

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:17-18

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 3:5-14

Sermon: "Praying for Knowledge of Him" Ephesians 1:15-19a

Benediction: 2 Peter 1:2

INTRODUCTION

When we think of what God, in love, by His grace, has done for us, we must exclaim, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ!"

With what blessing has He blessed us in Christ?

1. He has blessed us with redemption through His blood, leading to forgiveness of sins!
2. He has blessed us with an inheritance, a share in all the good things that belong to the Lord Jesus Christ!

To be sure that it is God who gets all the glory for these blessings we enjoy, let us be clear about how we came to have these blessings:

First, it is ultimately by the good pleasure of God's own will; it is by God's own purpose that anything ever happens; and so it was by the good pleasure of God's own will---not by your will, but by God's own will---it was by God's own purpose that these blessings have come to you.

Second, it is by His own counsel, God in counsel with no one else, that anything ever is done. And so it is that we have received these blessings by His own counsel; we were predestined to these things by Him alone, not by ourselves.

Third, God works all things. Everything that happens does so by the working of God, as He uses every creature at every moment in His work. Redemption was the work of God in the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior; it was not our work. The Lord Jesus Christ was crucified by cruel human hands, but it was all the work of God for us whom He loves. Our obtaining an inheritance was also the work of God. We obtained it through faith in Christ, as we believed the gospel message, trusting ourselves to Christ, repenting of sin to serve the living God as disciples of the Lord Jesus. But our believing and our repenting are not our own works---they are the work of God's Holy Spirit in us. We do not believe or repent on our own, or as a response to the work of God in us---no, our faith and our repentance are the work of God in us!

We came to have redemption through His blood and an inheritance, by the work of God, according to the counsel of God according to the will of God. Put another way, these things were done for us because He predestined us to them because it was His purpose to do them for us.

He does all things this way, and He has blessed us in Christ in this way, so that everything that ever happens in the universe, especially our receiving blessing after blessing in His beloved Son, may be to the praise of His grace, to the praise of His glory, to the praise of His great love, so that our human pride may be humbled before the greatness of God, and all our worship may be to the praise of God and God alone.

Because of this, when the Lord's apostle, Paul, heard that people had continuing faith in the Lord Jesus, and the accompanying love for all the saints, He did not give glory to those people; nor did he take credit for it himself, even if he himself had been the preacher. No, when Paul heard that someone had faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints, he thanked God for it, knowing that it is the work of the Holy Spirit of God that produces such faith and such love. And with Paul, we thank God for such grace and love from Him, for such powerful working in us, undeserving sinners.

There you have a brief summary of the study we have done together over the past eight weeks in Ephesians chapter one. Now we take up the next idea in this letter, and here it is:

Seeing that God has begun such a good work in us, giving us faith in Christ and love for His saints, and thanking Him for that, we also pray that He will continue His good work in us by giving us knowledge of Him.

Read the text: Ephesians 1:15-18a (I will stop part-way through verse 18 at the word, "know.")

Ephesians 1:15-18 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, (16) do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: (17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know . . .

Seeing that God has begun such a good work in us, giving us faith in Christ and love for His saints, and thanking Him for that, we also pray that He will continue His good work in us by giving us knowledge of Him.

The emphasis here, in this passage, is on knowledge, on knowing. Let's work a moment on that word.

The usual word of knowledge is *gnosis*, which is used many times in the Greek New Testament. It has the full range of meaning that our own word "knowledge" has, used for everything from the very common, ordinary things to the most profound spiritual truths.

knowledge - Greek *epignosis*

RWP, JFB: full knowledge

Hodge: accurate and certain, and especially experimental knowledge; adequate and proper knowledge

Gill: practical, experimental, with love, with faith, with obedience, fiducial, appropriating, progressive

Poole: acknowledgement, which may imply an owning, approving, and embracing things before known

So, then, we are talking today about knowledge that certainly includes simply being informed of the facts, but also includes believing, approving, embracing these things we have been informed of.

I. Not knowing God is a major part of the whole problem that sinful man has with God

A. This was true of the Israelites in the Old Covenant

1. in the past

Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you . . .

2. in the present

Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (2) For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

B. It is true of the rest of the world, also

Romans 1:20-21 [excerpted and paraphrased] The visible things of the world inform people that there is an invisible God; so that everyone knows there is a God; Romans 1:28 yet they did not want to have knowledge *epignosis* of God, and so God gives them over to a debased mind, so that they Romans 1:32 do all the evil things that they know God will judge people for.

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II. So, when the Holy Spirit of God moves in the heart of a sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, to regenerate that heart, to give a new birth from above, He produces in that sinner faith in Christ and repentance from sin, so that the person no longer rejects the knowledge of God, but desires it; no longer suppresses the knowledge of God, but seeks it. We, then, have become disciples of Jesus Christ, those who want to learn from Christ, gaining knowledge of God.

- A. see how that appears in the Lord's Great Commission to the church: "make disciples"
 - 1. the church goes preaching forgiveness of sins in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - 2. those who, by the work of God's Spirit in them, believe in Christ, become His disciples
 - 3. those disciples begin the life-long pursuit of the knowledge of God through Christ

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The Holy Spirit has made us disciples of Jesus Christ, who want to gain knowledge of God

III. The Lord Jesus Christ has set in place the means by which we gain this knowledge of God.

- A. He gave, in the first place, the apostles, as eye witnesses;
- B. Through the apostles, He has given us the holy scriptures, the bible
 - Luke 1:4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed
- C. He has given us the church, and charged its pastors and teachers with the ministry of the Word, so that we can gain the knowledge of God
 - Ephesians 4:11-13 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

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The Lord Jesus Christ has set in place the means by which we gain this knowledge of God.

IV. Yet, despite the use of these means, given by the Lord Jesus Himself, we will not know God as we should know Him, and as we want to know Him, unless God the Father gives us the knowledge by His Holy Spirit at work within us. (Eph 1:17-18a)

A. We need the spirit of wisdom and revelation (see Isaiah 11:1-3a)

B. ILLUS: we need light for our eyes (Eph 1:18a)

C. We can then know things about God (Eph 1:18a) NEXT TIME!

-Not knowing God is a major part of the whole problem that sinful man has with God

-The Holy Spirit has made us disciples of Jesus Christ, who want to gain knowledge of God

-The Lord Jesus Christ has set in place the means by which we gain this knowledge of God.

-Yet, despite the use of these means, given by the Lord Jesus Himself, we will not know God as we should know Him, and as we want to know Him, unless God the Father gives us the knowledge by His Holy Spirit at work within us.

V. Since we can have knowledge of God only as God gives it to us by His Spirit, we pray that He will give it to us! (Eph 1:16b-17a)

A. This takes us right to the nature of prayer

B. So often we think of prayer this way:

1. there is something I want God to do for me or for people I care about

2. He is not of a mind to do it

3. I will ask Him to do it, or demand He do it

4. He will then be persuaded to do it

C. Here, though, is the concept of prayer the apostle is teaching us here

1. there is some good thing God is sure to do

2. we know what that is from the bible He has given us

3. we pray that God will do what He has said He will do

4. God is pleased to do it for us, as a father is pleased to give his children their food when they ask for it

D. In the case of giving knowledge of Himself

1. God has said He will give knowledge of Himself

2. He has sent the Lord Jesus, so through Him we can know God

3. The bible sets down what the Lord Jesus has revealed to us about God

4. The Holy Spirit has regenerated our hearts, so that we love the knowledge of God and have become disciples of Jesus Christ

5. The Lord Jesus Himself gave us pastors and teachers to perfect us, work on us, and build us up with the truth of the scriptures until we gain the knowledge of God

6. We pray that by these means the Lord will give us knowledge of Him

7. He, then, is pleased to do it for us, since we are in His beloved Son, and we are asking in His Name, as adopted sons of the loving Father

CONCLUSION

- Not knowing God is a major part of the whole problem that sinful man has with God
- The Holy Spirit has made us disciples of Jesus Christ, who want to gain knowledge of God
- The Lord Jesus Christ has set in place the means by which we gain this knowledge of God.
- Yet, despite the use of these means, given by the Lord Jesus Himself, we will not know God as we should know Him, and as we want to know Him, unless God the Father gives us the knowledge by His Holy Spirit at work within us.
- Since we can have knowledge of God only as God gives it to us by His Spirit, we pray that He will give it to us!

Seeing that God has begun such a good work in us, giving us faith in Christ and love for His saints, and thanking Him for that, we also pray that He will continue His good work in us by giving us knowledge of Him.

Knowing God, then, is the very purpose for which the New Testament scriptures were written
Luke 1:4

I. This is what the Lord has commanded

II. This is how the Lord has structured His church
He has given us the scriptures
He has given elders and other gifted brothers to teach

III. Yet for it to work, God the Father must give

IV. Therefore we pray for this

John 17:3

Mat 13:11

Luke 1:4

John 8:32

Hebrews 8:11

John 10:38

2 Timothy 2:25

Calvin:

To be brief, it is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit to teach us in such a way that the word we hear may thereby have its position and true valuation, and that we may profit from it.

Calvin:

every one of us ought also to apply it generally to his own life. Therefore when we come to be taught God's Word, or when any one of us reads it by himself, let us not imagine our minds to be so discerning that we are able sufficiently to understand whatever the Scripture tells us, but let us acknowledge our own lack of understanding and pray God to make his doctrine prevail with us

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory

Calvin:

the Father of glory, or the glorious Father (for the expression 'Father of glory' stands in the Hebrew language for 'glorious Father')

may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him

Hodge:

adequate knowledge of divine truth

the eyes of your understanding being enlightened

that you may know

what is the hope of His calling

what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints

Hodge:

due appreciation of the future blessedness of the saints

what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe

Hodge:

which had been already exercised in their conversion
a proper understanding of what they themselves had already experienced
in their conversion

As God raised Christ from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places; so you, that were dead in sins, hath he quickened and raised you up together in him. This analogy is the very thing he would have them understand. They had undergone a great change; they had been brought to life; they had been raised from the dead by the same almighty power which wrought in Christ. There was as great a difference between their present and their former condition, as between Christ in the tomb and Christ at the right hand of God. This was something which they ought to know.

he conversion of the soul is not a small matter; nor is it a work effected by any human power. It is a resurrection due to the exceeding greatness of the power of God.

Whatever be the precise distinction in the signification of the words, their accumulation expresses the highest form of power. It was nothing short of the omnipotence of God to which the effect here spoken of is due. No created power can raise the dead, or quicken those dead in trespasses and sins.

see Colossians 2:12