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The Naz Prayer Ministry



Knowing Christ

(Part 2: Sharing in His Suffering and Death)

John 12 tells us that the disciples had walked with Jesus from Bethany to Jerusalem. Their entry into the city would later be called “the triumphal entry.”

That evening, away from the press of the crowd that had surrounded them all day, Jesus and the disciples were together for supper when something extraordinary happened. Jesus picked up a towel and knelt to wash the disciples’ feet.

This was a normal social custom. The roads were dusty, even the short two miles that morning, and inevitably everyone had feet covered with the grainy, pale soil, interrupted only by the straps on their sandals. Normally, a host would provide a servant to handle this undesirable chore. In small homes with no servants, the host would actually tend to this task. But on this night, Jesus was holding the towel, and Peter was indignant.

“You shall never wash my feet” (John 13:8, NLT). Jesus was their leader, not a lowly servant. The esteemed in society, those in authority did not bow for such a menial and unpleasant role. It just wasn’t done.

But listen to Jesus’ reply: “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” At that moment, His response was puzzling at best. Of course, we know His words were cryptic, pointing to an inner cleansing, a truth that would become evident in time.

As will be clear in a moment, the tenor of Jesus’ reply in John 13 fits perfectly in the conversation of Philippians 3:10 about sharing in His suffering and death.

Some could assume that the idea of sharing in the Lord’s suffering and death suggests that we, like Him, would be required to face scourging and shame and even the cruel death of the cross. Others assert that these words point in a more general way to a time when we will bow to a martyr’s death. But Jesus is actually pointing us to a much deeper discovery.

Sharing His suffering becomes a reality the moment we choose to walk in a relationship with Christ. He is Savior, to be sure, but He is also the Suffering Servant who gave Himself (see 1 John 3:16) as the sacrifice for our sin. One cannot share a covenant relationship with God without having a part in His Sacrifice. His suffering transforms those who choose to participate (i.e. share) in the impact of the selflessness Christ displayed in humbling Himself even to the indignity of death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).

The life He imparts to us flows from Himself. He is the Vine of John 15, and we are the branches. The life we have flows from Him. Paul spoke about this by noting that we live, but in reality it is the Christ-life in us (Galatians 2:20). Without the life flow of the Vine, we are capable of nothing and have nothing.

The life that courses through us comes from the One who, according to Philippians 3:10, Paul seeks to know through the power of the resurrection. This is the power by which He triumphed over His suffering and death. It is this life triumphant that brings us out of our spiritual death into the newness of life, His life.

Paul’s passion and prayer to know Christ is about sharing a life in which struggles and pains are certain, but one in which the life triumphant flows from the Vine Himself.

Taking Our Next Step Together

Lord God, forgive us for how prone we are to squander the moments of our lives on distractions that satisfy little more than our fleshly whims. Awaken us to the awe, yet sobering reality of the life of Your Son that flows with purpose and redemptive passion through us.