

Knowing Christ - The Value of Suffering Philippians 3:10-14

Introduction:

1. **Illustration:** How many people in this building have you met? Is it over ten people? But how many people in this building do you really **know**? Beyond the basic facts of who they're married to, where they live, where they work, etc?
 - There is a vast difference between **meeting** somebody and really **knowing** somebody.
2. The man who wrote this book (the apostle Paul) had met Jesus Christ as His Savior on the road to Damascus, but in verse 10 we see the cry of his heart. It was to know Christ.
3. He wasn't satisfied to have simply met Christ as His Savior, he longed to know Christ in a more intimate and personal way.
4. I'm fearful that many of us have a surface relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - **Illustration:** surface relationship - we talk about the weather, sports, etc. Is this how we are with Jesus?
5. Or, do you have an on-going, personal, close, one-on-one communion with Christ? This was Paul's desire and should be our all-consuming zeal and passion.
6. Without it, your life is lacking something, but when you **do** have it, your life takes on new meaning and there is such a joy and peace in your heart. Everything else in life seems to fall into its proper place when that intimate relationship with Christ is there.
7. But, what will it take to really know Christ? This text will teach us.

First, it will take an understanding of the value of suffering.

1. Notice again verse 10, "*...and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made...*"
2. Jesus Christ, with mighty power, rose from the dead. **Romans 1:4**
3. But remember, **before** He rose from the dead with mighty power, He suffered and died. So, **first** came the suffering and death, and **then** came the mighty power. If we are really going to know Christ, we must identify with Him in both.
4. We readily embrace the power of His resurrection, but many times we scorn the fellowship of His sufferings. We don't desire any part of that. But, mark it down - we will never fully realize the power of His resurrection until we have known Him in the fellowship of His sufferings.
5. Many believers have never learned the value of suffering, but the apostle Paul had not only learned to appreciate its value, he even rejoiced in it.
2 Corinthians 12:9-10
6. Suffering (if responded to correctly) has the potential to do some incredible things in our lives. Let's look in our text.

Suffering can deepen our fellowship with Christ.

- Notice the phrase, "*the fellowship of his sufferings.*"
- When this old world throws us flat on our backs, many times there is nowhere to look but up. Suffering can motivate us to look to Christ, reprioritize our

lives, and realize that our relationship with Christ is what matters most on this earth.

- Some of the sweetest fellowship you will ever experience with Christ is found in the fellowship of His sufferings. Why is this? Because we know He understands.
- He has walked the path of suffering before us. Have you ever noticed that there is nothing like the fellowship of someone who has been through what you have been through?

Suffering can teach us to die to selfish desires.

- Notice it says, "...*being made conformable unto his death.*" cf. 2:8
- Jesus totally resigned His desires and will to the Father's will and He learned this by the things which He suffered. **Hebrews 5:8**
- Just like Jesus, when we enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, we learn to die to our own selfish desires and simply surrender it all to God.
Galatians 2:20
- Suffering has a way of reminding us that it's not about us, but it's all about Him and His will for our lives.

Suffering can bring about fruitfulness. vs. 11

- Paul is speaking here of a spiritual resurrection whereby we walk in newness of life and have a spiritually fruitful life.
- If we were constantly on the mountaintop and everything we touched turned to gold, we wouldn't be worth a plug nickel. When everything is going our way and we never encounter any problems, we tend to forget our source.
- Suffering reminds us of our need of Christ, which causes us to rest in Him, which in turn brings a spiritual fruitfulness. **Example:** the Thessalonians were experiencing great trials, yet they were abounding and fruitful.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

Suffering can enable us to realize His resurrection power.

- Notice how the phrases "...*power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings*" go together. Does that seem strange? When we think of suffering, we think of weakness, not power.
- But God's ways are not like our ways. Paul learned this spiritual truth of power in the midst of weakness and suffering. **Illustration:** the story of thorn in the flesh - **2 Corinthians 12**
- When we are at our weakest physically, God's resurrection power can flow through us unhindered and God can use us in mighty ways.

In Conclusion:

1. So what has been your attitude towards suffering? Do you despise the fellowship of His sufferings? Do you rail on God and accuse Him when suffering pervades your life?
 - "I don't deserve this. Why is God doing this to me? This isn't fair."
 - Do we really think that we are better than Christ and can experience the power of His resurrection without any suffering at all?
2. God wants you to allow suffering to draw you into a closer, deeper relationship with Christ so that you can cry out like Paul, "*That I may know him...*"

- Notice that each point begins with "can." Suffering **can** be of great value, but that depends on your personal response to it.