

Philippians


Part 9

Knowing Christ
Through Triumphant Suffering

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Starter Question

- From Sunday's sermon, what did you **like best**, or what **caught your attention most**—and **why**?

Observation—*What does it say?*

- Paul "**longed** to know Christ" and "**pressed on**" to achieve ever deeper knowledge of him (v. 10-11). Pastor Doug posed questions such as "What is Christ like *personally*? What does he *most care about*?" From Philippians 2:5-11 and 3:18-21, generate some answers to those questions.
- Why** would Paul **want** to experience "partnership in Christ's sufferings" (v. 8-11)?
- Who** "laid hold of" the resurrection and of perfection for Paul and for us believers (v. 11-12)? **Who else** is to "press on" and "lay hold of them"?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- Dictionaries of New Testament Greek define "laid hold of" as "*acquiring through significant effort*." What significant effort did Christ expend in order to acquire resurrection life and perfection for us?
What "significant effort are **we** to expend" in order to lay hold of resurrection life and perfection (v. 12-17)?
- Our suffering is first mentioned in Philippians 1:29, where we learn that suffering was **granted** to us. Greek dictionaries define "granted" as "*graciously given*." **Why** does suffering need to be a gift?
What else does Philippians 1:29 say was "*graciously given*" to us? **Why** does faith need to be a gift?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- Paul suffered, "counting all things rubbish" **so that** he could gain Christ (v. 8), **in order that** he could attain to resurrection life (v. 11). What losses have you suffered in order to gain Christ and life?
- To what degree** are you "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (v. 12-17)? What are concrete examples of your "reaching forward"?



Sermon Summary Text: Philippians 3:10-14

The goal of the Christian life should be to know the Lord. We want to come to the point in our spiritual walks where we are constantly in tune with him and seeking to please him in all that we do. He is as real to us as any member of our family. How do we get to really know Christ? The apostle Paul answered this question in his letter to the Philippians in chapter 3:10-14.

In this portion of Paul's letter, he informs us that knowing Christ intimately involves suffering triumphantly until we die (v.10-11). If you're going to really know Christ, you must first draw upon "the power of his resurrection"—that is, the power that comes to you because of his resurrection. It is the power that frees us from our slavery to sin, and allows us to live triumphant, godly lives. As a consequence, we don't need to fear death. To the contrary, we anticipate our own resurrection from the dead! The resurrection means that Jesus is alive and that in the person of the Holy Spirit He lives inside you, prompting you and strengthening you to approach life the way He would approach it. As a result of this internal power, we are able to handle difficult situations without being devastated or defeated. We are able to live triumphantly through life's challenges.

To know Christ, we must identify with Him in the fellowship of His sufferings and draw upon His resurrection power as we do so. But why is it necessary to share His sufferings—to suffer as He suffered? Because your greatest moments of spiritual growth come when you handle a situation of suffering well—when you trust God and honor Him in your responses to human suffering—whatever the source. It is during those times—when by faith you draw upon God's resurrection power—that you grow spiritually.

But Paul adds one more thing. He talks about becoming like Jesus in his death. Some people start off well, but falter down the stretch. The only way to make sure that you don't falter is to have a long obedience to the very end, to the last moment of life. Paul realized that to experience this opportunity to know Christ intimately, he would have to participate in the resurrection, rather than in the rapture.

Lest we think of Paul as some kind of super-apostle who has a picture-perfect relationship with Christ, he shatters any such notions by declaring that he has not yet spiritually arrived (v.12-14). To experience the resurrection, we must have Christ's righteousness, and that comes to us by faith. Triumphant suffering does not make you righteous. It does not merit the resurrection from the dead. You attain to the resurrection because of the righteousness that is credited to you when you place your trust in Christ as your sin bearer.

To do that well, we first need to forget what lies behind us (v.13). Dwelling on the past can be a huge hindrance to making progress in your spiritual life. Satan loves to bring those things up. He is the "accuser of the brethren." But God can use you, despite your sin and failure (Proverbs 24:16). We are not defined by our failures, but by our response to our failures. We need to get up, ask God to forgive us, and keep moving forward in the power that He supplies. Don't allow past sins and mistakes to convince you that God can't use you again. The same holds true for our past successes. Thank God for your successes but then get over it!

Fear of failure, apathy, or even burnout can have a similar effect. We need to move forward in the power that Christ supplies. Daily, we need to draw upon His strength and His wisdom as we press forward. In verse 14, Paul states what he is reaching towards. Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness in this life. Too often our spiritual lives move up and down with our circumstances. It shouldn't be that way. As Christians we should expect suffering (Phil. 1:29). Suffering is part of the Christian life, but it also provides an opportunity to come to know Jesus intimately, as we draw upon His resurrection power. God wants you to forget what lies behind and press forward in faith.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Paul wanted to be "conformed to Christ's death" (Philippians 3:10).

Since "no man can live and not see death" (Psalm 89:48), Pastor Andrew Gray (1633-1656) gave the following five suggestions to his congregation regarding preparing for their deaths.

Find and study a biblical passage which relates to each of his five suggestions:

Monday— *"Every day, envision the certainty of your day of death, and of your grave."*

Tuesday— *"Engage in self-examination, repentance, faithful living, and in the mortification of sin."*

Wednesday— *"Think much about the excellent things of heaven."*

Thursday— *"Always labor to keep a good conscience before God and man."*

Friday— *"Never be indifferent to any known duty, crucify any conviction, or break any resolution."*

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]