



SUCCESS

AND THE **SHAPE**

OF LIFE

Power and Participation

Philippians 3:10-12

¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

The ultimate “success” of a human life is found in a genuine and intimate relationship with God, which comes through knowing Jesus and being known by Him.

Paul wants to know Christ.

And, Christ has also “taken hold” of Paul.

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Jesus may not knock you down to the ground with a blinding light from heaven (like Paul), but he does want to “take hold” of you in an intimate relationship of mutual knowledge.

“Because of the righteousness Christ has effected for his people, we know him now... but the ultimate ‘prize,’ to have knowledge of him fully realized, awaits resurrection.”

(Gordon Fee)

The resurrection of Jesus radically changes our understanding of our present existence.

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The life of the future is already at work within the present.

“Paul unites the power and the participation to form a single entity. Knowing the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings are two inseparable aspects of his experience of knowing Christ. They exist contemporaneously... Knowing the power of Christ’s resurrection provides the incentive and strength to participate in the sufferings of Christ.”

(G. Walter Hansen)

“Resurrection power and participation in suffering—we have too often split the two. We’ve tended to ignore Holy Spirit power in our participation with those who are suffering, rendering us powerless to bring deliverance for the afflicted and unable to persevere in difficult or distressing environments. Or we’ve pursued supernatural power within our church meetings (often for our own ends) and failed to translate this into bringing hope to the plight of the most vulnerable people or into the systems of the world that perpetuate their pain...

We desperately need both the compassion of God and the power of God to successfully transform communities... Living without compassion isn't an option. Neither is going without power."

(Pete Portal)

"The coal got wet."



“Lack of devotion and discipline in our private, unseen habits and behaviors can often undermine our public life and witness. It might not be a secretive scandal, just a timid half-heartedness in how we steward the health of our souls.”

(Pete Portal)



Acts 3:1-6

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ² Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.

³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴ Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶ Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

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The experience of the power of the resurrection that neglects the experience of suffering for Christ also falls short of the fullness of "knowing" Christ.

Matthew 25:37-40

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?' ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?' ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

“Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.”

(St. Augustine)

Philippians 3:12

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Closing Reflections

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Do you have a desire to know Christ? Do you trust that Christ has a desire to know you?

Closing Reflections



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Have you been settling for a dulled form of Christianity, neglecting the power of the resurrection available to us here and now?

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What kind of costly, co-suffering participation have you been insulating yourself from?

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Invite the Spirit to reveal to you some fresh ways to keep the "coal from getting wet" in your spiritual life.



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