[POSTED ON FACEBOOK WEEK OF 11/1/26]

KNOWING JESUS: SCRAP THE OLD LIFE
PHILIPPIANS 3 – PART TWO

The first thing Paul had to do was scrap the old life, scrap his pedigree. In doing that he was ready to receive the righteousness of God, access to God, relationship with God. This was essential to knowing Jesus, to obtain the resurrection of the dead.

We are involved in a process of coming to know Jesus better and better—to really know Him. To know Jesus is eternal life (John 17:3). Paul connects two ideas – knowing Jesus and participating in the resurrection. He has made the connection before in Romans 6, where he connected sharing in Christ's death through baptism with resurrection.

We begin in Phil. 3:10. I want to know him—what his resurrection power is like and what it means to share in his sufferings, thus becoming like him in his death.

Why was knowing Jesus so important to Paul? What did knowing Jesus include as Paul understood it? Paul writes that knowing Jesus will include knowing the power of Jesus' resurrection and learning what it feels like to share in sufferings for him. The result will be looking more and more like Jesus, having the same form or likeness. Paul was not expressing a desire to be crucified like Jesus, or to experience martyrdom, although that was often the result of faith in the first century. What about us? What does this verse mean for us? We do not yet know, but we share the same goal—to know Jesus, and the same commitment—to understand resurrection power, and the same willingness—to participate in suffering for Jesus.

Did you ever play follow the leader? Whatever the leader does, everyone else does. The leader jumps over a stream, you jump over the stream. The leader climbs the tree; you climb the tree. The leader swings from a branch, you do the same thing. This is a simple illustration. Follow Jesus. He went before us. We are followers—sharing his life, sufferings, death, and resurrection. That was Paul' goal.

A final observation. In v. 10, the grammatical construction matters. Paul wants to know Jesus. Knowing Jesus includes knowing resurrection power and sharing sufferings. The result is becoming more and more like Jesus in his death. Continuing the reading, Paul understood that this was possible only by turning one's back on the past and moving aggressively toward the prize. Priorities, values, goals. What really matters in this life? What is your #1? The case can be made that for Paul, his #1 was to know Jesus.