

# The Book of Philippians

Notes: Doug Hamilton

## The Christian Soldier's Ultimate Victory

Philippians 3:10-12 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; <sup>11</sup> in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

- The word that Paul uses for "know" is *ginoskein*, which almost always indicates a close personal knowledge of another. It is not merely an intellectual knowledge of a person, but an intimate knowledge. For example in Genesis 4:1, "Adam knew his wife, and she conceived a son...", the word in the Hebrew is *yada*. In the Greek Septuagint of the same verse, it uses *ginoskein*. In other words, it was not the goal of Paul to simply know of Jesus, but to intimately know Him.
- What in particular was it that Paul focused on in this text? Three things:
  1. Paul intimately knew Jesus.
    - He knew of the life of Christ from the years he persecuted the church. He likely was in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus' ministry. He encountered Jesus on the Road to Damascus before his conversion. He had prayed endlessly, worked tirelessly and served sacrificially. He knew Jesus intimately.
  2. Paul intimately knew the Power of Jesus' Resurrection
    - This was the most remarkable event in human history, for it defined the Christian faith. It was the supreme miracle for which Jesus would define His entire ministry. He spoke of it often throughout His entire earthly ministry.
      - John 2:19-21 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up...But He was speaking of the temple of His body."
      - Mt 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.
      - Luke 9:22 "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."
    - Paul intimately knew of the power of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead on that third day. It was the defining moment of all human history, for it is the core of the Christian faith.
  3. Paul intimately knew the Fellowship of His Sufferings
    - Jesus said numerous times during His earthly ministry that his followers would have to suffer for His sake. *John 15:18-21* "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but

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*I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.* <sup>20</sup> *“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.* One really does not intimately know Jesus unless they have experienced suffering and sacrifice for His sake.

- Paul intimately knew of the sufferings of Christ. He lived it from the moment of his conversion until the day he was executed.
  - 2 Cor 1:5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.
  - Gal 6:17 From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.
  - Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
- He knew Jesus in a way that fellowshiped with Him in the sufferings.
- The participle phrase "being conformed to His death" indicates that when all three levels of intimate knowledge are combined, there is a fourth form of knowledge, and that is the intimate knowledge of knowing that you will be resurrected in the end.

## Application:

- The soldier of Christ in a spiritual war with the world must have the mind-blowing knowledge of victory through the resurrection. That is what gives him or her strength to carry on in the daily battles they face. This is the ultimate victory of the soldier of Christ, intimately knowing that we have a future resurrection from the dead when all this is over for this life!
- That was what Paul was saying in *1 Corinthians 15:50-57* *Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.* <sup>51</sup> *Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,* <sup>52</sup> *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.* <sup>53</sup> *For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.* <sup>54</sup> *But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.”* <sup>55</sup> *“O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?”* <sup>56</sup> *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;* <sup>57</sup> *but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- The word for *victory* in that passage is *NIKOS*. It is also where the ancient Greek Goddess Nike derives her name. She personified victory in the ancient world, often depicted with wings on her back and the crown of the victor in her left hand. It was a legend that her presence was there for the



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presentation of the laurel crown placed on the head of an Olympic champion. Since 1928 every Olympic medal bears her image on the back.

- Our victory, *nikos*, in this life is not an olive branch woven crown, but the knowledge of a future resurrection from the grave. It is the knowledge that we will be raised imperishable and incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). It is the knowledge that we will have a new body like that of Christ Jesus (1 John 3:2). Death for us is truly swallowed up with victory. This ultimate victory of the knowledge of the resurrection from the dead is the strength that any soldier of Christ needs to press on in our walk with Jesus. He will take us through to the end in whatever we face with the battles.

Philippians 3:13-15 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; <sup>16</sup> however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

- Often it was the military soldiers who were the athletes in the games of those days. This appears to be the theme that Paul uses here for the Philippians, for he is using the language of the athlete and a soldier.
- When the athlete would line up for the race, the prize they were chasing was a crown at the finish line that was nailed to a pole. The race would start and all the runners would run as fast as they could to the crown, never taking their eyes off it. As Paul would say in *1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.* It is and always will be about the prize as the basis of our focus; it keeps us running hard in the race. With that perspective, we win more battles than we lose and will not lose the war or the victory of the resurrection.
  - You might have been fighting battles with lust all week long. You won a few; you lost a few; but you kept the knowledge of the end of the war and the crown of life that Jesus stored up for you in heaven. It helped you make it through, for you already had victory! You were knocked down, you remembered the future resurrection and you pressed on. You kept running toward the mark of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
  - You might have been struggling with laziness this week. You won a few battles as you ran strong; then you lost a few when you tripped and fell. While you were on the ground in loss, you remembered your victorious crown of life waiting for you at the finish line. That knowledge motivated you to get up, brush off the dirt and start running again. You lost that battle of laziness, but you are still in pursuit of the prize of your victory!
  - You might have been battling with anger this week. You were doing great, being patient with people. You were victorious in every battle

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until that Jehu cut you off in traffic and offered the middle digit of fellowship as your reward! That's it, you honked your horn and said a few things that Jesus would not have spoken, causing you to lose that battle. What a loser! What an absolute failure! Then images of the victory of the resurrection fill your head and you realize the need to press on in the race. You get up off that ground and start running again with repentance toward that prize of the resurrection. You press on toward the mark of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus! You run the victorious race again!

- When we fail, there is no sitting alongside the road of life for that is not the spirit of the athlete or a soldier. We deal with the battles of the past by keeping them in the past; we always get up and run again, always pressing on to the mark of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:17-21 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, <sup>19</sup> whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>21</sup> who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

- In Paul's day there were some of the converts in the church that simply did not get this concept. They were running a race, but refusing to move their legs. They lost battle after battle with their lusts, their pride and their earthly attitudes. They had fallen alongside the road of despair and were no longer in pursuit of the prize they once longed for. They had lost their vision of victory of the future resurrection.
- If we are not careful, we could fall to the wiles of the devil. He wants us to give up at the end of the battle, forgetting the promised prize at the end of the war. Even worse, he wants us to be deceived into thinking we can falsely hold onto the hope after giving up. Worst of all he wants us to forget the victory altogether, giving up for good and turning our backs on Jesus.
- Brothers and sisters, our citizenship is in heaven. We must eagerly await that day that Jesus comes back. He will resurrect our humble, deteriorating body into one like His. He has that power to do so, for He already made the trip and has the keys of Hades. He is asking us to live for Him and to fight those daily battles for the cause of God. If we will only focus on that glorious day that will yield no more tears, sadness, pain, persecution, disease and death, then we will have the strength to win those daily battles.

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- Are you struggling with gluttony? If that fast-food drive thru calling you to pull in for a snack when you are not hungry, meditate on the resurrection, gain that strength and win that battle.
- Are you struggling with greed? If your blessings have you instead of you having your blessings, then you have a battle to fight. Focus on the great victory that awaits you at the end of the war, then you will better withstand the battle.
- Are you struggling with idolatry? Have you been putting your hobbies, your job or other people ahead of the Lord? Then take some time and focus on the glorious day of resurrection prize awaiting you. Think about the endless day when you will have unlimited worship of God and His beloved Son. Let that strength permeate your heart, mind and soul, then fight that battle with all your might!

## Conclusion:

Intimately know Jesus through your Bible, intimately understand the incredible power He demonstrated in His resurrection and intimately know the experience of His sufferings. If we will do that, the result will be a clear understanding of the future resurrection that awaits us at the end of the spiritual war. If we can call on that glorious image of the prize, then and only then we will be able to fight those daily battles we are facing. Draw strength from the future victory and be the battle-tested soldier we are called to be.