

Message Three

**Knowing the Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings
and Being Conformed to His Death**

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24

I. Paul aspired to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings—Phil. 3:10:

- A. With Christ, the sufferings and death came first, followed by the resurrection; with us, the power of His resurrection comes first, followed by the participation in His sufferings and conformity to His death—v. 10.
- B. We first receive the power of His resurrection; then by this power we are enabled to participate in His sufferings and live a crucified life in conformity to His death.
- C. Christ's sufferings are of two categories: those for accomplishing redemption, which were completed by Christ Himself, and those for producing and building the church, which need to be filled up by the apostles and the believers—Col. 1:24:
 - 1. We cannot participate in Christ's sufferings for redemption, but we must take part in the sufferings of Christ for the producing and building up of the Body—cf. Rev. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:10; 2 Cor. 1:5-6; 4:12; 6:8-11.
 - 2. Christ as the Lamb of God suffered for redemption (John 1:29); Christ as the grain of wheat suffered for reproducing and building (12:24):
 - a. The Lord, as a grain of wheat that fell into the ground, lost His soul-life through death that He might release His eternal life in resurrection to the many grains—10:10-11.
 - b. The one grain did not complete all the sufferings that are needed for the building up of the Body; as the many grains, we must suffer in the same way the one grain suffered—12:24-26:
 - (1) As the many grains, we also must lose our soul-life through death that we may enjoy eternal life in resurrection—v. 25.
 - (2) This is to follow Him that we may serve Him and walk with Him on this way, the way of losing our soul-life and living in His resurrection—v. 26.
 - (3) The way for the church to come into being and to increase is not by human glory; it is by the death of the cross—vv. 20-24.

II. In Philippians 3:10 Paul spoke of "being conformed to His death"; this expression indicates that Paul desired to take Christ's death as the mold of his life:

- A. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ, counting all things as loss, gaining Christ, being found in Him, knowing Him, knowing the power of His resurrection, and knowing the fellowship of His sufferings all issue in one thing—being conformed to Christ's death—vv. 7-10.
- B. Being conformed to Christ's death is the base of the experience of Christ—1:20-21a; 3:9-10.

- C. The mold of Christ's death refers to the continual putting to death of His natural, human life that He might live by the life of God—John 6:57a:
 - 1. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He lived a crucified life; by living a crucified life He was alive to God and lived Him.
 - 2. He always put His human life to death so that the divine life within Him could flow out—10:10b-11, 17.
 - 3. As He was living, He was also dying—dying to the old creation in order to live a life in the new creation; this is the meaning of “His death” in Philippians 3:10.
- D. Christ's death is a mold to which we are conformed in much the same way that dough is put into a cake mold and conformed to it:
 - 1. God has put us into the mold of Christ's death, and day by day God is molding us to conform us to this death—Rom. 6:3-4.
 - 2. Our life should be conformed to such a mold—dying to our human life in order to live the divine life—Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 4:10-11.
 - 3. If we put to death our natural life, we shall have the consciousness that we have another life, the divine life, within us; this life will be released, and then in our experience we shall be conformed to Christ's death—John 10:10b; 1 John 5:11-12.
 - 4. In the mold of Christ's death the natural man is killed, the old man is crucified, and the self is nullified—2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 6:6; Matt. 16:24.
 - 5. If we allow our circumstances to press us into this mold, our daily life will be molded into the form of Christ's death—Rom. 8:28-29.
 - 6. We are conformed to the mold of Christ's death by the power of Christ's resurrection—Phil. 3:10; John 11:25; Eph. 1:19-20; S. S. 2:8-13.
- E. As we are conformed to Christ's death, we experience His all-accomplishing death:
 - 1. By being conformed to His death, we experience Christ in His death for the release, impartation, and multiplication of life—John 12:24-26; 2 Cor. 4:12.
 - 2. The only way to glorify God is to be conformed to Christ's death; the more we are conformed to Christ's death, the more we glorify the Father—John 12:28; 13:31.
 - 3. When we die the death of Christ and are conformed to His death, we shall be a magnet drawing others to Christ—12:32.
 - 4. The more we die with Christ, the more we save our soul—v. 25.
 - 5. If we are willing to be conformed to Christ's death, we shall overcome the world and defeat Satan—v. 31; Heb. 2:14.