

Knowing Christ - His Resurrection 3

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If you would turn with me to Philippians 3:10:

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

And then Ephesians 1:15-23:

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.

Shall we have a further word of prayer:

Beloved Lord, how glad we are that we are found in Your presence, and Lord, we want to ask that You will meet us this evening. Lord, we pray that Your Holy Spirit be at work in the whole of this time. Many of us may know the truth, but Lord, we pray that it may come home to us with fresh clarity and power. Lord, let Your resurrection life and power swallow up everything this evening. Open the eyes of our hearts. Touch us at the very center of our being. It always pleases You, Lord, to make Your power known in weakness. We are all weak people. Lord, let Your power be manifested this night. We thank You Lord, You have said about the ministry of Your word, that it is death in those who minister and life in those to whom the word is ministered. So let it be, Lord. We thank You for the anointing grace and power which is ours in the Lord Jesus and which the Holy Spirit makes a glorious reality. Into that anointing grace and power, we stand by faith for both the speaking of Your word, the translating of Your word and the hearing of Your word. We ask all this in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus, Amen.

By the way, this evening is the first night I can see you all. They brought the lights up. Only the first two rows, I can't see them tonight. Now I can see everyone who falls asleep. That's why I wanted the lights to come up.

You must all know now that my responsibility during these times is knowing Christ in His resurrection. I am not going to go over what we have said the last two evenings or we will not have time to cover what I believe we need to this evening.

I want to talk about the church. The church is found only in the resurrection life and power of the Lord Jesus. In that glorious resurrection life of the Lord Jesus, a new man has been produced. A new man has been born. It is wholly within the life of the Lord Jesus and it is an amazing fact that everything about the church should be life and resurrection power. Supremely, the church is the witness in the world to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The church cannot be put together by man although men have always tried to put it together. The church cannot be set up by human beings although even saved human beings are all the time trying to set up churches. The church can only be born of God. It is planted by the Holy Spirit. It is something alive, something organic. It is something beyond the capability of man, even Biblically-knowledgeable man, even theologically-correct man. The church is something found within the resurrection life and power of the Lord Jesus.

Where is He tonight? Where is He at this very moment? He is at the right hand of God. It is the Holy Spirit that makes that resurrection life and power a reality in human beings. Then we discover one another in the Lord. Then we are committed to Christ crucified in one another. That is the way the church is born. I am very well aware that only the Holy Spirit can open up the eyes of our heart on this matter.

The great mistake of church history – we see on every page and we see it today all around us, in every country – is what I call “Old Testament Christianity.” Now don’t get me wrong. My Bible consists of an Old Testament and a New Testament. I do not have a Bible that consist of 27 books. My Bible consist of 66 books. Nor do I think the New Testament is superior to the Old Testament – this is humanistic nonsense. I cannot believe that something given to us by the Holy Spirit 2,000 years ago is more inspired than what was given 4,000 years ago. If God spoke 4,000 years ago, 5,000 years ago, 6,000 years ago, 2,000 years ago...if God spoke, it is God’s word and it must be authoritative, inspired, practical and relevant and that in all its parts from Genesis to Revelation. But nevertheless, there is a very real difference in the new covenant and the old covenant. In the old covenant, it was all special places, sacred places, special people, sacred people. Special buildings, sacred buildings - that is what I call “Old Testament Christianity.”

Of course, if we are born of God, we are going to have to meet somewhere. We are, of course, meeting in Christ, on the foundation in Christ, in the heavenly places. We believers are extraordinary people. We are on the earth and at the same time, in the heavenly places. The only people in the world who can be in two places at once! Isn’t that amazing! And the church is also on earth. I’m talking about the church on earth - on earth but in the heavenlies at the same time. Now is that too much for you to understand? Of course, we have to meet together so there must be a place we meet. It may be a hall, a school, maybe a home. It may be some other building. I mean, the point is this – there is a vast difference between something that is an organization attached to a particular place and building with particular people running it. May the good Lord help me. It is no easy matter to explain this. But really, so much of the church is in the same area as the synagogue and the temple in the old covenant.

Let me try to explain. Do you remember that before Pentecost, 120 born-again believers met in an upper room in Jerusalem? Do you remember that? They were all there. The apostles were there. Mary, the mother of our Lord was there, his brothers were there. It was amazing. There were 120. 120 born-again believers. They were absolutely sound in doctrine. They believed in the authority of the 39 books of the old covenant. There was no New Testament. It was in the making. They believed in the authority, relevance and inspiration of those 39 books. They had absolute faith in the Lord Jesus, in His virgin birth, in His sinlessness, in His Messiah-ship, in His atoning death, in His burial, in His resurrection on the third day. And of course, in His ascension. They had been witnesses. They actually were the eyes and had seen much of what happened. They were clear about the Lord Jesus. They had pure doctrine, absolute faith in the risen, glorified Messiah. Absolute trust in the word of God, its authority and inspiration and even more remarkable, they were absolutely one! That is always an amazing thing when believers are one, even for a few weeks. They were there with one accord. No dissenting voice. This is incredible for Jews. I don't know about Chinese but I do know about Jews, and it is very hard to ever get Jews to really be together. The first Prime Minister of Israel, when he was asked what it was like to be Prime Minister, he said it was like being prime minister to three million prime ministers. Here, we have 120 born again believers, pure doctrine, absolutely trust in Word of God – faith in the Lord Jesus, actually he Himself had been teaching them and opening their understanding to things concerning the kingdom of God.

Now here's my question - wouldn't you call that a perfect church? Isn't that the kind of church we all long for? Now just wait – there's something more. They met together with fasting and prayer. I wonder how many assemblies here ever fasted and prayed. I mean, this is an exceptional congregation. If the whole of San Francisco, everything called by the name "church" were such an assembly, we would be thrilled! But the Lord Jesus said you must wait till the Holy Spirit comes upon you. Let me put it another way. It was almost like the Lord Jesus was afraid they would get out and start these congregations everywhere. They are so full of zeal, so full of faith, they are so devoted, they'll get out and start congregations all over the place. There'll be born-again believers who trust in the word of God, faith in the Lord Jesus. But He said wait, wait until the Holy Spirit is come upon you. On that day of Pentecost when the Lord Jesus received the promised Holy Spirit and poured him out, 120 units, the 120 individuals who are the perfect congregation became 120 members, 120 limbs of a body. It is a dimensional difference.

Let me put it another way. A congregation however perfect and sound can be organized and it can be organized like any human or social club but the other is something that cannot be organized by man - the organization within the resurrection life of its risen head. It is the Holy Spirit that produces the ministries. It is the Holy Spirit who gifts the members. It is the Holy Spirit that enables the members to function and only in relation to a head that cannot be seen.

Dear brothers and sisters, do you follow me? A congregation can be put together. A congregation can be set up. To use a peculiar American term – a church like this can be "got off the ground." Actually, it never gets off the ground. It is something that belongs

to this earth. Now, I don't know how to use any other word that I mentioned. The body of Christ is in another dimension. Do you understand that? You have to break the spiritual sound barrier to be in that dimension. That's the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is the breaking of a spiritual sound barrier. There was nothing wrong with the temple or the tabernacle or even the synagogue: the old covenant. But in the new, it is something beyond a man's capabilities. Beyond his power. It is something that only the Holy Spirit can do. Now some may say to me, "Now this is ridiculous. We're human beings. You mean to tell me we have to sit around until somebody somehow mystically does something?" No, not at all. I'm saying this – that where there are two or three born-again believers and they come together on the foundation of the Lord Jesus and refuse to reject any other born-again believer who has been received by Christ, you have the beginning. But until there comes, by the spirit of God, a committal to Christ in one another, the church cannot be born by the Holy Spirit. You can only have an "Old Testament Christianity."

Has it confused you all? Let me look at this from another angle. Have you ever noticed a remarkable thing in John 15? I am going to read just a few verses. John 15:1-5:

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoke to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Now I am neither a scientist nor a mathematician. I hated mathematics. But I do know one thing. Nothing is nothing. It doesn't matter how many times you multiply naught, it equals naught. Jesus said apart from Me, ye can do nothing. It doesn't matter how much Biblical knowledge you have, it doesn't even matter how clear you are on church principles, if it is up here. Apart from the Lord Jesus, you can do nothing. The vine has always been a symbol of the chosen people of God. Always. Jehosephat tells us that one of the great wonders in the world in his day, it was to be seen in the temple, a great filigree, gold, pure gold vine. He said it went up in the porch before you went into the holy place. It's rolled work in pure gold. Branches, leaves, tendrils, fruit.

Jesus said I am the vine. Now how could He say I am the people of God? The Lord Jesus was always saying extraordinary things. I am the bread of life. I am the way, the truth and the life. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the door. I am the good shepherd. Some of these are difficult to understand. Some are very easy. I mean, how do you eat Him? I mean it was a puzzle to them. I am the bread of life. He that eateth Me shall live forever. No wonder some of them thought, "I never heard anything like this." There's something weird. When He said I am the good shepherd, that's understandable. When He said I am the door, that's a little puzzling but it's understandable. But when He said I am the true vine and then made it perfectly clear – abide in Me and I in you – I am the vine, you are the branches.

Now some of you may have seen Italian vines. They have quite a kind of trunk which out comes the branches. Then we understand – He is the trunk, we are the branches. But Jesus never said that. He could have said, “I am the trunk, you are the branches.” That’s absolutely explicable. But He said I am the vine – the root, the trunk, the branches, the leaves, the tendrils, the blossom and the fruit. I am the total vine. I am everything that the vine is and you are in Me. Not the total. You are branches. You’re in Me. Abide in Me, I in you for apart from Me, you can do nothing.

Now I don’t want to get into a controversy over this matter. There is one very good thing about the Old King James version. It uses very old language and when it says “thou” it refers to an individual. “Thou” or “thee” - that’s an individual. “You” is plural. We normally understand this declaration in completely personal terms. He is the vine. I am a branch. I am in Him and He is in me and in this way, we bear fruit. But the Lord was talking about the people of God. That’s why they put that golden vine on the entrance of the temple. It had something to do with the dwelling place of God, something to do with the habitation of God, something to do with the home of God. Let’s put it another way. The Lord Jesus is far too great to be contained in one born-again believer. He needs all of us. He is the vine. We are branches. He says abide in Me and I in you. Now the church is the vine and once again, we discover something tremendous. It is not something impersonal. It is not just a collection of individuals – born again and sound. It is in some amazing way, an incorporation of every born again believer into Christ. Oh dear, do you find it all too much this evening? I don’t see you asleep – I’m glad but I don’t know about the two rows in the front.

Let’s come back to this. Matthew 18:20. You’ve heard this even if you are the youngest person in this place, you’ve heard it:

For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst.

What does the Lord mean? First of all, there is one little tiny word in the beginning. For where two or three are gathered – the general idea is we’ve got a few believers and we’re gathering in the name of the Lord. We don’t understand what that phrase “in the name of the Lord” means but nevertheless, we’re gathering in the name of the Lord. And therefore the Lord is in the midst. But it means far more than that. What it means is this – those two or three believers are gathered into the name. That is, they are incorporated in such a way that they can speak to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Let me explain it another way. Look –you see me –here am I. This is my body. This is my head. You got it? Now is there another name for this part or this part? Of course not! There’s only one name – Lance Lambert. That’s the name of my head and my whole body shares that name. Now here’s Jonathan Pong. He has fingers just like mine but his fingers cannot speak in the name of Lance Lambert. Now he has very nice fingers but those fingers of his cannot meet in the name of Lance Lambert. They can only meet in the name of Jonathan Pong. He has feet – yes, two feet, two hands, a nose, ears, eyes. All the parts, limbs, members are part of the fellowship of Jonathan Pong. His fingers live in the name of Jonathan Pong. His hands work in the name of Jonathan Pong. His

feet walk in the name of Jonathan Pong. And when the members of his body call upon the head, they call upon the name of Jonathan Pong. Is it too much for you? Listen carefully, if two of you shall agree on earth that's touching anything that they shall ask of my Father who is in heaven, it shall be given them.

We don't agree to agree. That is a false understanding. It is rather that we are agreed by the Holy Spirit. The word in Greek is "symphonia" from which we get the English word "symphony." We are symphonized, we are harmonized. What the head wants is transmitted by the Holy Spirit to the members of the body and they act in the name of the Head. They fulfill the will of God in the name of the Head. They stand and withstand and having done all, stand in the name of the Head. Does it begin to dawn upon you something tonight? I hope so.

What a wonderful thing it is when a gathering of born-again believers is filled with resurrection life and power. Beloved brothers and sisters, our assemblies, I'm not talking about any particular ones, our assemblies are sometimes the most boring place on earth. They are like old steam engines trying to get up a mountain. There's no power, there's no life, sometimes people pray, they mumble and mumble. What's the point of a prayer time when we can't hear one another? Or you say – well, God hears them. Well, yes, so they may as well go home and pray by their bed. How can I say Amen to that I can't even hear? That is because we are so afraid. We feel somehow unworthy, insignificant, too weak to pray. Oh, how tremendous when the resurrection life and power of the Lord Jesus courses through the members of the body. And then we stand against the wiles of the devil. We withstand in the evil day. And having done all, we stand.

Now, let me come again at it from another angle. There is a term used for the church which is only used in the New Testament - head and body. Ephesians 1:22-23:
And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, and the fulness of Him who fills all in all.

You notice that? Head over all things to the church which is His body. Colossians 1:18:
He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

Now the problem is so many believers, Christians, look upon Jesus as the head as if He is the head of the university, the head of a hospital, the head of a school, head of the government. We are the staff, He is the principal. We are the student body, He is the director or whatever. We are here, He is there. That is not how the Holy Spirit has introduced this term in the New Testament. It is as head and body.

Let me say what I've said many times. You've never seen a living, headless body. You have never seen a living, body-less head. The whole meaning of this term is that head and body are together. Of course, it is true the Lord Jesus exists apart from us. Of course! We will never devalue His divinity. But this picture is to illustrate something. The church is an organic union. The church is a living organism. It can only function when the head and the body are together. The moment you alienate the head, the body is

paralyzed. The moment you divorce the head, the body begins to die. This is an amazing picture. This body was produced by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Now, again, there is something remarkable because the emphasis is always on the head. In other words, if you want an example. Colossians 2:19:

and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

In other words, the body can only really discover itself when it discovers its Lord. Now let me put it another way. The church only functions when she is in living union with the Head. Look at Ephesians 4:15:

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,

Dear brother, dear sister, it is only when you grow up into Christ as Head that you discover the body. What an interesting term – grow up into Him in all things. I'm growing up into Him as Head. You're growing up into Him as Head. He's growing up into Him who is Head. Then we discover one another.

You see, well, let me put it yet another way. The church is a living organism when it is in living union with its head. Nothing is impossible. It will turn the world upside down. It will have such an impact even upon fallen human society.

Nations can be changed. When the church is where it ought to be, when it becomes an organization, when it becomes a mere institution, when it becomes a mere tradition, when it becomes denominationalized, society is not touched. The world is not touched. When the Holy Spirit brought the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus unto that 120, 3,000 more were saved and then the whole of Jerusalem was turned upside down and then Judea and then Samaria and then at the end, the whole Roman world. No theological seminaries, no great Bible schools as such, no great organizations, I am not saying that such organizations are wrong, what I'm saying is that they have nothing of it. Was it the 120? No. It was the risen head in 120 members. It is as simple as that.

Now you can see the satanic strategy – always, divorce the body from the head and substitute the head by other things. Wherever you look in church history, in every great movement of the spirit of God, as it were realigning the people of God, bringing back the people of God to the original path. I call them “mini-pentecosts.” For it always began with the Holy Spirit. Who could produce the light that shone into the heart of Martin Luther when he suddenly understood that the just shall live by faith? Who took hold of that simple man George Fox? I could go on and on but time, we have to watch time. I can speak of Wesley or Whitfield, speak of Darby or of Newton or some of the others. I can speak of the early pentecostal and some of the charismatics. It has turned the world upside down. Every time it's been the Lord Jesus re-enthroned.

Let me put it this way, the fact that Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of God has been recognized. In every one of these movements, you have certain teachings - the Lordship of Jesus, the full salvation He's worked, the absolute authority of the word of God, the

person and work of the Holy Spirit, fellowship. In that sense, in everyone there has been some expression of the body of Christ until finally man has taken over again.

Well, I think we must begin to close but may I say something about the headship of Christ? Whenever this term is used, it has the body or the church in view. The Lordship of Jesus can be personal but the headship is always corporate. Now let me just say something. I believe that the most vital and strategic need is the matter of the headship of the Lord Jesus. Take the leadership – real leadership is a question of men who hear the Lord. This is on every level of church life. If we do not recognize Jesus as Head, we are in trouble. And let me say something else, it is not just a question of recognizing the Lord Jesus as head, we need to have an ear to hear what He is saying. Wherever the church is built and expressed in reality, the fullness of its life is dependent upon whether there are people who are able to get on their knees and seek the Lord. Oh, how many times I remember when I lived in Britain when we had some big problem. Of course, we brothers prayed about it but then we would take it to the home and sometimes we put aside the whole week's routine and simply get on our knees and seek the Lord. Every time that happens, a renewing went through the home as if the head was realigning us.

And here is a very funny thing and when I say funny, I don't mean to be a rebel. Only the Lord could do this. We brothers often don't have the answer and then at the end of the prayer time, some dear little old sister would come up and stand there almost trembling and would say, first she could hardly speak the Queen's English and had no great education, she would stand there almost trembling and she would say, "Brother, do forgive me, I don't think it's my place to say anything but as we were praying, I think the Lord gave me," and she would turn to Scripture and I would listen as she read that Scripture and I say, "She's got it." She hit the nail on the head. What about all the big brothers? Well, you could say – those big brothers, they are no good. How could they not hear?! But I tell you what the Lord said to me – don't get upset, this is the way I balance the body. That's exactly what it says in 1 Corinthians 12. There are parts of the body that are as important as other parts but they are not so seen. The biggest problem with those who represent the headship of the Lord Jesus is that we turn in on ourselves and we don't even realize it but we become proud.

It is a tremendous thing to have an ear for the Lord and sometimes the Lord will speak to the simplest, poorest, weakest member of the body. The power in the church, the livingness in the church, the renewing of the church is all dependent upon hearing the Head.

When I was first saved, I had never read the Bible and therefore everything about the Bible was new and to a certain extent, strange to me. And I used to be full of questions, questions that other people didn't seem to have but I had them in a great number and one of them had to do with Moses and Aaron. Everywhere I read, I found that they were always falling flat on their faces before the Lord. I thought these great men, leaders of God's people – why are they always falling on their faces before the Lord? Every time there's a problem, they fall on their faces before the Lord. But of all the people of the children of Israel, they are the ones that know what to do. Since the Lord has given them the law, why don't they do something? But they fell on their face before the Lord.

Now that's the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is knowing what the facts are and many go ahead and just apply the facts, sometimes with disastrous consequences. Wisdom is to know from the Lord how to apply the facts. That is why Moses was called the meekest man on the face of the earth. He was teachable. That is the key and that is why again and again and again, in this history of the church, the church has died. Because knowledge puffs up, wisdom comes through dependence on the Lord.

Just two other things and I'm through. This living organism, the church, is so designed by God that it can expand and contract. It can go forward as it were and then retreat. There is a fluidity. This church can go into caves, fields and forests and survive. The other kind of church – cut the head off, destroy the headquarters, take it over and the church is finished. It is amazing how the real church, when it is in living union with its head, can go through the most incredible trials and tribulations and come out the other end with more than it had in the beginning.

Well, dear folks, that's really all I wanted to say. This last thing is very simple. When Luke came to write the book of Acts, he dedicated it to a man called Theophilus. He spoke about the former things he wrote about in the gospel of Luke and then he said in Acts 1:1

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,

“Began” - what does he mean? From the beginning of Acts 1, Jesus has ascended. Why does he say “began both to do and to teach” unless he means that Acts is the continuation of the Lord Jesus doing and teaching through His body. The church is not an end in itself. It is to be a ministry to the Lord. It is to be a ministry to the world. It is to be the house of prayer for all nations. It is to be the place where God reveals Himself. The place where God expresses Himself. Oh, for such a church! Wherever there are believers, if we could only simply meet in the Lord Jesus and be the expression of our risen, glorified Lord and Head, what a tremendous thing it would be!

I don't have much doubt we are moving into one of the most troubling periods the world has ever seen and this trouble will affect also the United States and Canada. May the Lord, in some very real way, touch the eyes of our hearts. That we may know Him in His resurrection both personally and corporately. May the Lord do it.

Shall we pray:

Dear Lord, we do pray that You would preserve anything said this evening from misinterpretation or misunderstanding. We need You, Lord. We pray that in every single assembly that is represented here this evening, You will cause that resurrection life and power of Yours to be manifest. Help us, Lord. Help us to grow up into the Lord Jesus as head in all things. To hold fast the head in all things so that the body may function. Lord, You can do it. We do not know what lies ahead of us other than we have this sense of very great trouble. Beloved Lord, You have always loved us, You are the good shepherd, You've laid down Your life for the sheep. Lord, touch our hearts. Open us up

to Yourself in a new way. Lord, will You work in all of us, from those of us with the greatest responsibilities to those who are the simplest helps? Lord, work and may we discover something of the wonder of being in the body of our Lord Jesus. We ask it in His name, Amen.