

Adult Sunday School Lesson

Nassau Bay Baptist Church

April 4, 2021

Read Philippians 3:7-11

Easter is the cosmic dividing line. All else led to Easter. All else leads from Easter. The resurrection is the removal of all doubt about God's plan, of all hope for Satan, of all excuses for me.

Past—Future

Easter forces me to think of the past and to look to the future. Without my sin, there would have been no Easter, no need for the redemption of the cross, no death, so no resurrection. Easter requires that I ponder my sin, the cause of Christ's death, the cause of the unimaginable grief.

'Oh, no,' you might protest. 'Not your sin. Do not be so hard on yourself. It was the sins of the whole world.' But that only reveals that every single, individual one of us caused Christ's death with every single, individual one of our sins. It began with a piece of fruit in the Garden, but I stand no less responsible. If I am not responsible, then Christ did not come to die for me. But He did. He did come to die for me. I must be responsible lest I have no hope in His resurrection.

That points my eyes to the future, to the resurrections that will come because of His First Resurrection. I see hope. Not some sort of wishy-washy, sentimental maybe sort of hope. I see knowing hope. A certain hope. I see it clearly. It consumes me, and I long for it, my resurrection, to see Jesus. To know Him. To leave my sin and desires behind, and to enter life with Him in fullness.

Our Treasure—His Person vv. 7-9a, 11b

Paul put it this way. *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, . . . I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

Think of all that you treasure. Think of all you have gained in life. Think of the stories you have to tell, the awards, the compliments, the achievements. Paul had all those things at the youngest of ages. Yet he considered it all *skubalon* (*skoo'-ba-lon*), rubbish, refuse, garbage, dung, dregs. All that he had accomplished was not just worthless, it stunk. It was something he wanted out of his life, never to come back. That was how the things Paul did in life compared simply with knowing Jesus. Do we know the same Jesus Paul knew? Do we really believe we have something to offer Jesus? Is this what Paul meant when he wrote in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." I am nothing. I have nothing to offer. Jesus is everything. What He does not do through me stinks of death. Only what He does through me has value, produces value, and lasts.

Easter reveals this one truth: Knowing Jesus, gaining Christ, and being found in Him. That is everything.

Our Unrighteousness—Christ's Righteousness v. 9b

As we saw above, Paul wrote, *not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*

In the resurrection, all that I have done will be burned away, and only what Jesus has done through me will last. Heaven is all about Jesus, all about what He has done, not only on the cross but through you and through me. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.* (1 Corinthians 3:11-13)

Paul did not say something like, "My own righteousness is not enough." He said, "not having my own righteousness." Like Paul, you and I have no righteousness. We bring no righteousness to the table. We only bring the righteousness of Christ, and we only bring His righteousness through faith.

Thus, we faith in our resurrected Lord, we assume His righteousness, "the righteousness which is from God by faith," and we receive His life in us. We do not believe our Lord was raised from the dead. We know it happened. Christ is alive in me.

Knowledge, Power, Fellowship, Conformity v. 10-11

The world gets it. Knowledge is power. But the world seeks knowledge that will give it power to control. This is no power at all.

After Paul described how he counted all of his achievements as rubbish, he told us why: *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

True power is in our Lord's resurrection. Yet, before we can know that power, we must know Jesus. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, set the sequence before us.

1. Know Him.
2. Know the power of His resurrection.
3. Know the fellowship of His sufferings.
4. Be conformed to His death.
5. Be resurrected from death or received by Christ in His return.

The *power of His resurrection* lies in the purpose of His death. Jesus died at the hands of the world in service to the world for the purpose of redeeming the world to eternal life with God. The greatest act of serving, of humility, of giving led to the resurrection, which gave hope to all people.

Paul is not simply seeking the power to be raised from the dead. He is seeking the power of the risen Lord! Of Jesus, who said upon His resurrection, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18) The power Paul wanted to know was the power of Jesus, who gave Himself in death for our holiness and righteousness. It is the power of pure and true love. But he could not know the power of the resurrection until he knew Jesus. The more Jesus, the more love, the more power.

In Colossians 3:1-4, Paul wrote, *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

How do we know Jesus? *We seek those things which are above. We set our mind on things above, not on things on the earth. We live as though we are dead, and thus we live in the reality of Christ, who is our life.*

I am good with that! But then Paul brings in the fellowship of His sufferings. That is not so exciting. But it is wonderful. How can I know someone whose sufferings I ignore and avoid? "Call me in the good times. Let me know when you are happy and healthy. Don't bother when you suffer." That is not a recipe even for basic friendship.

I have never sought suffering, and I believe we should not. But it is suffering that has allowed me to know Jesus. In my suffering, He walks with me. And when I suffer because of Him, I know His sufferings in part, and I know Him through them. As He and I suffer together, we fellowship in ways that are not possible without suffering.

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. (Colossians 3:1)

Through *the fellowship of His sufferings* we are conformed to his death. To be conformed here is, more literally, "to be changed to be the same," or to come to the point of "sharing the same form from embodying the same inner (essential) reality." This then is what Jesus meant in Matthew 16:24-26.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

We live by dying, but not just by dying. We live by putting ourselves to death as Romans 8:13 describes: *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* As John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." He must live, but I must die. As we take up our cross, as we die to ourselves, as we lose our life, we find our true life, our true purpose, our true selves in Christ.

The more we embody the same inner reality with Jesus, the more we are changed to be like Jesus who died. I become conformed to His death. That which I thought was important dies away, and that which is important to Jesus takes its place. This happens over and over until I am overwhelmed by Jesus, conformed to His death, dead to all but the Father whom I know in and through Jesus.

In Jesus' death, I join Him in His resurrection, and His resurrection becomes my resurrection.

So let's look again quickly.

1. Know Him.
2. Know the power of His resurrection.
3. Know the fellowship of His sufferings.
4. Be conformed to His death.
5. Be resurrected from death or received by Christ in His return.

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Do you see it? The very beginning. Know Him!

It all begins with knowing Jesus. And we cannot skip knowing him. It all begins and it all runs through knowing Jesus.

This is not the same as knowing about Him. This is not the same as having taken 500 Bible studies. This is not the same as growing up in the church. This is not the same as being a deacon or a pastor or a director or the Senior Adult of the Year! All fine things that can be signs of obedience, but knowing Jesus is more.

I must turn away from all I am and have in this world, so that I might
Know Jesus in the way that leads me to
Know the power of His resurrection in the way that leads me to
Know the fellowship of His sufferings in the way that leads me to
Be conformed to His death in the way that leads me to
Join Him in His resurrection.

Is this the Easter we want? That all else would be rubbish, refuse, dung in comparison to knowing Jesus?

May we ever, alone and together, seek such Easter! May we die, alone and together, that He might live in us and through us in sufferings and death and in such a glorious resurrection!