

SUNRISE 2010

“The More You Know”

Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

The apostle Paul wanted to “know” three things:

1. He wanted to “know Him,” referring to Jesus Christ.
2. He wanted to know “the power of [Jesus Christ’s] resurrection.”
3. He wanted to know “the fellowship of Jesus Christ’s sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

Let’s take them one at a time to try and understand what was so important about each.

Paul wanted to “know [Jesus Christ]”. The wording seems odd, does it not? Didn’t he already know Him? Didn’t they meet on the road to Damascus where Jesus revealed Himself to Paul?

Isn’t that how you get saved – by meeting Jesus?

Some of you may be history buffs. You may have a favorite historical figure. If so, you’ve read their biographies and maybe their autobiography. You know a lot about them.

But you don’t know them because they are dead.

Maybe you once met a famous person. Or had a relationship with one. If they are dead, you say you *knew* them – not that you ‘know’ them.

Paul was reminding you of something simple but significant. If Christ is not raised from the dead, if His bones are buried somewhere in the Holy Land,

then we cannot know Him. That man is dead. We might read about Him, we might revere Him, but we cannot know Him.

Before we talk about knowing Him we might pause to declare the significance of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

1. First, the resurrection is one of the major evidences that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Paul affirmed that Christ is “declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).
2. Second, Jesus’ resurrection represents an assurance that we can have forgiveness from our sins. Paul contended: “[I]f Christ hath not been raised, our faith is vain; you are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). The reverse of the apostle’s affirmation would be this: if Jesus was raised, sins will be forgiven when we obey the gospel (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
3. Third, the resurrection tells the world that the kingdom of God is ruled by a living sovereign. The founder of Islam is dead and his bones lie dormant in the earth. But the founder of Christianity, sixty years after his death, appeared to John on the island of Patmos and said: “I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:17-18).
4. Fourth, Jesus’ resurrection proves that physical death is not the termination of human existence. God, who is the giver of life (1 Timothy 6:13), has the power to reanimate the human body. Christ’s triumph over the grave is Heaven’s pledge to us that we too shall be raised. This is why Jesus is referred to as the “firstfruits of them that are asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20,23).
5. Fifth, the Lord’s resurrection previewed the ultimate victory of Christianity over all its enemies. In the book of Revelation, Jesus is depicted as a lamb that had been slain, but was standing again (5:6). This same Lord was “the lion of the tribe of Judah” that had overcome his foes (5:5). Christians too will overcome as a result of the Lamb’s sacrifice and victory over death (cf. Revelation 12:11).

If Jesus did not rise bodily from the dead on the first Easter morning then you cannot know Him. You can’t even say you knew Him.

Since He is alive and ascended into Heaven you can know Him.

The words “that I may know Him” means *to learn about and to come to a perfect knowledge* of Jesus. It was Paul’s great passion, his reason for living, to learn more about his risen Lord each day until the day he would be in Heaven with the Lord and know Him perfectly.

How do you get to know a person?

1. First you should meet them! The Lord is alive and ready to meet you.
2. Second you spend time with them, listening to them and talking to them. As Christians we call this devotions, and that’s OK as long as we understand it is not simply an activity. It’s an interaction. It’s more like a date.
3. Third you follow the person around and hang-out with them in various situations. You are to ‘follow’ the Lord throughout your day then see how He would handle your blessings and buffetings.

Following the Lord leads us to want to understand the next thing Paul said he wanted to know about his risen Lord – “the power of His resurrection.”

Paul does not ask God for more power. Instead, he asks God that he might know the resurrection power he already has.

In Ephesians Paul spoke of God’s “incomparably great power for us who believe . . . which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead” (Ephesians 1:18 & 20).

“Power” is the word from which we get our word *dynamite*. The dynamite power which raised Jesus from physical death also raises you out of spiritual death. Then it gives you daily victory over sin.

All Christians have access to this incomparably great power, this resurrection power. Our task is to tap into it.

Why, then, do Christians keep on sinning? Paul gives us the answer: **We don't know the power!** We have all this power, but we continue to act as if we are weak, as if we are still slaves to sin.

Earlier this year, in February, you may have seen the tragic story of Kyra Ishaq. She was a young child, seven years old, who starved to death in her home while surrounded by food. The problem was, the kitchen was kept locked by a bolt out of her reach.

(Her mother and step-father were recently convicted of manslaughter).

Christians seem to think God's power is available but locked away and inaccessible. We are always looking for something that will "unlock" God in our lives. That's why programs are so popular in the church at large. They promise something that the author has discovered or uncovered that will unlock something about God or your walk with God. It will only take a day, or forty-days, of concerted effort for you to tap into God's power.

People have been helped by programs, for sure. But I think it's more by accident! Programs enhance the idea that God's power is elusive and must be hunted down using the proper words and methods, by reading the right books and memorizing the right steps. You must either continue the program weekly or annually, or wait for the next program to come along in order to walk with power.

In fact, you simply need to "know" it, realize it is always available to you. God's Word **IS** God's enabling. It needs no further assistance.

The final thing Paul wanted to know was "the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

It sounds serious. It is.

Jesus suffered, died, and was resurrected. Paul spoke of knowing resurrection power and then suffering and dying. The order is reversed to describe your experience as a believer.

If you are saved you will suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ in this life. Jesus once announced to His disciples,

Matthew 20:23 ... "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with..."

The “cup” He was describing involved agony and suffering; the baptism He was alluding to involved death in the will of God. All of the apostles suffered physically and subsequently died as martyrs.

Yet they died rejoicing in hope. The Lord was with them in their sufferings for His sake. They knew a fellowship with Him, a sharing in His life and of His life, that can only be known in trials and testings.

Paul wanted to know the Lord so much that he welcomed even sufferings within which he might experience this intimate fellowship. He learned, for example, through a severe buffeting, that he called “the messenger of Satan” and a “thorn in his flesh,” that God’s power is revealed and made perfect through human weakness.

Paul’s desire wasn’t to suffer. It was to learn and grow through the suffering. It was to know Jesus in ways that could only be experienced in storms.

I was staying with a friend at San Clemente many years ago. I was bummed because a severe storm was rolling in which would ruin my plans to hit the beach.

He grabbed his gear and ran off to Dana Point excited. He was enrolled in a rough-weather sailing class and it was the perfect weather for him to learn and grow as a sailor.

That kind of passion leads you to being “conformed to [Jesus’] death.” One writer said of this experience,

The agony of Gethsemane, not less than the agony of Calvary, will be reproduced however faintly in the faithful servant of Christ (Lightfoot).

Jesus left Heaven to search you out. Though God, He took upon Himself a body. He lived an obscure existence in a backward time and place. Then He died for you. His entire human existence was a suffering that He might win your heart.

Once He woos and wins you, you start becoming more like Him. The Bible calls it being “conformed.” It *must* include being made conformable to His death since His suffering for you was and is so much a part of the strength of His love.

Think of it this way. Couples who love each other and have a strong, maturing marriage become more and more like one another. They think alike; they act somewhat alike; they like (and dislike) the same things. They experience an intimacy of fellowship that can only come from sharing all the things that affect them both. All the things – blessings but also buffetings.

If you know the Lord and are following Him then you are dying a little bit more each day. You are dying to self and living for Him. Even though it is slight, you are being made conformable to the Lord’s death.

Paul wanted to know three things. *So should you and every other Christian!*

#1 Do you want to know Jesus Christ?

- For you that may mean meeting Him for the first time today as a risen and living Person.
- It may mean you need to start dating the Lord again!
- It certainly means you need to commit to follow Him on a daily basis.

#2 Do you want to know the power of His resurrection? Then stop walking in your flesh. Just stop. Just say “*No!*” You already have the power. It’s not locked away out of your reach.

#3 Are you really willing to know “the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformable to His death?” This final step may seem like the toughest but it isn’t. It naturally and joyfully follows the knowing of Him and the power of His resurrection.

It's not that you will seek out suffering but that, when it comes, you will know the Lord's grace and mercy in it. He will be putting His arms around you in all of your trials and testings.

Here is a simple three-word summary of our verse for us to meditate upon:
Date... Dynamite... Death.

