

'Love's Birth And Parentage'

"The Longings of a Christian Heart.—Philippians 3:10.

Most of the Christian world will agree that Paul was the best example of a Christian that the world has ever known. Ch. 3, in verse 10 of Philippians Paul is expressing the longings of all Christians (to know Christ better). Paul seems to want to know Christ in this life as he will know Him in heaven. We know there is to be a time when we shall know Christ better (1 Cor. 3:12). "For we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face, now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when we shall appear, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." In this 10th verse Paul mentions four things that his heart longs for: 1, To have an experimental, growing knowledge of Him; 2, To be all that His resurrection challenges us to be; 3, To crucify his inward sinfulness till it be utterly destroyed; 4, To patiently endure suffering for His sake.

I—To Have an Experimental Growing Knowledge of Him

If we are to know Christ as He is and have an experimental knowledge of Him, then we must study His Word. I sometimes wonder how those who saw Jesus as man felt in their hearts. As John was growing old, some who did not have the privileges of John began doubting if Jesus had lived. We read in I John 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes and have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life."

We cannot have that identical experience now, but we can have an experience with Christ. The Master said in John 20:23: "... Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." What does it mean to know Christ? Most people have an intellectual knowledge of Christ. They realize that He can save, that they need a Saviour, that they cannot save themselves; but that alone is not sufficient. To have an experience with Christ is to accept what He has done at Calvary, believing in Him and receiving what He has to offer. If any man is willing to have an experience with Christ, the natural result will be growth. Just as the seed is put into the ground and is drawn out by the magnetic power of God's sun and lifts its face to God; so man when exposed to God's only begotten Son will grow. An experimental growing knowledge of Christ will cause us to grow.

II—To Be All That His Resurrection Challenges Us to Be

What is the power of His resurrection? Other men have been raised out of death, but always God has a prophet on earth through which to work. Jesus said to His disciples before He died: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again." While Jesus lived His apostles believed He could do anything, but when He died, their hopes were crushed. How was He to raise His own life again? To them it was all over. The power of Jesus' resurrection lay not in man. There was not a man on earth who had the remotest part in His resurrection. The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out, but to let the disciples in. The power of His resurrection was so great that even death could not separate Him from His Father. Jesus died and I wonder if His Father did not send an angel to Him who said, "Master, it is time to arise." It is no wonder that Paul wanted to know more about Jesus and His resurrection, that which brings out the best part of the Christian experience. If one will give it due consideration, Paul says in Colossians 3:1: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Being raised with Christ means being dead to self. Jesus said, "Deny thyself." If we have been raised to a new life, then we must be dead to

the old one. No person can be a resurrection example unless he dies to the old life. Paul says, "Seek those things which are above." The word seek denotes effort on the part of him who would know that resurrection power. God's power is unlimited. We limit God by not allowing Him to cleanse our lives.

How will the resurrection experience change us? The power of His resurrection will challenge Christians to be at the Lord's house each Lord's day. It will challenge them to contribute a legitimate part of all they possess: time, talents, influence, and material substance. It will challenge them to keep his Holy day holy. We cannot keep God's day holy unless we hold it above other days. It challenges us to go no place where Christ is not leading. We cannot take him with us. Christians must follow Him. Do we comprehend the fullness of the meaning of the resurrection?

III—To Crucify My Inward Sinfulness, Until It be Utterly Destroyed

What does it mean to die? The word crucify denotes pain. Nature has well arranged the stages of growth to a better life. In the vegetable, a seed must first die in the ground before it can give enough of itself to feed mankind. In the marine family an oyster must be subject to the grain of sand which takes its very life before it can bring forth the precious pearl. In the mineral kingdom, gold will not be refined until the dross has been burned out. Paul says in Romans 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we might not serve sin." The longings of all Christians should be to destroy completely the inclinations of the old man. There are things in the lives of Christians that are as dear to them as their hands, which Paul

says must be cut off if they offend. These things in our life must cease—must be crucified with us—if we are to have a life which is dead to sin. Paul gives another demonstration about this in II Timothy 2:11, "It is a faithful saying, for if we be dead with Him we shall also live with Him." Genuine Christians realize how far short they come of being like Christ—they are conscious of the many shortcomings in their lives, and they pray daily for cleansing.

IV—To Patiently Endure Suffering for His Sake

What does it mean to suffer with Christ? Just as we cannot have the same experience the apostles had of knowing Christ, we may not have to suffer the same way. They were beaten, jailed, and even killed, but we as Christians can suffer with Christ because He is still being persecuted. One of the joys of a Christian is to be allowed to suffer for Christ. Acts 5:4: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." The Lord told Ananias Paul would suffer (Acts 9:16): "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My name sake." Stephen knew what it meant to suffer for Christ. Adoniram Judson knew the persecution of a heathen country. We may never be called upon to suffer as these men, but there are other ways to prove our love and loyalty. Jesus in Matt. 5:11 said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake." From the beginning of the Christian era, followers have been persecuted for their belief. If a Christian determines that he is going to live a separated life and be all that God's Word teaches him to be, he will be branded a fanatic. There are some standards in the Christian life which we must not lower even in the face of persecution. The longings of a Christian should be so satisfied in knowing Christ, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His suffering, the conformity to His death, that he can stand and withstand.

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