

To Know Christ and His Resurrection

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"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." (Philippians 3:10)

There was a mighty hunger in the heart of Paul. There was one bread only to satisfy that hunger, namely Christ, and that hunger gave direction to his thoughts, to his prayers, to his pursuits. No man can really go contrary to his appetite, contrary to the great, the greatest aim of his spirit. If we are in the world, after the world we shall go. If we live in the Spirit we shall seek to walk in the Spirit. If we know our ruin we shall want to be saved from it. If we feel our vileness we shall want to be covered with, and be found in, the Lord Jesus. One thing in this chapter is the aim, the hunger of the apostle. Everything he had naturally, everything he could boast of as being acquired, he found and esteemed and reckoned to be nothing but loss to him compared with the one Object of his heart's desire, with the great hunger of his soul, and that was Christ. Christ, not in a notion. No, a notional Christ won't carry people very far. Not in a form of sound words; that will never empty a man of himself. But Christ as a real Person, a great Saviour, a sufficient Righteousness. If we have the same appetite we shall follow in the same path. The measure will be different, but the principle is the same. It is a great mercy when the Holy Spirit takes pains to empty people of themselves. There is no more room in us for the Lord Jesus than the Spirit has made emptiness in us by convincing us of what we are. In the blessed covenant of grace there is ample provision made for the wants of all the saints, and that provision is summed up in the wonderful word, "I am that bread of life. Moses gave you not the bread. It rained from heaven. That was a type of Me. I am the true Bread," and this we may say was born again hunger. Every nature has its own appetite. Spiritual nature has its appetite. Angel's food won't suit you, sinner, but Christ the Bread of life will suit you.

It is a wonderful mercy then to have your eye and heart set here: "*That I may know Him.*" And this expresses a great deal. It expresses the Saviour, "Him." It expresses the experimental knowledge that is to be had of Him. It sets forth the keen appetite that a sinner blessed with the Spirit of Christ has, and an appetite that can never be satisfied until the bread is given. It is a great mercy that the Lord has said that as an earthly father will not mock his son who comes and asks for bread by giving him a stone, we may be sure that the heavenly Father, of whom the Lord there speaks, will not mock a sinner who goes and asks for the bread of life. To know Christ is to have faith, and Christ to be revealed to that faith. All knowledge comes, and is received as a persuasion in the mind, on sufficient evidence. Now if we have a sight of Christ by precious faith there will be in our hearts knowledge, a persuasion that He is, and that will lead us to want to know Him more. "O could we but with clearer eyes His excellences trace; Could we His Person learn to prize, We more should prize His grace!" To know Christ is to know Him in His various offices, to know Him in His great work of redemption, to know Him as the Lord our

Righteousness, to know Him as an Elder Brother, as one who stands at the right hand of the poor to deliver and save him from those that are too strong for him. The apostle did know Christ at this time, but what he knew of Christ led him to want to know more. It is a peculiarity of divine teaching and of the knowledge of Christ, that the more He is known the keener is the appetite for Him. The longing to know Him more always accompanies knowledge of Him. I am sure some of you understand me, that the least measure of knowledge that you possess of Christ has this effect among others, namely a desire to know Him more. "O could I know and love Him more, and all his wondrous grace explore! Ne'er would I covet man's esteem, but part with all and follow Him." God has sent Him to be known, and it is life eternal to know Him: "*This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*" (John 17:3) Do you not feel a longing for Him to come to you? Does not your appetite find expression in the Psalm where you read: "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" Does it not express your hunger? As if you could say, "The one I want, and whose coming will satisfy me, is the Son of God;" and then turning the eye of your heart to Him you say, "O when wilt Thou come to me? When will that blest time arrive when Thou wilt kindly deign, with me to sit, to lodge, to live and never part again?"

To know Christ is to know that you are blessed with divine life, surrounded by divine favour, founded on a divine love, and that there is prepared for you an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. All this is really implicit in that knowledge of Christ which the Apostle Paul here desires. Yet some here may know Him and not feel that they know all that. But it is there in the seed of it, and the more Christ comes the more will those things which accompany salvation come to the front in your own experience, and you will say, "I understand now a little of what was meant when such and such things were said concerning the knowledge of Christ." To know Christ is really to be delivered, to be delivered from bondage and fear which hath torment. The child of God may know Him so as to say, "I wish I were united to Him; I wish I had communion with Him; I wish He would pour out of His fullness into my soul; I wish He would condescend to heal me and to comfort me and walk with me." Well, this wish of yours, ardent wish, will one day find perfect satisfaction. "That I may know Him. I want above all else," as if the apostle should say, "I want above all else to embrace the Son of God as my own, to be led to say, constrained to say of Him, "*Who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" (Gal. 2:20)

Now if we know Him there are two or three things quite certain in our experience. The first is love to Him. "*We love Him because He first loved us,*" (1 John 4:19) none can say but the people who have felt it. What a warmth, glow, moving, urging feeling there is to His Person and His name, and we call that love. Love that wants to live in Him, and to Him, and with Him for ever. Love that makes His name as ointment poured forth, love that makes you feel you would rather die than displease Him, love that makes you want to depend on Him entirely and only, that makes all others as nothing to you, love that makes you say, "O let my soul live at Thy footstool, let me daily repent and daily wash Thy feet with my tears, and daily enjoy the sweet sense of being loved!" That is one thing that will always accompany knowledge of Christ, and the more you know of Him, the more you will feel love to Him; and the reason men despise Christ is their ignorance of Him and their death in trespasses and sins. Ah it is a solemn position to be in, denying and despising of Christ! O what do we owe to the grace that has brought us into another state of mind, and given us affections towards that blessed One!

Another thing that will always accompany knowledge of Christ is humility. People are big when they are away from Him and ignorant of Him, but whoever knows Him knows, while the knowledge of Him is kept alive in the heart, that humility is there. "Why me, O blessed God, why me? Why dost Thou look on me? Why pass myriads by and lay Thy hand of grace on me? Why was I made to hear Thy voice? Why didst Thou call my soul by the invincible call of the Holy Spirit?" And while this knowledge is lively in you, humility will thrive so that your position in providence, very tried it may be, does not provoke rebellion. Rebellion is a natural thing in us when we are not pleased, but humility grows out of a knowledge of Him who is pleased to speak to the Soul.

Another thing is this, you delight in Him: "Delight thyself also in the Lord;" and surely a sinner can do no other when he knows the Lord. If you have a real knowledge of Jesus Christ there will be moments when your whole spirit will be so delighted with His Person and His grace and His mercy that nothing will attract you that is not in Him. O it is easy then to let things go, and so to walk in the way of truth and life; easy to choose what He chooses for you, to sit at His feet, to sit under His shadow with great delight and find His fruit sweet to your taste! Then, then the heart is in sweet conformity to the word of exhortation I have just mentioned: "Delight thyself also in the Lord." There is nothing in Christ but what is beautiful and lovely and of good report. And when He is known that is also apprehended. Everything in Him is beautiful the King in His beauty, in His love, in His glory, in His power, in His resurrection power, in His intercession, in His word, the King entirely is beautiful to those who know Him.

And I would say another word here, if we know Him we shall want to be like Him "As He is in this world, so are we." You may say, "I cannot make myself like Him;" and if anyone tells you you can, you may turn from him as a false teacher. Well, but how is a sinner to be like Him? The Holy Ghost has told us in the Scripture, and this is the word: "*We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" (2 Cor. 3:18) That will do it. May I refer for a moment as an illustration to photography? What is photography? It is writing by light. The light comes on to the sensitive plate. My friends, if you do view the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that will put the very image of that blessed One upon your spirit, and you will want it as you know Him.

Again I may say, if we know Christ we want to walk in His ways. To profess knowledge of Him and walk contrary to Him are inconsistent. Why, if you know Him you will want to run in the way of His commandments. O the precepts of the gospel then are as dear as the promises! "I esteem Thy precepts and Thy word above thousands of gold and silver. I have taken Thy word unto me as a heritage for ever." And there is nothing in the Scriptures of precept, of admonition or warning, that you would not wish to follow and obey and be conformed to, as you have a real knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you know Him you will cleave to Him with purpose of heart. O what a glory there is in His cross to one who knows Him! What a glory in His death, in His resurrection, in His life in heaven, the "power of an endless life."

And again, how His gifts will be prized by those who know Him, that chief of all gifts including others, namely the gift of the Spirit. This was manifested very soon after His ascension into heaven. When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, the disciples being together in one place with one accord, the Spirit was shed upon them; and Peter tells us that this was done by Christ:

"He having received the promise of the Father hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear," (Acts 2:33) the gift of the Holy Ghost. May we receive Him in new manifestations and operations so that we may be living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. "That I may know Him."

I would like to add this to what I have said on this point, namely that if we know Christ, there will be at times a desire to be where He is. Absence is pain where love is, and to be on the earth a poor sinner often sin-bound, and bound by unbelief and carried away by many, many things, to be here dwelling in Meshech, having enemies and difficulties, and again and again carried away by some sin, is very painful. So may we be enabled to follow after Christ. "That I may know Him," in His Person, in His work of redemption, in His graces, know Him in His word and in His ordinances, know Him in His blood and love Him there, know Him in His blessed truth and cleave to Him as crucified.

"And the power of His resurrection." This would lead us to notice briefly the death of Christ. What was it that brought Christ to death, to that voluntary, that vicarious death which He died? It was sin; it was the curse of God's holy law. The stroke of justice that came upon Him was the stroke that inflicted the keenest pain and sharpest sorrow that He knew. And in the Romans the Holy Ghost teaches us this: *"He died unto sin once."* (Rom. 6:10) And the saints are exhorted to reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin by the death of Christ. They are dead to the law by the body of Christ, and they are dead to sin by the death of Christ. Death brought Him unto the grave. Now the apostle informs us in the Romans that "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more." He liveth after the power of an endless life. The same apostle says in another Epistle, and we are told too in the Ephesians, that the power which brought Him from the grave was the exceeding great power of God. The apostle desired that the Ephesians might know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe." What was that? By the resurrection of Christ that exceeding greatness of God's power was manifested.

So the apostle says here, *"I want to know the power of Christ's resurrection."* He was brought out of the grave, and what is intended I apprehend is this, that as Christ came out of the grave by divine power and is to die no more, so my soul would often rise from sin and the world and self and self-wisdom and live unto God. Every act of faith in the soul is by the resurrection power of Christ. Every time you rise in your affections and cleave to Christ, that is by the power of His resurrection. Every time you can say in affliction, *"Thy will be done,"* that is a victory over rebellion, and it is by the power of Christ's resurrection. Every time you feel your affections set on things above, and that you can follow on to know the Lord and long to know Him, that is by the power of Christ's resurrection. It is a very beautiful thing to feel it. It is very sweet to feel it, to feel that the victory is given you over death and hell and sin in your heart, to feel that you rise toward God in Christ and say to Him in sincerity when you are troubled, "Thy will be done," to feel that you rise above the wicked power of unbelief in you and can say with the apostle in affliction, "I believe God;" the waves and the creaking planks and the word of God telling him that the ship must be broken, that "we must suffer shipwreck, but I believe we shall all get safe to land." That was the power of Christ' resurrection in the apostle's soul: "I believe God." The deathly and death-inflicting unbelief of his heart would have said, "O these waves, they will swallow us up!" But faith in his heart said, "No, these waves will break the ship, but we shall get safe to land." So when you rise above the dreadful power of unbelief, and commit your way and

your soul and your things to God, and believe that though death should stare you in the face and would have threatened to swallow you up, yet the Lord will bring you forth; that is the exercise in your heart of the power that brought Christ out of the grave. What a wonderful thing it is to feel it! To be one minute as if you were buried, buried beneath carnality and unbelief and carnal reason and temptation, and the next to say to your soul, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him. Though now I am walking in trouble, God will quicken me and bring me up again from the depths I am in. Though now I am tempted He will bruise Satan under my feet." It is power, my friends, the power of God, the kingdom of God in power, and expressed in this beautiful word, "the power of His resurrection." We need it; I need it. We need it not a little, nor seldom. We need it much and often, there are so many griefs to swallow us up; that is, so many sins to ruin us, so many devils seeking our overthrow, so many circumstances to afflict us, that we need this power of Christ's resurrection.

To follow this up for a moment, let us consider where Christ is. He was raised from the dead, not to live on the earth, but as an evidence that He might show Himself alive to His disciples by many infallible proofs. But when that was done, in order that He might carry on His people's cause above. He went to heaven. Now He said, as it is recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew: "*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" How could your heart be there if it were buried in the grave of sin? But if you know the power of Christ's resurrection, there will be happy moments when your heart, your affections, aims, designs, and feelings will be in heaven. The apostle says in this chapter, "*Our conversation is in heaven.*" What child of God does not know the power of sin to keep him on the earth, to keep him in the affliction, to keep him beneath a load of carnality as if he were buried in it? What child of God does not know what it is to be as in a grave? But that is not all. If we never know a resurrection we indeed are dead. If we do not know it in time this power of Christ's resurrection raising us up, then I say, we are dead. But there will be times when blessing will come down, the blessing of the Spirit, when the resurrection voice and power of Christ will be heard, "*Come forth,*" and the grave will give you up. Your carnality, and your temptations, and your circumstances, and your indwelling sin will give you up as it were, to arise in the power of that wondrous resurrection of Christ, rise into heaven in your thoughts and desires and affections, and many a sigh will be in your soul then: "O that I could live in heaven in my heart's love and affection and wish! O that I could be near His footstool and not be buried again as I have so often been! O that I could live near His heart and feel his mercy and His goodness! That I may know the power of His resurrection."

Now Christ dieth no more, just think of that for a moment. He was raised from the dead and He dieth no more. Now if we know this power of His resurrection we shall never die again; never, never! But you say, "I do." No you don't. You fall into evil; you fall into this sin and into that. You get broken bones, you get a sore conscience, you get distance from the Lord, you get reproof into your mind, you get some solemn rebuke from the mouth of God. But there is one path that a raised sinner will never experience. He will never fall into death again. Born again, he will never die. He will often be convicted; he will need it. And whenever he is convicted it is by the power of Christ's resurrection. What a mercy to have everlasting life in you! What a mercy to have been raised from the grave of sin, of death and hell, and raised up to heaven in your heart's affections and desires!

"And the fellowship of His sufferings." What is this? Is it temporal trouble? Why, some of the wickedest people upon the earth have plenty of trouble: "*Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.*" (Job 5:7) Trouble, you will find it everywhere. Let us look at this question, what was Christ's suffering? The reproach of men, the contradiction of men, of sinners, the accusations of men? He suffered that way certainly. What fetched groans out of His heart? What made Him sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground? What brought Him to say, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" Sin, my friends, sin. Sin broke His heart, sin brought Him low, sin was His suffering. What is conformity to, or fellowship with Him in His sufferings? It is the solemn feeling in your soul that you are suffering because you are a sinner. Not suffering penal wrath poured out upon you, but suffering because you have a holy principle in your heart that hates sin, hates the sin that broke the guiltless heart of Christ. This will make you feel at times to hate a foolish thought: "The thought of foolishness is sin." The very life of God in your soul will make sin bitter. Not because there is a hell in which sin is punished, but because the Lord Jesus Christ suffered sin and was pained and grieved and wounded by sin imputed to Him. He had no sin, He did no sin. He did suffer because sin was imputed. God made Him to be sin. As I apprehend it, this is the great secret in the word "fellowship of His sufferings." I do not say that a child of God never will have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings when he has some temporal affliction. That may accompany it. But strictly, as I judge, the truth lies there, that if we have the life of God in our souls, sin will afflict us, wound us, grieve us, pain us, shame us; and as we are favoured with access to God with all this in our souls, as we have liberty to mourn before the Lord and grace to hate ourselves, and as we have power to resist sin and not consent to it but seek to live unto God in the spirit of holiness, there will be in all that the spirit of this petition and desire of the apostle, fellowship with Him in His sufferings. And implicit in this is a desire for more of the love of Christ, and more grace to be poured out into our souls, because the more we have of that love and of that grace, the more we shall suffer from the presence and the working of sin in our members. That I may have this fellowship.

I thought the other morning that this had some attraction to me, and my soul panted for it, that I may have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Why my brethren, very great is a suffering person! He must suffer in the world. He will be misunderstood there, and in that he will come into some sense of this; for if you have God with you, depend upon it there will be a separation from the world. And for one who has the world in his heart and has lived in the world in his own life, and to be cut off from it and separated, especially separated from some people with whom you had very pleasant society in the world, will be indeed a suffering. And grace is the root and cause of that. Coming to Christ will mean you will suffer the separation that there has to be. I was very much attached to one man when I was a young man; we used to read together and I was very very closely united to him naturally. And of all that I had to give up, this was about the keenest and came the nearest; and I remember feeling one day in particular I could not give him up, and would not give him up, and then this fell upon the spirit with great weight: "Either this friend or Christ, not both together." And you will find it will come sometimes with things and people, either these or Christ, not both; and that will bring you into some fellowship. And let me insist on this, the root of it is Christ's life in the soul that will bring you to fellowship with Him in His suffering in your own spirit, suffering because His precious life is in you uniting you to Him, bringing you to His footstool, and cutting you off from your own inward life and from some things that are external.

"That I may have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, being made conformable to His death."
"That as He died unto sin once, so I may die," says Paul. "This is my desire, as He died unto sin, so may my soul desire it. As He was cut off out of the land of the living and had to go through that solemn experience of death, so may I follow Him, be made conformable to His death." O but one says, "This is very dark and gloomy." Yes, but there is an end to this. Remember what Christ said in the Psalms, having said to His Father, "*Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, nor suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption; Thou wilt show Me the path of life. At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*" (Ps. 16:10,11) And if you are brought into conformity to the death of Christ in this way, there will be shown to you the path of life and the river of pleasures, the river of God which is full of pleasures at His right hand for evermore. So says the soul, "May I pant for this and may I come into an experience of it." A little of this grace that Paul had so much of will cause us to follow him in measure in this his desires and following after Him. The Lord grant us more grace, that we may more truly and understandingly say, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death."