

Following the upward call through Philipians ...

What to Know

There is a lot of knowledge in the world, but most of it is irrelevant to eternity. Daniel, for example, had prophesied the coming of a time when "many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase" (Daniel 12:4). It is a good possibility that our own time is what was contemplated by the prophet, inasmuch as it is now possible to be almost anywhere in the world within a day or two, and as the digital revolution has caused a tremendous knowledge explosion. But most of that knowledge is as irrelevant as some starlet's hourly "tweets." The apostle Paul had counted everything that might have

been gain to him as loss for one purpose: knowing Christ. He suffered the loss of all things for one purpose: knowing Christ. He even sought and found the righteousness of God found through "the faith of Christ" for one purpose: knowing Christ.

- ◆ **Knowing Christ** — The apostle Paul really emphasizes the importance of knowing Christ. He calls it "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." He states that his desire is to "be found in Him" — not having his own righteousness, but that which comes through the faith of Christ — "that I may know Him," he again adverts (Philippians 3:10). It is worth re-emphasizing that the only way to know Christ is to be "immersed into Christ" (Romans 6:3). No one can know Christ on his own terms or by trying to negotiate a separate deal. The conditions of fellowship with the Lord are laid out by Him, and only those who submit willingly to His terms are admitted to His fellowship or can know Him. "This is eternal life," said the Lord Jesus Himself, "that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

- ◆ **The power of His resurrection** — Not only did the apostle desire to know Christ, he also wanted to know "the power of His resurrection." *Resurrection power* manifests itself in the saint in various ways. The followers of Christ know that God "raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6). Faith in that picture, revealed in the scriptures by God, lets the disciple of the Lord know that his prayers are heard instantly at the throne of grace, and that he by faith has already received a spiritual resurrection. The Christian knows that, since he has been raised up with Christ, he is exhorted to "keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." He is further encouraged to "set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:1,2). Those who belong to Christ also know that since Christ has been raised from the dead, they also will attain to the resurrection of the righteous. "But now Christ has been raised from the dead," was how he posited it for the Corinthians, "the first fruits of those who are asleep." "But each in his own order," the apostle added, "Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:20,23).

- ◆ **The fellowship of His sufferings** — Because of the hope that lay in front him, the apostle was willing to charge forward into the same types of suffering that the Lord endured during the years of His earthly sojourn. His desire was to know "the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Those who have gone through a Communist prison camp successfully together have deep fellowship; they experienced the same pain, won the same mental battles. Paul's intent was to suffer as Christ suffered, that he might identify with Him and have even more intense fellowship with Him than those survivors of a prison camp could have.

Paul's knowing Christ, knowing the power of His resurrection, and knowing the fellowship of His sufferings all pointed to one end, as he asseverates, "in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:11). May modern Christians be imitators of Paul, even as he was an imitator of Christ!

*Paul's goal was
to attain to the
proper resurrection
of the dead.*

JAY WILSON

*I press on
toward the goal to
win the prize for
which God has
called me
heavenward in Christ
Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14