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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Sunday  
evening 12.10.75

Text: Philippians 3.10

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."

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This verse is in full accord with what I considered this morning (Romans 1.16 & 17) in regard to the Gospel of Christ and of the Apostle's observation that he was not ashamed of it; although we may be ashamed of our ignorance of it and of how much we lack, according to our feelings; but even so those who know anything of vital saving teaching can say that they are not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the good news of a covenant-performing God to poor needy sinners lost and ruined in the Adam fall, and who are dependent upon the sovereign mercy of God for their eternal deliverance from the wrath to come and their everlasting salvation. The experience of the Lord's people is very largely attended with confessions of what they feel to lack and of desire, wholesome and prayerful desire that they might be brought to a saving and gracious knowledge of the Gospel and a great part of this consists in a knowledge of Christ. It is a mercy to be brought there and to feel to have in your heart what is in our subject, "That I may know Him". This is vital as we have it in the Lord's own words, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." The importance that cannot be over estimated centres in a knowledge of Christ and here the Apostle is not possessed of this knowledge but he has a personal desire that he might know Him. In fact it seems to gather up this for which he counts all beside but dung and dross, that he might win Christ and be found in Him. He is ready to throw everything else aside for this one thing, to be found in Him and to be brought to a gracious and saving knowledge of Him by the inward teaching and gracious operation of the Holy Spirit of God. There can be a natural knowledge of the letter of truth, but where life is in

the soul there will be a pressing on as the Apostle said of himself, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He does not set himself head and shoulders above everybody else but places himself with those who long for a saving knowledge. There is much more to be attained to; "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; I have not reached that state where I desire nothing more; but he said, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark".

Now here is an evidence of life in the soul of one being quickened and brought to some feeling understanding of the importance of eternal realities, and it is a wonderful mercy to feel in our hearts a knowledge of Christ. The Apostle does not put himself above everybody else but expresses it to be his one desire, "That I may know Him". There is a knowledge of Christ, I believe, in an experimental way and manner in the experiences of the Lord's people. This is not a natural attainment, but the teaching of the Holy Spirit, when the light shines into a poor sinner's heart and Christ is made precious there as the chiefest among ten thousand. How far can we come in with this, "That I may know Him"? It is a mercy if we can feelingly say it because it indicates that we have been brought away from false refuges to feel in our souls something of the unspeakable value of a knowledge of Christ. This is a knowledge of Him in relation to His glorious eternal Personality, as the Father's eternal Son, as we read in the first chapter of John, being "The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". It is a mystery, but we shall not obtain a qualification for heaven by solving all mysteries. Great is the mystery of godliness, and yet there is a knowledge of that blessed mystery in the heart and experience of a living soul. There is a knowledge of the mystery, "That I may know Him". How far do you feel that you can go in this? It seems to be a gathering up of things to a point where everything else is of comparatively little value, in fact he counts it as dung and dross in comparison with a knowledge of Christ and says that he has suffered the loss of all things. Every advantage with regard to

his education appears to be sacrificed for Christ's sake, "that I may know Him". This is a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in relation to His power to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. It is a knowledge of Him as an all-prevailing intercessor in the court of heaven; there He is enthroned above and undertakes the cause of His poor, needy people upon earth. "That I may know Him". This knowledge does to a great point centre, as we have been singing in the hymn, in Christ crucified, for it is a knowledge of Christ crucified in a particular sense, because by reason of His substitution He gave satisfaction to the claims of justice and opened a way to heaven for His poor; waiting, needy, helpless people, as they are in themselves. Well, dear friends, do you feel that you can say this is your desire? Is it in your heart in this sense, and does it seem to gather up your poor little religion, "That I may know Him"? If we are really brought down to feel our sin and ruin we shall not write off the hope of everybody else but we shall fall at the feet of Christ, "Give me Christ or else I die".

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection", the power of it. This is something very different from a natural knowledge of the fact. We are all in a sense acquainted with the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He suffered on the cross, died and was buried and that He rose again the third day, as the Apostle affirms in writing to the Corinthians; but there is something more than that. He does not say, That I may know Him and the fact that He rose from the dead, but "the power of His resurrection". What are we to understand by the power of His resurrection? It is something that you will feel in your own heart. In the first place I believe we may say that the new birth is the effect of Christ's resurrection from the dead. The Apostle Peter says, "According to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". So it is of His mercy. The power of Christ's resurrection is in the new birth, in the Holy Spirit's gracious operation in the hearts of His dear people in being born again. In ourselves we are in a state of death and sin, but we find

the Lord saying, "Because I live ye shall live also". To be born again is a mercy of mercies because it bears this witness that we are among the redeemed of the Lord, appointed to eternal glorification. The power of His resurrection also is sometimes felt in a particular sense in liberty in prayer. Some of you may know the difference between the form of prayer and sometimes feeling a spirit of liberty as though the Lord has drawn you to Himself, enabled you to lay hold of Him and plead your case before Him. This is the effect of a risen and exalted Saviour. "Because I live ye shall live also". Prayers ascend up into heaven through the merit of His precious death and answers are given to them through the power of His resurrection and His all prevailing intercession, "That I may know Him". "This is life eternal", that is what a knowledge of Christ is. How far can we seem to follow in this? How far does our experience centre in this one Object? O sometimes you may feel to get so near to Him, and can feel your heart drawn out in a gracious waiting upon the Lord, pressing your case before Him. What is that but the power of His resurrection in your heart, and it may be that there have been times when you have come to that point that Jacob came to, when he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me". If you are really there, then still struggle on, holding fast to Him, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me". Is not this a beautiful opening of the importunity of faith?

"Lord I cannot let thee go,  
Till a blessing thou bestow"

What is it in the heart of a poor sinner that gives this importunity? I would say it is the power of Christ's resurrection and so sometimes it may be that you can feel such a strength in your heart, feel so confirmed in your standing, so sweetly revived and feeling to enjoy a confidence of faith that you can say,

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given."

If the earnest is given then you will endure to the end and enter in the Lord's time into the full enjoyment of it.

This is a sweet word, this is the verse I preached from the first time I attempted to speak in public, and it is as much, if not more, my language today as in those far off days. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings". The fellowship. People talk a lot about having fellowship one with another, sometimes in a very light-hearted sort of style; it may be they are invited to come and have fellowship; but the Lord's dear people have to prove that a lot of this language in some places of religion has very little, if any, foundation, but there is something very, very sweet in fellowship with the Lord's dear people. It is giving and receiving in communion, it is a communion they enjoy together.

I have told you before that in my young days a friend came to spend a weekend with us and I walked quite a long way with him when he went back to Tunbridge Wells and he seemed to move me to open my heart to him and I told him things I could not tell my parents. O what a sweet time it was, I have never forgotten it. The dear man has gone to heaven many years ago; there is something so sweet about it and he talked so kindly to me, he did not shut me up as though I was presuming or attempting to be religious.

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings". This is profoundly sacred. We find the Apostle saying in another place, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him". There is to be this suffering, then. It does not mean that all must die a martyr's death and be burnt at the stake, although thousands have been. We have our Christian liberties and privileges; but there is an inward conflict in the heart of a child of God; everything that is spiritual and saving will be attacked by the enemy and there will be a conflict, and you may not always know whether it is the enemy or not but you may find things rising up against it as though there is nothing in it. What a hard battle can be to stop everything of a religious and saving nature, and yet amidst all this His dear people are brought into some fellowship with Christ. "Fellowship of His sufferings". No one ever suffered on account of sin in the same sense or degree as the Saviour did, yet all the Lord's people, more or less, are brought to suffer on account of sin and what they feel in their own heart of that dreadful

thing. But here is a fellowship indicating a communion that the Apostle desired to know, a fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, the fellowship of His sufferings, that sacred communion that a poor suffering believer has with a suffering Christ. You may walk that path alone because many may not understand you, but there is something very sweet and sacred in it; this is a fellowship; He is your elder Brother, a Brother born for adversity for your sin. There is a fellowship. We read of those early believers that they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and prayers. There was a little fellowship, a little communion one with another.

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death". To be conformable unto it is to be brought into full agreement with the death of Christ, conformed to it. There is something more than this. There is being with Christ that the Apostle refers to in another place, there is a communion between the Head and the body. His people are made conformable unto His death, a dying to self, a dying to sin, through the merit of the Saviour's substitution. This is being made conformable unto His death and placing our hope and prospects for eternal life alone on the merit of His death, and so it is that all His dear people are part of Himself. They are His body; the church is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, and you cannot separate here the head from the body. They are joined together, being made conformable unto His death. Many have laid down their lives for Christ's sake. What a noble army of martyrs there has been. One was from the village where I was born in Sussex. He suffered with a company of others who were burnt to death in the High Street at Lewes, for Christ's sake. I know where he lived, where he concealed himself in a certain place in the church to elude his persecutors and would have done so if his own father had not betrayed him. Many of the martyrs have experienced this fellowship with a suffering Christ in laying down their life for His sake. They were made conformable unto His death, they did not count upon their own life for His sake.

Here is the Apostle's desire; he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. "That I may know Him" and may be helped to press on in this matter of seeking a further and deeper knowledge of Christ, a knowledge of Him and the glory of His eternal Personality, a knowledge of the efficacy and merit of His precious death. May we be kept close to Calvary that we may seek the application of that blood that does for sin atone. Here I believe the Apostle has some companions who would in their humble way use the same language, "That I may know Him".

"To know my Jesus crucified,  
By far excels all things beside;  
All earthly good I count but loss,  
And triumph in my Saviour's cross."

O what a mercy of mercies to have a saving knowledge of Him. I am nearing eternity and I feel it; I cannot be with you very much longer and often in the night my end is before me and I long for a further token, although I believe the Lord/<sup>did</sup> say to me that all is settled and my soul is resting upon the merit and blood of a once crucified Redeemer. O to get a glimpse of Him, a sweet view of Him, to feel that you belong to Him and He belongs to you. That I may know Him "And be found in Him not having mine own righteousness". Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, but he said, All this I count as dung and dross. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". For the excellency of it, indicating the superior value of it. O may the Lord look upon us then. Some of us cannot rise very high and I would speak an encouraging word to any of our dear young friends. I was young myself once and remember quite a number of things, but I do hope it may please the Lord to bless you and put you among those to whom the Apostle refers. This eternal testimony will surpass all conception of your minds. O to be prepared! Seek unto Him, and may the Lord bless you in your providences and go before you. One day you will have to leave them behind. To possess Christ is a blessing of all blessings. You will never have to leave Him behind when you come to die, but when the end comes all those whose religion is in my text will close their eyes to everything on earth and open them in heaven, to see Him not through a glass darkly but face to face. May the Lord bless you and remember us each one. Perhaps in years to come you may reflect upon a few things I have said, and if that is so may the Lord grant His blessing upon it and upon you. Amen.