

Intro: The major thing that separates Christianity from the worldviews around it is the belief of Christians that Jesus died for sins, bodily arose from the dead to live again, and that His Holy Spirit lives now within His believers. To know Him intimately, passionately, truly, deeply, and powerfully is the desire of every heart that belongs to Him and it is to this end that we strive. In fact, many of us wrestle with the fact that we know the truth objectively and believe it to be true, but are buffeted daily with sin and doubt and failure. Our experience of His resurrected power goes inexperienced and our desire to know Him personally falls woefully short. This passage to the Philippians is for those who struggle to know Christ in experience, in the day to day struggle of life's pressure and our soul's weakness and unbelief.

Because of the reality of our struggle, which has been shared with believers of all ages, our home groups are beginning a new discipleship curriculum this Fall. It is the desire of the elders that we all grow in our knowledge of Christ, not merely in facts about Him (which we must believe) but in our experience of Him. Discipleship, the act of following a person, is supposed to be welded together with the act of knowing that person. Sadly, in our culture it is not always so. Deception is rampant and deceivers deceive. But Christ is not this way. He desires us to know Him well and to follow Him completely. To this end we strive with great expended energy, and Paul instructs us as to how we know Christ more fully in our daily experience: to understand His powerful resurrection, suffer with Him, to die to sin daily, and to keep the hope of His promise before eyes. One day we will see Him face to face and our sin will no longer plague our weakened souls. Until then, we press on to lay hold of knowing Christ through sharing in His sufferings and dying to sin daily, always remembering that there is an end to this journey and He stands there to transform us from these lowly bodies into what we truly desire to be: pure joyful worshippers of God.

1. The Christian's Highest Goal is to Know Christ as He is

- a. Knowing Christ supersedes all other knowledge or achievements
 - i. "knowing" is a particularly extensive word, "to understand so as to recognize"
 - ii. It is a deeper, more intimate knowledge than mere head knowledge
 - iii. Eph 1:18 – "I pray...that you will know what is the hope to which He has called you"
 - iv. Eph 3:19 – "that you might know the love of Christ *which surpasses knowledge*"
- b. Knowing Christ is put into two specific contexts by Paul using two primary nouns:
 - i. POWER
 1. Knowing the power of Christ is so vital to overcoming self-righteousness and enduring suffering of all kinds
 2. Do we realize that Christ has the power to subdue and transform our wayward hearts to live righteous and holy lives?
 - a. Often we like to "know" Christ as our friend or brother, our kind helpful guide in life (which are all true!)
 - b. Too often we forget (or resist) that He is the KING, the powerful authority over our lives who exercises this power to bring us into joyful conformation with Himself
 3. It is God's desire to change you and He has the power to kill your old sinful self and produce in you His Spirit's righteous fruit:
 - a. He who transformed Saul the Persecutor to Paul the Preacher
 - b. Simon the Boaster to Peter the Rock
 - c. There is hope for anyone for powerful transformation from death to life
 - ii. FELLOWSHIP
 1. Sharing in, partaking along with Jesus in His sufferings
 2. We don't suffer for righteousness alone: Jesus is always with us, so there is great hope and comfort to endure
 3. We will suffer, however, if we follow Christ. It is promised and destined to be such, for the unrighteousness hate the righteousness (in varying degrees)
- c. the power of His resurrection
 - i. NEW LIFE from DEATH

1. Spirit and Law
2. Law kills us, we died in Christ
3. The Spirit makes us alive by uniting us to Christ's death and RESURRECTION
- ii. Paul is not speaking of knowing of the objective historicity of the resurrection (which he obviously believed wholeheartedly), but rather of the subjective experience for him of its power
 1. Newness of life: power of living righteous and holy lives
 2. This is the desire to see the Kingdom of God break through into the history of right now: Joyful obedience and worship as Christ-centered citizens of heaven
 3. Paul strives for this righteous life (vv12-14), to reach the end goal of glorification in Christ when he raises us from the dead never to sin again with all of his might, knowing that the Holy Spirit works in him to produce great changes in this direction
- d. the fellowship of His sufferings
 - i. Paul doesn't want suffering simply for the sake of suffering
 1. He wants to suffer *with Christ* and *for Christ* because he knows that it brings him *to know Christ*
 2. Suffering is a necessary unlikeable tool that brings us to deeper fellowship with Jesus and to a greater joy in Him
 - a. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ might rest upon me... when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:9-10)
 - b. Like Jesus, "we are weak in Him...but will live with Him by the power of God" (2 Cor 13:4)
 - c. Suffering with Christ is inexorably linked to the power of God in producing joy and righteousness
 - i. Remember the first command of this chapter?
 - ii. REJOICE!!
 - ii. SUFFERING AND THE KINGDOM
 1. 2 Thess 1:5 suffering for the Kingdom
 2. Acts 14:22 through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God
 3. John 15:18 the world hated Me before it hated you
 4. John 16:33 you will have tribulation in this world, but take heart, "I have overcome the world"
 5. 1 Thess 3:3 we are destined to suffer for Christ
 6. 2 Tim 3:12 all who desire to live godly lives will be persecuted
 7. 1 Pet 2:21 we have been called to suffering like Jesus, an example to follow
 - iii. To suffer with Christ is the participation in what our Savior experienced, though not in its fullest sense (payment for sins)
 1. Paul always considered it an honor and a joy to suffer for His beloved Savior
 2. This suffering was a validation that he belonged to Jesus
 3. Of course, this is suffering for righteousness' sake and not for unrighteousness (1 Peter 2:20)
 - iv. This knowledge of Jesus goes much deeper than mere head knowledge of the facts about Jesus into the intimate experience of walking with Him and He with you through the dark valleys of betrayal (Matt 26:49), hatred (John 7:7), rejection (Luke 17:25), physical attacks (Mar 15:19,24), hunger (Matt 4:2), weariness (John 4:6), emotional turmoil (Matt 26:37), and faithless friends (Matt 8:26; 26:34)

2. Christians Know Him by Dying to Sin

- a. “becoming like Him in His death”
- b. Context is Righteousness and Law
 - i. Jesus died according to the Law, for the sake of our life
 - ii. We are united to Him in this death
 - iii. Romans 6:4 “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”
- c. Paul has gone to great lengths in this letter to exhort us to live like Christians
 - i. “citizens of a different kingdom”
 - ii. “live a life worthy of the gospel”
 - iii. “have this attitude in you which was in Christ Jesus”
 - iv. “work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is working in you”
- d. Practical living out of our death to sin in Christ
 - i. We have died to sin in Him AND are dying to sin daily
 - ii. This is what Paul desires: to die to sin and its effectual power in his life
 1. He knows that the power of Christ’s resurrection is greater than the power of experiential sin in himself
 2. Rom 7:25-8:2
 - iii. What Paul is NOT saying is:
 1. That we die for others’ sins (or our own)
 2. That he desires to be crucified
- e. To die to sin daily, freely and joyfully pursuing the glory of the Father through obedience to His will even at the cost of our lives or our worldly comforts
 - i. Hebrews 2:10 and 12:2
 1. The Father “completed” the “author of their salvation through suffering” (2:10)
 2. Therefore, “keep your eyes on Jesus, the author and completer of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (12:2)
 - ii. Paul’s gospel is the exact opposite of the “health and wealth” gospel
 1. In fact, to follow Christ means to suffer loss of this world in order that we might know Him
 2. This is why Paul embraces suffering: it kills the sin in Him and gives Him more of Christ
 - iii. Dying to sin, or becoming like Him in His death, GIVES ME MORE OF JESUS NOW

3. Christians Have the Great Hope of Seeing Jesus Face to Face

- a. “that I might arrive at the resurrection from the dead”
 - i. “by any means possible”
 - ii. Not merely a possibility, but a phrase indicating a sure passionate pursuit
- b. “arrive” or “attain” is a word that means to come to the end of a journey
 - i. To reach one’s goal
 - ii. To cross the finish line
- c. This word “resurrection” is an intensified version of the previous verse “resurrection”
 - i. Compound word: “out + resurrection”
 - ii. Meaning “raised up *out from*”
 - iii. I believe that Paul is emphasizing the experiential, practical, day-to-day aspect of new life in Christ
 1. He desires to know Christ through living as one who has been made alive in Christ

2. Righteous living that is consistent with the righteousness imputed to him by faith in Jesus
 3. Living obedient lives as forgiven and freed children which we already are
 - a. Matt 5:48
 4. Look at the immediately following context
 - d. The “goal” of Paul’s journey is to arrive at perfect obedience of faith and righteousness: the image of Christ
 - i. This is what the Holy Spirit is doing, forming us into the image of the Son of God
 - ii. This is what Paul strove to see produced in God’s people: true holiness
 1. Eph 4:11-24
 2. Col 1:28-29
 - e. This goal is not reached in this life, yet is promised to those who believe in Jesus at the day of His return
 - i. **12-14** – not that I have already obtained perfection, but I strain toward it with all my might in a manner worthy of the upward call of Christ Jesus
 - ii. When the resurrection gives us glorified bodies
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 13:12 – “For we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”
 - iv. 1 Cor 15 – bodies sown into the ground in dishonor are raised up in power
4. What Do We Do?
- a. Treasure Jesus
 - b. Meditate on the Power of His Resurrection
 - c. Die to Sin Daily
 - d. Take HOPE!!

"Go to the end, and you shall rest and rise up for your inheritance at the end of the days."

Daniel 12:13