
Do You Know The Resurrected Christ?

...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...(Philippians 3:10a)

It seems that we live in the day of conferences. Just about everywhere you look; you can find some kind of conference to suit your fancy. Within the Christian world, we certainly do not lack variety in such conferences. There are Bible Conferences, Pastoral Conferences, conferences for congregations, conferences for church treasurers; there are marriage encounters, home school conventions, mission's summits and the list goes on and on. And just what is the point of such meetings? There may be a number of answers here, but one of them would simply be the question for knowledge. We want to learn something from someone who supposedly knows what he or she is talking about; someone who has experienced and is therefore experienced in some field of topic or discussion.

Charles Spurgeon once commented on how marvelous it would, if it were possible, to have a conference of those who have been raised from the dead. What kind of fellowship, or as Spurgeon put it, "strange communings" would be encountered if we brought together the daughter of the Shunammite, the daughter of Jarius, the son of the widow of Nain, Lazarus and even Euthychus? That would be quite the conference, would it not? It is too bad that such a conference is not possible.

And yet, this morning, as we gather to celebrate the single most important truth of Christianity, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, let us be reminded that in this place, right here as we gather, are many who *were* dead in trespasses and sins but yet hope that by the power of God, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we have been raised from spiritual death to spiritual life, living in this very moment to the praise and glory of God.

Beloved, our very spiritual and eternal well-being hangs on one central and most confirming of truths – the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Just last month, the Discovery Channel ran a special called, "The Lost Tomb of Jesus" wherein they tried to *prove* that they *may have* discovered the bones of Jesus, along with His family, including His wife and child. It is not my purpose or need to explain this morning the shortcomings of that documentary, but I was deeply saddened by those "so-called" Christians who suggested that if the bones of Jesus were found, it would not impact the Christian faith. In a word – "hogwash"! Consider the absolute statement of Paul to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:17; 19 –

17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins... 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

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And let me clarify that when the Bible speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is clear that it does not refer to simply some kind of spiritual, non-physical resurrection. The Gospel accounts emphasize the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And again, while I could spend our time together taking you to such accounts and seeking to prove to you the reality of this bodily resurrection, my intention is directed more toward asking that proverbial, “So what?” question. What is so important about the resurrection of Jesus Christ to each and every one of us this morning? I believe we get closer to answering that question by turning and looking at Philippians 3:10-11. As you turn there, let me summarize what Paul had been saying just prior to this statement:

I have followed the Law far above anyone and therefore better than any of these false teachers. There is not a person who could look at my life and accuse me of violating the Law. In this sense, I was perfect. But as I now look back upon such things, all that I sought to do to prove to God I was good, I such see such things as nothing more than garbage, or manure, particularly as I compare my efforts to the greatest thing of all – that of “knowing Jesus Christ” – of knowing Him and His efforts. Indeed, I have given up everything else so that I might simply know Him. For I know that if I truly know Him, I will be found in Him, that is made a part of Him, placed in His body, that is the Church and will be seen in Him as perfectly good before God, not because of what I have done, but because of what Christ has done.

It is in this context that Paul goes on to write these familiar, and I pray, life changing words:

Philippians 3:10-11

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

There is more in these verses than we can get into this morning and so I wish to focus upon what Paul expressed first and primary. He wanted to “know Christ” He wanted to “***know the power of His resurrection.***” At issue is this, if Christ has not risen from the dead; if His bones are indeed buried somewhere in Israel, then, listen carefully, we cannot know Him. Why? Because that man is dead. We can read about Him, we can study His life, we can even choose to

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hold Him in highest regard, but we cannot “know” Him in the sense intended by the Scriptures.

In addition to this, if Jesus has not been raised from the dead, then He has no transforming power for anyone today. If, as He Himself claimed, were raised from the dead, then all that He said would be proven to be true. But if He was not raised, there is no power in His Words and we are left powerless. This is why the resurrection is so important to the faith. Christianity is not a religion based simply upon some moral principles and high ideals. Rather, our faith is to be a personal and living relationship with a living Savior, a Savior we can come to know and grow in with intimacy.

So then, in the time we have together this morning, I would like to address these first two aspects of faith as expressed in Philippians 3:10; first of knowing Christ and second of knowing the power of His resurrection. For it is my prayer that all who have come to this place this morning would be among the company of those who intimately know the living, resurrected Christ and have experienced the power of the resurrection in their life, knowing that they have been raised from the death of sin to life in the Lord.

I. Knowing the Resurrected Christ

I begin then with this question, a simple question really and yet one that is not often rightly or fully considered. The question is this, “what does it mean to “know Christ”? To approach our text fairly, we must really begin by answer the question, “Was Paul’s desire to know Christ to be exclusive to him alone or was he expressing what is to be the universal desire of all Christians?” If we look just a few verses down we find the answer to this question. Philippians 3:15 states:

“Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude...”

Here we see that all believers, all who are pursuing the proper course of maturity in Christ, are to also pursue Christlikeness and Christlikeness is found by knowing Christ in a personal and intimate way. This is the testimony of Scripture, God wants to be known to His people personally. When God wanted to impress this upon Isaac, He called Himself the God of his father Abraham, that is the God who personally knew and made Himself known to Abraham. Of course, this precept expanded so that when God wanted Israel to know His intention to be known personally, He would refer to Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, so as to say, just as I was their God and we walked

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together, so I intend that you [Israel] would have such a personal relationship with Me.

We see another example of this personal relationship between God and His people in Jeremiah 9:23-24 where we read:

23 Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.

In other words, knowing God is more important than wisdom, might or riches. Such things stand in stark contrast to what the world most often admires and wants to know. The world wants to know about seemingly smart, beautiful, strong and rich. But the Lord says that what matters more than any of these things is coming to know the LORD, Yahweh, the living God who delights in those who know and walk in His love, justice and righteousness. Do you know what the LORD delights in? Do you spend enough time with Him to love to please Him in these ways?

If we take ourselves to the New Testament, we find that an intimate knowledge of God and His Christ is thoroughly emphasized. In John 17:3 we read –

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and [they may know] Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

What is eternal life, but being in the presence, in right relationship with God. Eternal life is knowing God and knowing Jesus. Additionally, in 2 Peter 1:3 we read –

...seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

And one final reference to demonstrate this common call upon Christians to intimately know God is found in 1 John 5:20 –

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And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

According to this verse, why is it that Jesus Christ came to this earth, lived among the people, died for sins and rose again? He did it so that we might know Him. So then, both the OT and NT; the very testimonies of men like Moses, Peter, John and Paul in our Philippians 3:10 passage agree that what is of first importance to every believer is knowing God and specifically knowing Him by knowing Christ. But all this begs another question? What do I mean when I speak of “knowing” Jesus? When Paul says, **“I want to know [Christ]...”** does he mean simply that he wants to know about Him, some facts, or is there something deeper in mind? The word for “know” here in Philippians 3:10 really carries the idea of intimacy, of close personal relationship. We can rightly say that “to know” means to have personal acquaintance or experience with. Is this be true, how do we come to know Jesus so personally and by experience?

To answer this question, we must first make a distinction between truly knowing someone and simply knowing about someone. Some of you know that I have greatly appreciated the ministry and life of James Montgomery Boice. I can tell you a lot of things I know about him, things like the fact that he was born July 7, 1938 and died June 15, 2000, just six weeks after being diagnosed with liver cancer. He was the pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia for 32 years and wrote a number of significant books for the Evangelical community. I can even tell you that his wife’s name is Linda Ann McNamara Boice and that he had three daughters, Elizabeth Anne, Heather Louise and Jennifer Sue. Are you impressed with my knowledge of Dr. Boice? To be sure, I might know a few more facts than some of you, but did I really know him? No. Why not? Because I never met the man. I never spent any time with Him. To truly know someone you must be in a relationship with that person.

The closest picture of what is meant by such a knowledge of someone is seen in familial relationships, particularly between husband and wife. Concerning my wife Laura, I know more about her than any of you. I know a number more facts than the rest of you. I could tell you stories about her that would reveal her character, her love and her devotion. But even with all this information, you would still not know her. And even I do not know her simple because of some facts. For nearly 19 years I have been in an intimate and personal relationship with her. We have shared triumphs and trials, we have shared joys and pains, sometimes even being the cause of such. Through these

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times shared together I have come not only to know about her, but also to know her. And this, my friends, is what it means to know the LORD, to be spending time in personal relationship with Him not only to know about Him, but also to know Him.

Is it your heart to say, "I want to know Christ?" I pray so, but how then do we come to so know Christ in such a personal and intimate way? Let me suggest two ways:

First, to know Christ intimately we must first know about Him. This is not a contradiction to what we have been saying, but is rather a simple statement of logical progression. Before we can know anyone intimately, we must know something about that person. So, we do need to know the facts about Jesus, that He was born of a virgin, that lived a perfect life on earth to offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice for sin and that He did indeed die for the sins of His people on the cross, was buried in a tomb and after three days, He rose from the dead in power over death, over sin and in power to be granted to all those who believe not only about Him, but also in Him. We can learn of such things through submitting ourselves to the faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word; through the regular reading and studying of God's Word and even through witnessing the power of God evident in the lives of other believers.

The problem is, too many are content with such a knowledge about Christ and so I suggest another avenue to pursue in coming to know Christ intimately – we must cultivate, we must strive, we must be determined to own a personal relationship with Him. We must learn to truly walk with Him daily, hourly, moment by moment. And just how do we cultivate such a relationship. Let me offer you three steps:

1. Put your faith in Christ.

This means we must believe in the facts about Christ, that He is the Son of God who has risen from dead just as He said; risen to offer life and hope to all who would follow Him.

Spend time in prayer with Him. It is in and through prayer, both personal and private, that we avail ourselves the greatest opportunity to be in a relationship with God. I know we can and often pray without an open Bible, but may I suggest to you that you pray with the Word of God open and spend less time talking and more time listening to God in His Word.

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2. Follow Christ daily.

As you read your Bible, pray and listen to God through His Word, be determined to do, or to follow what you read and hear. When what is commanded seems beyond your ability, beseech God to enable, to step out in faith believing that as He has commanded, He has also given the grace to obey. The more we would practice such things, the living and vital our relationship to Christ becomes and the more we truly know Him.

II. Knowing the Power of the Resurrection

The second thing Paul desired in Philippians 3:10 was **“to know...the power of His resurrection...”** There is an older little chorus that goes like this:

More love, more power, more of You in my life...

I have always loved the tune, but often struggled with the sentiment. I can justify it to a degree, but ultimately such a statement suggests that God has not already given us everything. Notice that Paul here in the text does not ask for *more* power, but rather that he might simply know the resurrection power that is already his own in Christ. In other words, we do not need more power, but simply to know the deep of the power of the resurrection of Christ in our lives. In Ephesians 1:18-20 we see mention of this power available to believers –

18 *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places...*

In other words, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, an awesome power to say the least, is the same “surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.” Again, we need not seek “more power” but simply seek to live in light of the power already supplied to us. But now I hope you have a question, that question being, what does this resurrection power accomplish in the life of the believer? Or to say it another way, because Jesus has risen from the dead, how does that power affect the believer? Let me offer you four such

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affects or accomplishments of the resurrection in the life of the believer? To know the power of His resurrection is...

1. To know power that cancels sin (Romans 4:23-25)

23 Now not for his sake only [Abraham] was it written that it was credited to him, 24 but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of [or for] our justification.

Abraham believed in the promises of God and this belief resulted in his being in right relationship with God. But this promise of having belief considered as righteousness before God was not only for Abraham, but for all “those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” And why was Jesus “delivered over” for our transgressions or sins, that as He was raised from the dead, we would be justified, made right with God; the sum of our sins having been buried with Christ, Christ resurrection cancels the effects of sin for all who believe that Christ did indeed raise Him from the dead.

In other words, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, is the power that cancels the hell-damning effects of sin in the life of the believer. The same power that accepted the perfection, completeness and sufficiency of Jesus sacrifice, physically raising Him from the dead, is the resurrection power that cancels the effects of sin our lives. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then in the words of 1 Corinthians 15:17, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins. But in the words of Charles Wesley –

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.

2. To know power that conquers sin.

Praise be to the Lord that the power that raised Jesus from the dead and the power that cancels the effects of sin in our lives has yet another effect in enabling us to conquer sin. We are familiar with the phrase, “Just say no to drugs” which while helping many stay away from drugs does not help many who are under its influence. The unbeliever cannot say, “I just say no to sin.” He

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might be able to just say no to some types or numbers of sins, but he is still under sins influence. The power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power that actually enables a believer to say no to sin. Turn with me to Romans 6:4-11:

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. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

In Christ we are a new creation, the old self, with its subjection to sin, has been done away with and replaced with a new self, created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Ephesians 4:24). No longer does the believer have to live in subjection to sin. Sin has been conquered in Christ and if we are in Christ, sin has been conquered in us. Since sin has been so conquered by the power of God in the resurrection of Christ, why would do we even entertain remaining in it? Do we need more resurrection power? No, we need to fully appropriate, that is strive to live entirely in the reality that in Christ, we need not submit to sin any longer. Will we fully comply with this truth this side of glory? Not until our flesh has been renewed to match the spirit God has placed within us, but until then, we fight the good fight and crucify the flesh along with its passions in the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

3. To know power that confesses the work of Christ.

The power of the resurrection cancels the effects of sin – meaning we are made right with God by the death of Christ, allows us to conquer sin – meaning we can choose not to sin against God, and now, thirdly it confesses the work of Christ. In Luke 24 there is the account of Jesus with the two on the road to

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Emmaus. And one of the striking elements of this account is that the resurrected Lord confessed or testified to them of the work of Christ according to the Word of God. In Luke 24:25-27 we read -

25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Beloved, this confession of the resurrected Christ by the resurrected Christ is to be our confession as well. We are to confess of the work, merits and person of Jesus Christ to others, calling them to repentance and reconciliation with God. We can only do this effectively because Jesus rose from the dead. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 5:14-20 where we read of this God-given power and duty –

14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. 16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. 17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; **C the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the **C** ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

In resurrection power we confess the work of Christ which reconciles the repentant to God. Do you want to know the power of the resurrection in this way?

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4. To know power that conforms us to Christ's likeness

We are to know the power of the resurrection that cancels sin making us righteous before God, the power that conquers sin allowing us to live for God; the power the confess the work of Christ, testifying of the reconciliation that is available between God and man in the work and person of Christ; and now, finally we see that to know resurrection power is to know the power that conforms us to Christ's likeness.

We need not move too far from Philippians 3:10 to see this, reading in verses 20-21 these words –

20 *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

Beloved, the greatest of the accomplishments of resurrection power, from the human perspective, is its ability and goal to conform all who live in it to be like Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection perfects us in love. God's purpose for believers, according to Romans 8:28, is to be conformed to the very likeness of Christ.

What a statement? Can we even fathom for a moment the depth of meaning that we "become conformed to the image of His Son"? Consider all the things about yourself that you don't like; those pesky habits and personality traits that you could do without. You know, those things that you have been spending many years seeking to change, wanting to bring into conformity with the will of God. Beloved, the power that raised Jesus from the dead and clothed Him with glorified, immortal, heaven-fit body, is the same power that is and will ultimately clothe you in such perfection. The power of the resurrection is transforming us more and more into the image of Jesus, that is, of course, if you are in Jesus, if you are living according to His power.

III. To Know Such Things (Conclusion)

Let me close with a reminder and a few applications. Remember that I said the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very core issue of all of Christianity. Without the bodily resurrection of Jesus, there is no Jesus to know; no relationship with Jesus to be had; no power by which to follow after Him and live for God; no power for the cancellation of sin; no power for us to conquer sin; no

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power to aptly confess the work of Jesus and no power to become like Jesus Christ.

Do you want to know these things? Are these the focus of your heart and your greatest longing? Let me ask you this morning, what do you want more than anything else? This is just between you and God, so be honest with yourself, God already know your heart. Do you long for money, for popularity, for influence or power; or even just for excitement and entertainment? This is what most people want to know, but according to Scripture, all such things are worthless.

Maybe some might answer the question a bit more positively by saying they want a meaningful life, a good marriage or even a satisfying job. Beloved, these still won't bring the soul ultimate satisfaction. So then, there is the more noble quest to simply do great things for the Lord. Even that is not God's ultimate goal for a believer. How did Paul say it? What did he want, *"I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection..."* I submit to you this morning, that without engaging in a real, daily and living relationship with Jesus whereby you come to truly know Him, you will never be satisfied with anything, but will either jump from pursuit to pursuit looking for something to know, or you will invest all your effort into one thing, good or bad, that, as you come to the end of your life, you will realize has not satisfied your soul.

Do you want to know Jesus? Do you truly believe, in your heart of hearts, that God raised Him from the dead? Do you know that He has been at work in your life? I can think of no better day that Resurrection Sunday to call upon the Lord, thanking Him for His work of salvation upon the cross, pleading with Him to deliver you from your own sinful and selfish pursuits, and asking Him to empower you with the resurrection power of Christ, enabling you to follow Him daily.

For those of us who have already trusted in this resurrection power; let me ask you some questions as we close:

- Have you been trying to impress God with your own level of religious activities?
- Have you placed the needs and cares of family, job or even finances before your need of a more intimate relationship with Jesus?
- Can you say with Paul, that in comparison with the knowledge of Christ, all other things in your life are counted as rubbish and dung?
- Are you experiencing the power of His resurrection in your life? If not, why not?

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- Are you allowing the influences of sin, Satan or self control you when you should be controlled by the Spirit of God?

If you are uncertain about your relationship with Christ, you need to repent, that is turn from your sinful, selfish self and turn to God. Get regularly involved in Church, a good Bible teaching, God's glory first Church – and, stop going at this Christian life on your own, depend first on God and then get involved with God's people. It is the only way you will fully experience the resurrection power of God.

If you are certain about your relationship with Christ, but some of these questions revealed areas of sin, then make a commitment to depend all the more on the power of God, plead with God that He will allow you to know Him better and conform you more and more to the image of Christ. Then we can have a continual conference of the redeemed and speak of how the resurrection power of Christ has transferred us from death to life to the glory of God. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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Philippians 3:10 and Selected Texts
April 8, 2007**