

Knowing Christ's saving and separating power (Quality: Very good)

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- [0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's help, I direct your attention this evening to Paul's epistle to the Philippians, reading from the third chapter and verse ten. The third chapter of Paul's epistle to the Philippians and reading the tenth verse.
- That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death.
- That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death.
- Lying behind this verse is the ignorance of the apostle. He was ignorant of Christ.
- He didn't know him. Lying behind this verse is the work of God's Spirit, which gave him a desire to know him, which changed the whole course of his life, brought him aid of his ignorance, and aid of his darkness.
- [1 : 37] We're in one of those two places tonight, either ignorant, walking in darkness and have no life, or else we have been brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of the gospel.
- And you can't tell me that we don't know when that happens or what happens. We may not be able to tell the exact hour or the exact day, but the fact that it's happened, that mighty work of a new birth.
- This apostle had no desire to know him. He hated him. He believed he was but a man. He hated the glorious doctrine of incarnation.
- He stood by whilst even with stone. All the ignorant, the darkness, the death, the hatred, the malice, the war cry.
- But a change was wrought in him. And I say to you, didn't I? Can you honestly, before God, say, this is my prayer?
- [3 : 04] You say in your heart, oh, that I knew where I might find him. Say, it's Job. Oh, that I knew where I might find him. Do you long to know him?
- Has God touched your heart with a desire to find him? I tell you this, if God has done that for you, you'll never rest or be able to rest until you've found him.
- He is that pearl of great pride. Do you know, there is nothing in this world worth having. That's wisdom. Vanity of vanities, always vanity.
- You start out in your young life and you have ambition. One wouldn't speak against ambition.
- But if one ambition exceeds all others, that I might know him, that's it, ambition. I tell you this, if the Lord does that for you, everything else will fit into the pattern.
- [4 : 12] God has promised to give us all other things we need. blessed mercy, if our one desire is to be made conformal to his death, that we be submissive, obedient, as he was, humbled, and brought to follow him and to seek him and have one desire here below, that I might know him.

you see, so many, and I speak not, I trust, unkindly, but so many have religion which is excellent in its outward form, like the apostle.

I might say this, it conforms to goodness. That will not save a man.

The apostle conformed to goodness. He led a good life. He begged God's holy law. But could he keep it?

He didn't realize. He didn't realize until the Lord opened his eyes how filthy were the rags of his own righteousness, what poverty, what emptiness.

[5 : 40] I say to you tonight, has the Lord shown you? Has he come to you? Has he blessed you in your heart? And has he given you the cry of the apostle that I might know him?

I desire to look at this for a little while. When the apostle wrote this, he did know him. He did know him.

Do you know so well that he didn't know him until he came to him on the road to Damascus. And then he was aware. I'm Jesus.

The first time he knew the glorious truth of incarnation. That he was the eternal son of God who had spoken to him from heaven.

He was that same Jesus who died on Calvary's cross. He rose straightway from the street called Straight and preached Jesus.

[6 : 45] And what did he preach? That he's the Christ, the anointed one of God, the Messiah. But he had so much more to learn. Oh, he did.

There, does it strike you as strange, this word that I might know, when you consider the glory of the person of Christ, his holiness and his majesty, his sovereignty and his almighty power, his condescending grace and his mercy.

They all have to be learned in the pathway of experience. They do. Divine sovereignty we learn in the pathway of experience.

I know this to be true. I proved it. When the hand of God touches you as it did Job, he knew what sovereignty was. The hand of God has touched me. You are young, so many of you.

You are young. Life is before you. What it holds, no one knows. I well remember in my teens, as a boy of about 16 or 17, hearing a godly minister preach from a text.

[8 : 16] It was this. And it came to me with power, through much tribulation he said to enter the kingdom. And you know, the words I fastened on were this, enter the kingdom.

But, I have learned since the solemnity of this, through much tribulation. What lies before you we do not know.

But a blessed mercy be sorrow. I tell you this, if the Lord bring you into this way, and give you a desire to know him, there is going to be suffering sorrow. There is.

There is. Like dear Rutherford, who said, deep waters cross life's pathway. And they do. But oh, there is a blessed purpose in this.

And when the apostle prayed that he might know him, he was thinking of the three parts of this text which follow. And I would desire to look at them tonight.

[9 : 18] One is power, the other is fellowship, and the other is to be made conformable. Those three things are the way he had in mind to know him, and how solemn they all are.

but they are very blessed. They are an avenue into a knowledge of the sorrows and sufferings of Christ.

They are an avenue to conforming his dear people, the image of his dear son. They are a vital and necessary avenue.

Firstly, this, power. all power belongeth unto me, he said in heaven and inner. And true religion consists of power.

The power of God's word under the influence of the spirit. I say to you tonight, has that word ever been made powerful in your heart?

[10 : 29] Amen. Amen. There are some things we never forget. As I drove here today, I saw the sign to Leicester where I was for four years, fifty years ago.

It's made me think tonight of a room in the hall of residence university there. About to enter an exam on my knees one morning with this book open in front of me and my eyes resting on the seventieth chapter of Jeremiah.

And the power I felt that morning in this word blessed is the man that trusted in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is.

Oh, there is power in the word of God when applied and spoken in our heart. Blessed power. The Lord speaks in our hours of darkness and need and temptation.

We don't carry our feelings on our coat sleeves so others can see them. And I'm well aware that much is hidden even from one another of the deepest feelings of our hearts.

[12 : 04] Children don't tell their parents often can't speak to them. there is a power in the word of God in our hours of need.

When the Lord speaks, when he comes and applies his word, his exceeding great and precious promises with divine power in our hearts and gives them to us.

Realize this, that the whole power of the work of Christ centered in his death and resurrection and his intercession at the right hand of his father today.

Every grace and every favor comes to us through Jesus' plan. Here is the source of power. power. I am he that lives and was dead.

And behold, I am alive forevermore and have the keys of hell and of death. Oh, the power. power. You see, the power of his resurrection was this, that the sacrifice which he offered on Calvary's cross was acceptable to his father and it was at the source and seat of his prayer at the last supper.

[13 : 27] I will that those who know has given me be with me where I am. that was the power, the resurrection. Mystically, the entire election of grace rose with him when he rose from the grave.

The work that he finished on Calvary's cross was done forever. His blood was spilt for his dear church and they used to know the power of it in their hearts.

And when we talk of power, just come to this. And we look at this, you know. Why did the apostle say this?

That I might know him. He needed him. He was a finite man in the hands of an infinite God and he knew him.

He was a sinful man and he knew it. And he was brought to know that his only hope of heaven was to be united to this man.

[14 : 37] He says here in the chapter before us and in the verses here in Philippians that I might be found in him. That's his figure, you know, when Christ was here, he spoke of the vine and the branching.

The branches were a living part of the vine, or else there would be no fruit. Oh, I ask you to know there any hope the living branch of that heavenly vine, Christ Jesus.

Have you ever known one single word from his lips with power? Blessed power in the word of God. Mercy, mercy if you can pick this book up and in the secret of your heart, having never told a soul, be able to say, that verse is mine.

Jesus gave it to me. He spoke it in my heart. He applied it to me in my soul. It's mine. See, one of the greatest blessings in the church of God is when he, by his Holy Spirit, constrains poor sinners to acknowledge him in a public profession of his name.

And they come before the church. It is not a tribunal to judge them. Something vastly different.

[16 : 16] It is the affectionate brethren to listen to the blessed work of God in power in their soul. The ability to be able to speak of how they've known him, how he began with them, what he's done for them, what he's shown them.

It may be very little. I was present at a church meeting once when a dear old man of 18 came forward. He told me afterwards he never walked in a day's disobedience.

And the Lord called him at the age of 80. But at a church meeting you might think he could have spoken for an hour. He spoke for a few minutes. But the one thing he said and the way he said it and the power which rested in his heart was this, I believe Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Lord, you see, Philip when he went to New Luke in the desert heard that from his lips and knew the power of it in his heart.

He knew the Lord had put that into his soul, had revealed Christ to him in that moment. I say to you, blessed mercy to know him in his power, in your soul, that you might be strengthened.

[17 : 52] The Apostle Paul, it's been with me for several years now. The promise the Lord gave the Apostle Paul in his thorn in the flesh. My grace, is sufficient for thee.

My strength is made perfect in weakness. Now I say to you, that was power in the heart of that Apostle. And we know it was power because of the effect of it.

He turned to the most remarkable way and he said, most gladly therefore. You've been asking the Lord to take it away, time and again.

Now he said, most gladly therefore, will I glory in my infirmity. Why, the power of Christ may rest upon me. Has the power of Christ ever rested on you?

Have you known any sermon you've ever listened to that's touched your heart with sweetness and power and melted you down? Perhaps fetched a tear from your eyes, from your hard heart, made you weep?

[19 : 03] Under a sense, realize that perhaps there's been a hymn you've sung in the house of God that's come with power into your soul. The Lord has used it by his spirit. It's touched you in a way that the rest of your life you'll never forget the spot and the place and the circumstance in which that word came with power.

And who's to know how young? Who's to know how young? I took a church meeting some time ago and a young student came forward and the first thing he said when he gave his testimony was this, that the Lord had begun with him at the age of six.

It was under a sermon of old Mr. Philip Warren. When he spoke of the experiences he had in the war, in the great battles in the Royal Navy, and how the Lord spared him, that young child said this, he said, I knew that was true and there was something in it, that was it, see.

You see, the Lord touches. I say to some of you young men, has the Lord touched your heart? Your life may not dramatically outwardly be changed.

I say this to you now, and I know it to be true, there's a power in the still small voice of God. Elijah knew it in the cave.

[20 : 43] The Lord came to him with power, but he didn't raise his voice. I say that reverently. Not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but still, and I know that to be true.

In the silent washes of the night, the Lord draws near, but when he speaks, in the souls of his dear people, as he did in Elijah's case, what doest thou hear, Elijah?

Still, small voice of God had a gracious effect. The Lord doesn't need to have an earthquake to move a soul, Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened. But you see, do you not see this dear apostle was in the right place at the right time?

The Lord had directed him. A power had said, go not into Asia Minor, go into Bithynia, go into Macedonia, and he went. When we're walking in the Lord's footsteps, of his commandments, however strange they may seem to be, the Lord is there, and he was, the power that touched Lydia's heart.

And then what happened? He was beaten. And the very man that beat him was brought to his knee in an earthquake to cry out, what must I do to be saved?

[22 : 12] Oh, the power. I've often thought, you know, whoever taught him to pray that, who put that word into his dear heart? Whatever made him say that?

What must I do to be saved? Well, one thing is very clear, that as you might expect in an earthquake, there was death all around him. Then what was he on about?

Well, he was on about this, wasn't he? Eternity. And he was unready like Hezekiah was. And oh, how that mighty power of God had worked in those two, Lydia and the jailer.

Paul had to go to Philippi. And the power of God gave him sacred fruit. They both were baptized. They both walked in sweet powers of obedience.

The work of God had been begun. And I tell you, all of what I'm speaking about tonight centers on the power that has come from his resurrection.

[23 : 27] That he's conquered death, put away sin, fulfilled his father's holy law in sacred obedience, has risen and ascended to glory, and now he speaks with power in the courts of heaven above.

Father, I will for those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that I might know him.

He knew the power of God so well on the road to Damascus. And he knew the power of God all through his life.

which kept him and helped him and strengthened him and preserved him. You read in his second letter to the Corinthians, the chapter at the end of the letter, where he catalogues all his suffering sorrows.

God's and and they were and they were and they were given him grace to stand.

[24 : 35] True religion is power, you know, and never more will you need it than in the solemn and awful weakness of a dying hour. and none of us know in the determinate counsel and poor knowledge of God when that hour is.

The hymn writer says some lovely things about it. He that formed me in the womb, he shall guide me to the tomb. All my times shall ever be ordered by his wise decree.

but in that hour power. Had a good friend at Leicester when I was a student, John Rayner, you probably know him well.

He and I are very close together. We frequently came Sunday nights to Coventry to hear John Green preach. We loved him. His ministry was power in our soul.

Many a night we went back from Coventry, bitter cold frosty weather but our hearts were warm. Never forget those nights. John was suddenly struck down with cancer and died in 10 days.

[25 : 49] Never forget going to Himalestead Hospital to his dying bed. Oh, what a scene. Sacred scene. I'm going to heaven, John, and I know it, he said to me.

Utter peace. I drove back to Trowbridge, in a most sacred brain. Not mourning at all.

Power. Mighty power that takes away fear and unbelief and temptation and darkness and grants peace in the heart.

And it all centers on this resurrection. Glorious resurrection. resurrection. But I must move on to the next part of this text, which is this, the fellowship of his suffering.

Oh, dear friends, that's solemn. That's sacred. You may not feel that yet in your life you have known much of that fellowship.

[27 : 01] look at it like this. Suffering, pain, pain, physical pain.

Look at it like this. Temptation in the world. Look at it like this. Grease.

Sorrow. They all berserk him and fled. They hated him without a call. Oh, when we look at his sufferings, weakness.

Now, fellowship with him. Let me tell you this. We have to walk through the path of crucifixion ourselves. Crucifying sorrow.

Crucifying weakness. Crucifying temptation. Darkness. Desertion.

[28 : 08] My God, my God, why has they forsaken me? Not that his father deserted him, but as he bore that sin, his father could not look upon him. For his dear church, made sin for us who knew no sin.

When we come to see fellowship with him, we have to walk in those footsteps. We have to walk in the footsteps of weakness. We have to walk in the footsteps of grief and sorrow.

He was a man of sorrow. When we look at fellowship with him, in his suffering, all those suffering, as a lamb done before its shoe, so can he not his man.

silent. Oh, the sacred path of the eternal Son of God, we cannot enter into what he passed through, but as he passed through it for his dear people, it is his tender love and affection for them that has this sacred desire that they might appreciate what he suffered for them.

And the only way they can appreciate what he suffered for them is to be brought into those solemn paths that he walked. They cannot walk fully the path he walked, but to catch a glimpse of it, of his sorrows, his suffering, his weakness.

[29 : 40] We read in that second letter after the thorn in the flesh was given to the apostle in the letter to the church at Corinth, we read this, we're weak with him. Weak with him.

Only as we walk in the solemn paths of weakness can we enter into anything that he passed through. That's the only avenue of fellowship. It's a solemn path, a crucifying path, a path of fellowship.

And it's the path the Lord would have his dear church to walk in, because it is his longing desire that they might appreciate what he passed through for them.

The price he paid that they might enter glory. And the place they're going to fully appreciate is here for love, in their suffering sorrow, here in this world.

And what will it do for them, I believe there, break their hearts in love toward him, such that they will say, why made? Why was I made to hear his voice?

[31 : 07] When they realised what he did as he set his face as a clint to go to Jerusalem, true religion is fellowship with the eternal Son of God.

There's no more sacred vested ground in this world than that. To have a sweet union of heart with the Lord Jesus Christ in the pathway he walked.

I tell you this, we only catch a glimpse. we see you now through a glass darkly. Have you ever had a glimpse of the, had fellowship with the suffering Son of God?

Has he ever favoured you with such a power? He was hated of all men. Have you known anything of it?

Some of you younger ones have come across it in school already. I was a teacher for 27 years. I had to stand over many things and sometimes I can remember in the staff room on one or two occasions it caused an immense explosion of anger and hatred.

[32 : 21] I remember the senior biology master shouting at me on one occasion, you bigot, you bigot, you bigot. Because I would not go to the school play.

I would not be seen present that Shakespeare's blasphemy or the hatred. When I was in hospital in the Bristol Royal Infirmary having my heart operation in 2001, subconsciously I was praying in the night without realising it.

All I was saying was Lord. Beside me was an undertaker, dreadful, blasphemous, cynical man. I heard him say to another godless man, O reverend's praying.

And as he said it, the Lord spoke to me with such sweetness they hated him without a call. I laid there and wept. I had such a sight as I'd never had before that Christ was hated for my sake.

Sweetest fellowship, you know, it draws his dear people as it were to his heart. they know he loved them and he loved them so much that he died for them.

[33 : 50] And he now sees that the travel of his soul and he's satisfied. Sacred and glorious truths, you know.

Bless his favour if we are brought to entry into the truth in fellowship with Christ.

I tell you this, surely, says the prophet, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Now, how can we say that unless we've had some bitter griefs and sorrows in life's pathway and he has come with power down to us and we've had a sweet union of heart and fellowship with the eternal son of God incarnate, in his sorrows.

Here is fellowship. Oh, true religion centres in communion with the eternal son of God here below. And the world cannot possibly grasp that.

[35 : 05] Cannot grasp it. And finally, to the third point of our text tonight, and that is this, made conformable unto his death.

Apostle Paul, in speaking of that, he says, I am crucified with Christ. Christ. He says this in his letter to the church of Galatia, where he says this in the second chapter and the twentieth verse, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ, liveth in me. And the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Oh, dear friend, crucified with Christ. What's crucified? Well, he tells us in other places here.

He tells us the things that are crucified with Christ. In this epistle here, he speaks of what is crucified, but the things he speaks of are these.

[36 : 26] The flesh, and the love of the world, that is crucified. Oh, our old nature, we are brought down to a place where the affections of this world and the sinful darkness and lust of this world are crucified.

It doesn't mean they're exterminated, but the fact is that the Lord puts a mighty power in the heart, the work of grace, and there's a separation from it.

And when we sin, we sorrow, we grieve, the Lord deals with it. He convinced, look at Jacob, how the Lord crucified him, and his awful, evil, deceitful heart.

What did he do? He led all his sons to deceive him. He put Laban to deceive him. Oh, the sorrow. He sowed to the wind, he reaped to the whirlwind, but it was crucified.

It brought him to bitter grief and sorrow. And when the wagons came from Egypt, it's enough. Oh, he could see the work of God in his heart.

[37 : 47] He was made conformable to his death in the crucifying sorrows that he passed through, that were the avenue to conviction and godly sorrow and repentance and pardon and peace.

Because he came to the end of his days when he blessed his dear grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to say, the Lord that redeemed me from all evil.

all when the Lord crucifies the flesh. But the other part that he crucifies is this, the world.

Crucified to the world and the world unto me. There's death. If there's a work of grace, there will be death to the things of this world, the attraction of this world.

I do ask you to deny, has the Lord wrought that mighty work in you? Has he separated you as he did? The apostle wrote that word, come ye out from among them, be separate, touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord God.

[39 : 07] There was a crucifying of the world. Has it been crucified in your heart? I love that little word in scripture, they went to their own company, the world was crucified, the fellowship and friendship of the world was crucified, they left it, they left it, they found their company amongst the living family of God.

love. And I was a student at Leicester, often used to come to Coventry, always called in for tea at the home of a dear old saint, dear Mrs.

Wilson. Oh, the fellowship, the union, the love. And there often is a blessed love between young and old in God's kingdom.

young and old. There's a fellowship between young and old. Do you know anything of it? the young often can't speak to the old and they're drawn to them in love. I was to her, never forget her.

Three saints she worships around God's throne tonight. We're below, but the church of God is united in Christ.

[40 : 18] The church militant and the church triumphant are utterly undivided. They're one perfect whole in Christ. When he rose from the dead, he died for them all.

And he'll come one day to raise them and receive the body and soul to be with him in heaven. Now, look into your own heart tonight.

Can you say, oh that you might be able to, that this is your prayer, that I might know him. that Christ be not a name to you, but a living reality, a person whose voice you've heard, my sheep, hear my voice.

However young you may be, you might know the power of his word, the power of his love, the power of his mercy, the power of his teaching, the power of his precious promises in your heart.

love. And this is a solemn path, to have fellowship with his suffering.

[41 : 47] Oh, many a child of God has shied from it. But the Lord in rich mercy leads us into it as I've proved it to be so. and in it, that sacred fellowship in suffering here below, in bereavement and weakness and fear and trembling, that sacred fellowship, oh, how beneficial it is, how blessed it is, and to be made conformable to his death, crucified here below to the things of this world, brought into submission and obedience as clay in the hands of the heavenly potter.

Oh, these are blessed powers. I pray for you that God make them attractive to you and bring you to that place where this dear apostle came when he spoke of apprehending not as though I have apprehended but I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I follow after if I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ of Christ.
Ask yourself this question am I apprehended of Christ?

Has he taken me in hand? am I pressing toward that mark? That I may apprehend myself
in my heart and soul and be made ready to meet him face to face that I might know him
and the power of his resurrection having fellowship in his suffering being made
conformable unto his death.

Amen.