Jesus said, "To know God and to know me, the son of God, is to have salvation." Knowledge and knowing the Lord is crucial to salvation. In fact, it works both ways.

In Matthew, Chapter seven, I preached on this yesterday morning. You recall what happened in verses 21 through 23? There were people who would obviously say, "We know the Lord." Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. But he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils. And in thy name done many wonderful works." Then will I profess unto them, "I never knew you.""

"Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. You say you know me, but I don't know you." You remember will not turn. When Dr. Brown preached on new birth. Before he read chapter of John, he gave us verses 20 and 21, or excuse me, 23 and 24 of chapter two. How there were those who said, "We believe they saw the miracles which he did." Jesus said, "I don't. You say you believe in me, but I don't believe in you, for I know what is in you. You say you know me, but I don't know you."

Now this is crucial. If we are going to be saved then we have to truly know the Lord. It is more than intellectually accepting the facts. Someone has said it is not a religion nor merely a philosophical system, but it is a relationship. In the Old Testament, we especially see this come to light. I think that has to carry over into the New Testament concept of knowing Christ. Turn to the book of Amos, chapter three, verse two.

God says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquity. Fascinating. What is God saying? Is he saying that he doesn't know anyone else on a superficial basis? Hey, God knows

everything. He knew all the other nations. But he is saying, "You only do I have a special relationship with. Because of that relationship, I'm going to judge you. I'm going to punish you for your sins."

In fact, the Old Testament concept even goes back to a sexual relationship. Turn to the book of Genesis, chapter four, verse 17. "And Kane knew his wife and she conceived and bear Enoch and he built it a city." When Kane knew his wife and they had that special physical relationship, God gave them a child.

Now to the New Testament, turn to Matthew, chapter one. Same principle. Verses 24 and 25. "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son. He called his name Jesus." He knew her not. There was no sexual relationship.

The concept is that is not merely the know of the intellect, but is the know of intimacy. When the bible says that Abraham was a friend of God, you begin to understand why God used him. They had a relationship. When the bible speaks of the excellency of knowing Christ, it's not just filling our notebooks with many facts about Christ or about our theological system. It is that knowledge transforming into an intimate relationship with our savior. A walk with him.

I would suggest to you, that as you measure the priorities in your life and what is going to be excellent in our lives, this should be number one. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Roman numeral two, I want to know, and I'm sure you want to know then how can we know him better?

It is possible to know him better. Colossians 3:10. "We are to put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." When we become a Christian, the scripture says there is a renewal process that goes on and there is a growth process that goes on in the knowledge of God and in the knowledge of Christ. It is not only a possibility, it is a command.

Do you remember what Peter said? How he closed out his epistle? Grow in grace and what class, in the? Knowledge. Just knowledge in general? No. In the knowledge of Jesus Christ. How do we do this? If it's a command, if it's a possibility, how do we get to grow in knowledge?

Number one, it must be a priority in our lives. You only make time for that that becomes a priority. There's so many things pressing upon our interest and our time and so somehow there comes a time when you sit down and say, "This is going to have a place and I don't have time for this."

Paul said, we'll not turn to this one. Many of you have memorized it. First Corinthians 2:2, "I am determined to know nothing among you say Jesus Christ and him crucified." Now, I don't believe that is saying that Paul didn't have

knowledge about other subjects. But it does mean that this was his priority to know Christ. That must be our priority.

The context here in Philippians chapter three, going back to that when he talks about all that is lost to him. He talks about his Jewish background, his heritage, his studies. He says, "I count all of that as law for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ."

But he is saying more than that. It's not just that he does not put his trust in those works, but his faith in Christ. Paul set aside his prominent place of Jewish leadership to know Christ. Paul set aside obvious wealth to know Christ. Paul set aside reputation to know Christ. Paul set aside family to know Christ.

Here's a man who in his early 30s and everything going for him. He's on top of the world it's converted to Jesus Christ and counted all as done that he might know him. I understand that Brother [inaudible] talked about some of the vines and the false vines. I think that's what we have to evaluate.

There's nothing wrong with athletics, and as you know, we stress sports on this campus. We believe it's an important part of a Christian liberal arts education. But knowing Christ is far more important than letting basketball or soccer or track or tennis consume your life. Knowing Christ and bringing others to know him very frankly, as you participate on those teams is more important than winning that ball game.

Though that might be easy to say if we had losing ball teams. We historically and especially last year had championship ball teams. But I would far rather lose a game and win someone to the Lord than lose our testimony and win a ball game any day. I appreciate our athletic director and our coaches that share that conviction.

What I am saying is, we must make knowing Christ a priority over athletics and even over the pursuit of our academics. Though we want you to do well in your academic programs, if all of a sudden you are so caught up in the studies and the books and the pursuit of knowledge and degrees that Christ and knowing him and having an intimate relationship with him become secondary, you're in trouble.

Now that is no excuse. For the person who does it study's for his exam or get his term paper in and say, "Sorry, I was involved in Christian service." That's a cop out. That's laziness. That's an undisciplined life. I am talking about getting our priorities straight. You can apply this to your boyfriend, girlfriend, relationship. It bothers me when I find so many of our young people who come and they spend a period of time. Then they fall in love and perhaps it's the will of God. But so many times seemingly, there is not a serious contemplation of what does God want for me?

It's just rush home and get married. Forget about the education. Forget about finishing the course. In this place God has enabled us to put some things together that ought to enable you within four years. If you will complete those four years to truly know Christ better. It must be a priority.

Number two, there must be a practical obedience if you want to know Christ. John 14:21. A fascinating verse. "He that hath my commandment," Jesus said. "And keep of them. It is he that loveth me. He's the one who has a relationship with me. He that loveth me shall be loved of my father. I will love him and will manifest myself to him."

He said, "If you obey me and if you love me, then I am in a very special way going to reveal myself unto you, and you're going to get to know me a whole lot better." This is not some theological, mystical kind of a thing. It is simply a matter of taking what he has told us to do and putting it into practice in our lives. He said, "As you obey me, you're going to get to know me better."

The person who is very careless in his practical obedience is not truly going to know the Lord, as Paul desired in Philippians three. Number three, there must be a surrender to his power. It must be a priority. There must be a practical obedience and there must be a surrender to his power. Look at Philippian 3:10.

"That I may know him and the power of his resurrection." When you are married and you have that special relationship with a husband and a wife, as you yield to that person, and are concerned about what they are interested in, and allow that person to begin to share that life with you. Even live his life through you and her life through you. Oh, the intimacy of that relationship.

The biblical principle of us after we're converted, yielding our lives to Christ. I am crucified with Christ. Never the less I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. That principle. When that happens, we come to know the Lord. I want you take the time. Daniel 11:32. You've got to mark it.

If you've not marked this in your bible, I love the Old Testament and whenever I can find those special verses, bless my heart. I love to share them with others. "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flattery." Underline this, "But the people that do know their God shall be throned and do exploits." Isn't that great?

When his people know him in that intimate relationship, then we have his power to work through us to do exploit and to be strong. Number four. There must be a sharing of his passion. Back to chapter three of Philippians and the latter part of the 10th verse.

"That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering, then made conformable unto his death." Some theologians have suggested that this fellowship of his suffering is a sharing of his passion.

In reality, if we want to come to know the Lord, then we must work for the same things that he worked for. What is the passion of our Lord? He said, "For I am come to seek and to save that which was lost." It isn't just a matter of us spending more time in our bibles which we must do. Those intimate times of prayer, of communicating with him that we must do more of, and endeavoring to make the word of God to work in our lives. To yield ourselves to him so that his power can work through us.

Making this a priority of knowing him, but it also must be sharing in his passion and his work of reaching this lost world for Jesus Christ. In fact, Paul said, you need not turn in Corinthians 15:34. "Some have not the knowledge of Christ." They don't know Christ. "I speak this to your shame."

John Flavel, who preached in the mid 1600s, preached 42 sermons on what it means, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. I jotted down one paragraph. Flavel said knowledge is man's excellency above the beast that perished. Psalm 32:9. The knowledge of Christ is the Christian's excellency above the heathen. First Corinthians 1:23 and 24.

Practical and saving knowledge of Christ is the sincere Christian's excellency above the self-[inaudible] hypocrite. But methodical, well digested knowledge of Christ is the strong Christian's excellency above the weak. I love this. A saving, though in methodical knowledge of Christ will bring us to heaven. But a regular and methodical, as well as a saving knowledge of him will bring heaven into us. May God grant it.

Our father, we thank you for the time together today. Such an important subject, yet so neglected. Use the message to work in this preacher's life and in all of our lives that we might have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Amen.