



How Does He Know?

Before we move on any further this week, I would like for us to review. I know you are reviewing your verses daily...you are reviewing your verses daily aren't you? Reviewing the words is so important to memorizing the whole passage. But... I want us to also review their substance. The powerful message of these God breathed Words is what will transform and speak to us as we hide them in our hearts. So...before we move on to verse 10, let's review what Paul is saying about faith living:

Verse 7-8

We have a new life within us and we consider this life more valuable than anything in this world

Verse 9

All because of His grace, we are blessed to be known by God, to be found by Him and loved by Him

In my classroom teaching years I often had to have "discussions" with a student. Some of these were enjoyable and some were not. One of the "not so enjoyable" ones was when I had to talk to a student about his lack of progress in my class. This could have been the student who was not taking the class seriously, was being undisciplined in his work or was just floating along, not living up to his full potential. As I had this conversation, inevitably I would ask the question, "Do you really want to do well in this class?" Of course the student always answered, "Yes". My next question was always, "How would I know?" Basically what I meant by that was, "What are you doing to communicate to me that you want to do well in my class?" In a sense I was asking the student, "Do you really mean that, or are you just saying it because you know that is what I want to hear?"

In the same way, as we are a part of this life of faith in Christ, we often make the same statement that Paul makes as he begins verse 1,

"I want to know Christ"

We may not say it exactly that way, but there are many similar "Christian" phrases:

"I want to get closer to Christ"

"I want to walk with Christ"

"I want to draw near to Christ"

As I have been working on memorizing verse 10,(and by the way, it really helps me to say my verses out loud when I memorize them ☺) the Holy Spirit has been asking me something every time I say this first phrase out loud,

"I want to know Christ"

He has been asking me, "How would I know?" In other words, He is asking me, what are you doing to communicate that? Are you just saying that at the appropriate times or do you really mean that? Just this simple statement has caused me to look at my life, to consider (there is that word again!) what am I purposefully doing in my life to communicate to God that I am serious about knowing Him!

If you think about it, when people are interested in something, it is usually obvious:

- When a man wants to get to know a woman, he gets serious; he calls, he asks for dates, he brings flowers etc. He shows her He is interested.

- When a young person wants to attend a college, she gets serious; she takes the SAT, she fills out an application, she writes an essay, she pays the registration fee etc. She makes it obvious that she wants to study at that college.
- When an athlete wants to know victory, he gets serious; he gets a coach, he works out, he practices, he buys the necessary equipment etc. He makes it obvious that he wants victory.

In the same way, as faith followers of Christ, if we are serious, it will be obvious that we are! From what Paul says next in verse 10, I think we can assume he was serious. I also believe what he says can be a great example for us to follow,

“I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death.”

These are statements that you don't throw around lightly. Paul wanted to experience the power of Christ's resurrection. What does that mean? To be honest, I could write a hundred pages and not be able to even describe the depth of that. Although I can't fully describe it however, I can make some statements about it.

Through the resurrection Christ overcame death. Death was the result of sin. Physical death is only one kind of death that resulted from sin. There is the death of emotions, the death of vision, the death of purity, the death of relationships, the death of potential. We could go on and on. As Christians we often focus on the power of the resurrection being the Truth that our physical bodies will be resurrected one day and we will live forever in heaven. That is Truth and certainly one to celebrate! I look forward to that day. However the power of the resurrection can have tremendous effects in our life right now too. Because Christ resurrected, when we receive Him in faith, He lives within us. That literally gives us the opportunity to experience resurrection power everyday. Before the Spirit indwelt us, our only choice was the death effects that sin brought. It was the law of sin alive in us that Romans talks about. But now that Christ has resurrected and lives within us, we have been set free with the opportunity to live in resurrection power everyday. Romans 8:2 says,

“because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death”

So when Paul says he wants to know Christ and the power of his resurrection he is saying, “I want to live with God overcoming any of the death like effects of sin in my life.” Don't we all want that? Yes! But the ones who really mean it are those who can also say the second part of verse 10,

“I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death.”

To understand this second part of Paul's statement we can't forget the steps that Jesus took before the resurrection. He took the steps of suffering, of disciplining his flesh to do it God's way. Before the Spirit lived within us, we didn't even have the privilege of knowing what God's way was. We were chained to the law of sin and death. But now that we do and as His Spirit within us reveals more and more of God's way, just like Jesus, we have the opportunity to be obvious to God that we want to know Him, that we want to be serious about our faith, that we are willing to go the hard route when God's plan calls for it so that we can enjoy the blessings of living a resurrected life.

Paul is willing to be obvious about his faith. He wants to make sure that God knows He really means it when he says, “I want to know Christ...” Don't forget he was writing this from a prison cell, no doubt suffering for his faith. And Paul is not the only one. The power of Christ's resurrection continues to be evident in the lives of people who are willing to “suffer” setting aside their own wills to do things God's way, even when it hurts, even when it takes discipline, even when it doesn't make sense.

If you read the account of the crucifixion and put yourself in the places of the people there, especially Jesus Himself, you will see that is the path of suffering that eventually led to the resurrection.

So... as we practice our verse this week (and I encourage you to say it out loud too) when we say those words,

"I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection..."

... do we really mean it? Consider these things. The benefits of a resurrected life await!

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