



Ministry of the Word

*Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2016*

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:10-11

**Subject:** Chapter 3, Part 8 – Power of His Resurrection, Fellowship and Glory

When is enough, enough? That's a searching question, and not easily answered when it comes to us personally. Of course there are times when it is easily answered, for instance, when we are overcome with difficulties or pain, even stress. We have, I think, a line we draw and say "enough is enough!". Especially when something is going on and on without reason in your estimation and it has reached that 'line'.

Now, consider things like wealth, power, fame or even pleasure? Where do you draw the line on these? We often seek after the mirage and never find it until we either wake up to reality or do ourselves so much harm chasing the wind that we have to stop.

When it comes to spiritual things, we seem to have a limited appetite for the things of God. By that I mean, we have it seems very limited desires! God wants to bless and we want to be blessed but only on our terms,

"I don't want to run after the Lord, surely if He wants to bless me, He will have to do it?"

“O yes! please Lord, send revival, but don’t ask me to do anything for it.”

In Acts 8: 5 – 25 we read about that old villain Simon the Sorcerer, but it’s verse 18 to 24 that I want to draw your attention to if I may.

Here was a man who professed faith but never possessed it. We know this because of the reference to the condition of his heart. Note, if you will, the mind set in verse 19. He did not want the Holy Spirit for himself but simply to use Him as a power or to be seen to be a man of power like before. Why do I draw your attention to this? I do so because many today, even believers, are chasing the wrong thing. They want the power but not the Person of the Holy Spirit.

What we have before us is very instructive, and may I be as bold to say very necessary. Jesus said in John 15: 5.

*“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”*

There are too many like that old villain Simon out there with the same mind set and heart condition, we even read of them in Matthew 7:21-22 of whom the Lord says He never knew them. They are like putrefying fly’s in the ointment. They have no desire to give up their power and bow down to the Lord and wait to be raised up as He desires.

Desires are a very powerful thing. They need to be kept in check as well as motive as we know that it has an important part to play too. We can easily see that Paul had holy desires for God Himself. He had a vibrant relationship with the Saviour. This relationship, like any other, works both ways, you only get out what you put in. This is not a secret to success but the right step. Look at what James the apostle has to say in chapter 4:8.

*“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded”*

If there is a particular thrill to the Christian in reading the end of verse 7 then there is an equal thrill about the beginning of verse 8, to which we now turn. There is a wonderful 'lift' in it all — ‘Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you’. There are two views the Christian ought to covet more than any other; one is

Satan's back and the other is God's face — and these verses promise us that we can have both of those views!

There are many people in the Bible who walked with the Lord, and there are two men of whom those very words are used. We read that *'Enoch walked with God'* (Genesis 5:24) and a little later that *'Noah walked with God'* (Genesis 6: 9). What a lovely phrase to describe the Christian life! It reminds us immediately that the Christian life is not a matter of slavishly following rules or rituals, but one of personal experience and relationship. It is a walk with God. Of course, we need to submit to God's doctrines, His disciplines and His demands, but even in doing so, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Christian life is essentially a living relationship with God day by day.

As we come to the next or the first point this morning notice how Paul says what he says. Can we say the same? Is it the desire of our heart and mind? What loss we suffer when we settle for less when in fact we can have the more. The third surpassing benefit that Paul counted gain and for all who are truly in Christ is there in verse 10.

#### THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

*'that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection' (3:10a)*

Paul had already mentioned the deep, experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ that comes at salvation (v. 8). Yet still the cry of his heart was **that I may know Him**. The initial saving knowledge of Christ became the basis of Paul's lifelong pursuit of an ever deeper knowledge of His Saviour. Specifically, Paul longed to experience **the power of His resurrection**. He knew there was no power in the Law. He knew there was no power in his flesh to overcome sin or serve God (cross reference Romans 7:18). However, he also knew Christ and had His righteousness imputed to him. Paul had been given the Holy Spirit and the same spiritual power that raised Jesus from the dead.

**His resurrection** was the greatest display of Christ's power. Rising from the dead John 2:19-21;

*"Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body."*  
(Cross Reference with John 10:17-18)

This revealed His absolute power over both the physical and spiritual realms (Cross reference Colossians 2:14-15; 1 Peter 3:18-20).

Paul experienced Christ's resurrection power in two ways.

First, it was that power that saved him, a truth he affirmed in Romans 6:4-5:

*"Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection"*

In salvation, believers are identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. Even more than that, it is Christ's resurrection power that sanctified him (and all believers) to defeat temptation and trials, lead a holy life, and boldly and fruitfully proclaim the gospel. Paul gladly exchanged his impotence for Christ's resurrection power, and desired to experience its fullness.

So what about it? Do we have the same desires? Are we truly happy as we are? Do you believe God has more for you? Without a hunger and a thirst, we will die as we are. Awaken! God has more, more than you could ever know or imagine, and he is not tight fisted, mean or withholding. He desires to give you His very best and if you have doubts about that then look to the Cross and the cost He paid.

If the Lord can feed the 5000 with two loaves and fishes to meet the physical need of the people who were all strangers to Him, what do you think He can do for His own children? Let's just have a peep and see, John 7:37-39.

*"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water". But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."*

This relationship that Paul had was not just for his own personal benefit, but for the church not only in his time but right up until time has run out. It goes further than that, right out into the world for which the Gospel is needed. We tend to think in a very limited way but your

relationship of whatever kind you have is like a book read of 'all men'. I like the way Paul tells us this in 2 Corinthians 3:1-3.

*"Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."*

How do you read this? A sad story or a great epic! God has given to you all that you need to do His will, so let's rise up from slumber and take hold of God and seek to walk in His ways. Listen carefully, they are not boring or burdensome at all.

## FELLOWSHIP

*'and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death'* (3:10b)

A fourth benediction salvation brought Paul was **fellowship** with Jesus Christ. The apostle speaks specifically here of the **fellowship of His sufferings**. As he has just noted, Paul was **conformed to His death** at salvation (cross reference Romans 6:4-5). If we meditate on this a little more, we can understand that he has something more in mind here, a deep partnership and communion with Christ in suffering. When he met Christ, Paul gained a companion to be with him in his suffering. One who endured far more intense persecution and suffering than anyone else who ever lived, all of it undeserved.

The deepest moments of spiritual fellowship with the living Christ are at times of intense suffering; suffering drives believers to Him. They find in Him a merciful High Priest, a faithful friend who feels their pain, and a sympathetic companion who faced all the trials and temptations that they face (Hebrews 4:15). He is thus uniquely qualified to help them in their weaknesses and infirmities (Hebrews 2:17). That blessed, comforting truth led Paul to exclaim,

*"Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Corinthians 12:10).

For many believers these verses have no meaning or relevance for the simple reason that they have a very comfortable life with no problems, difficulties, threats, dangers. There so blessed that they don't know it. But not so for the rest who face death and suffering all day every day. You know Hebrews 11 is like that until you come to the end. The point really is this, have we the kind of fellowship 'in' or 'with' Christ that we trust Him all the way?

Paul not only identified with fellow believers in their suffering, but could and did encourage them that in such times to draw near not run away. Make no mistake many do, but to where do they run? I am thrilled to bits to know that the Saviour who can calm the storm and make the wind to cease is in this vessel, are you?

#### GLORY

*'in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.'* (3:11)

A final and consummate benefit Paul obtained when he met Christ was the guarantee of his future resurrection, when he would share Christ's glory. The Greek phrase the NASB translates **in order that** actually reads "if somehow". However, that does not express doubt on Paul's part, but rather humility. Paul's sense of unworthiness never left him. In 1 Corinthians 15:9 he wrote,

*"For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God"*

In Ephesians 3:8 he described himself as *"the very least of all saints"*. Paul was confident **that** he would **attain to the resurrection from the dead** and share Christ's glory.

The phrase **the resurrection from the dead** is unique in Scripture. It literally reads "the out resurrection from among the corpses". Believers will **attain** that **resurrection** at the Rapture, when

*"we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).*

Believers will be taken out from among the rest of the **dead** corpses, who will not be raised until the end of the millennial kingdom, and transformed into the image of Christ.

Paul hated the weakness of his flesh and longed to be rid of it. He saw himself as wretched (Romans 7:24) and because of this he wrote to the Romans,

*"We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).*

The redemption of the body at the resurrection is another of the surpassing benefits of knowing Christ.

What do believers gain by their union with Christ? The knowledge of Christ in their identification with Him; the righteousness of Christ imputed to them in justification; the power of Christ for their sanctification; participation in the sufferings of Christ; and sharing Christ's glory in their glorification. No wonder Paul gladly exchanged the religious credits in his loss column for the surpassing benefits of knowing Christ.

Matthew 19 records the story of another man who came to the same crossroads as Paul. In reply to his question about how to obtain eternal life, Jesus told him to obey the Law. In response,

*"the young man said to Him, All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" (Matthew 19:20).*

He, too, had his spiritual profit column filled with self-effort, religious ritual, and works righteousness, however, unlike Paul, he counted those things gain and rejected Christ. Paul counted them loss and gained Christ.

Everyone stands at the same crossroads. People can cling to their religious credits and follow the rich young ruler onto the broad path that leads to eternal destruction.

Or they can forsake them in favour of the surpassing benefits of knowing Christ and follow Paul onto the narrow path that leads to eternal life.

*Amén.*