

Summary

This sermon explores Paul's transformation from a zealous Jew to a follower of Christ, emphasizing how he counted all his previous religious achievements as loss compared to knowing Jesus personally. The pastor provides extensive church history context, tracing Christianity from its Jewish roots through the Great Schism of 1054 AD, the Protestant Reformation, and the development of various denominations. The central message focuses on the surpassing value of having a personal relationship with Christ over religious status or achievements.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather together today, we ask that You open our hearts and minds to what You want to teach us through Your Word. Help us to be receptive to Your Spirit's leading and to see beyond our own understanding. May we, like Paul, come to truly grasp the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as our Lord. Prepare our hearts for discussion and fellowship, and help us to encourage one another in our faith journey. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one thing you've given up or sacrificed for something you valued more? It could be as simple as giving up sleep to spend time with family or changing jobs for a better opportunity.

Key Verses

1. Philippians 3:7-8
2. Philippians 3:1-6
3. Genesis 12:1-3

Questions

1. Paul says he regards everything as loss 'because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.' What do you think Paul means by 'knowing' Jesus in this context?
2. Paul lists his impressive religious credentials in verses 4-6. What modern-day achievements or status symbols might people today count on for their spiritual worth?
3. How does Paul's personal relationship with Jesus ('my Lord') differ from the typical relationships people had with pagan gods in his time?
4. Paul suffered the loss of friendships, status, and freedom for following Christ. What losses have you experienced or might you experience for following Jesus?
5. The sermon discussed how Paul was seen as a 'betrayer' by his former Jewish community. How do you handle criticism or rejection when your faith conflicts with others' expectations?

6. Paul had been a 'gold medalist' in religious performance, yet he counted it as loss. How can we avoid falling into the trap of performance-based Christianity?
7. The church history lesson showed how Christianity has many branches but one root. How does understanding our shared Christian heritage affect how you view other denominations?
8. Paul emphasizes the personal nature of his relationship with Christ. How would you describe your own personal relationship with Jesus, and how has it grown over time?

Life Application

This week, take time to evaluate what you might be counting on for your spiritual worth besides your relationship with Christ. Write down any achievements, status, or religious activities you might be tempting to rely on, and then spend time in prayer surrendering these to God. Focus on deepening your personal knowledge of Jesus through Scripture reading and prayer, asking Him to reveal Himself to you in new ways.

Key Takeaways

1. Paul counted all his religious achievements and status as loss compared to knowing Christ personally
2. True Christianity is about having an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus as 'my Lord'
3. Following Christ may require sacrificing worldly status, relationships, and comfort
4. The value of knowing Christ surpasses any earthly achievement or religious performance
5. All Christian denominations trace back to the same apostolic foundation and share the core gospel message

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the example of Paul, who showed us what it means to count everything as loss for the sake of knowing You. Help us to examine our own hearts and see if we're relying on anything other than our relationship with You for our spiritual worth. Give us the courage to let go of whatever might be hindering our walk with You, and deepen our personal knowledge of who You are. May we, like Paul, be able to say with confidence that You are 'my Lord.' Unite us with believers from all backgrounds and denominations as we pursue the common goal of knowing Christ more fully. In Your precious name, Amen.