



# The Flame

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from GCCN Prayer Ministries

(“I want to know Christ” part 2)

## **“Participation in his sufferings”** (The Apostle Paul – Philippians 3:10)

You may be wondering if I missed that class in seminary about keeping the message positive. It’s quite a leap from resurrection power to suffering. One is so uplifting, promising. The other, not so much.

Granted, the topic of suffering doesn’t even make the extended list of most desired topics. Other than someone with a mental health deficit, no one would deliberately seek out suffering. There’s nothing natural about that.

But Paul is not talking about something “natural.”

Resurrection living doesn’t happen without experiencing death. In the next issue we’ll look at that more closely, but for now we need to remember that before facing death, Jesus suffered.

Paul’s words here seem hard to understand. We cannot share in the pre-crucifixion suffering of Christ, so obviously the apostle’s words are pointing us elsewhere.

The older King James translation speaks of “the fellowship of his suffering.” The “fellowship” is the Greek word *koinonia*, a spiritual union, a “oneness.” Remember, Jesus said in John 15:20 that “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”

Jesus’ physical life came to an end, but we are now His Body, and just as He suffered during his earthly life, so His Body will suffer as well. This means that the suffering of Christ is carried on into and through us as His Body. While the natural man will never understand, the inner man experiencing resurrection living will find strength and comfort in Matthew 5:10:

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

### **Taking Your Next Step**

As you pray, seek to know Him, personally and intimately know Him more and more. Invite Him to live in you unimpeded, even more so in the days ahead as we most certainly will face the reality of persecution and suffering for our faith.

Seek the transformation of spirit that reveals in your inner being the unnatural response of pure joy that comes from the unique oneness with Christ through the fellowship of suffering for His sake.

*Consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials of many kinds (James 1:2)*