

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

EPHESIANS 01:15–18

Introduction

Paul had just declared the eternal plan of God for the world (v. 3-14). It is crucial that believers come to know the God of this plan in the most personal and intimate sense. This is the great subject of this passage: the knowledge of God — it is absolutely essential that believers grow more and more in the knowledge of God and that the world come to know God as their personal Saviour.

- I. The basis: faith and love (vv. 15-16).
- II. The need: a growing knowledge of God — the God of Christ and the Father of glory (vv. 17-18).
- III. The results of knowing God (v. 18).

I. Ephesians 01:15–16 Testimony of the Ephesian Church

The basis of knowing God is faith and love. The Ephesian church had a strong testimony, a testimony so strong that it was being buzzed about all over the world. Their testimony and its strength had reached the ears of Paul. And note what it was that he had heard: the church had a strong faith in the Lord Jesus and had a strong love for all the saints (believers) of God.

=> He had heard about their faith in God's love (that God had sent His Son to save the world) and about their loyalty to the Lord Jesus in carrying the message of God's love throughout the world.

=> He had heard that they were ministering to the saints of God — demonstrating a great love for God's people.

It was this fact — their strong testimony of faith and love — that had stirred Paul to write the Ephesians. He knew that the Christian life never sat still. A person has to grow or else he slips backward. Therefore, Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to grow in their knowledge and power of God. He had just shared the great blessings of God which was theirs when they first came to know God (see Eph. 1:3-14). Now he wanted them to grow in these blessings, the blessings of knowing God and experiencing the power of God. Therefore, he told them that he prayed for them. In fact, he never ceased to ask God that they might grow in the knowledge and power of God.

II. Ephesians 01:17–18 Growing in the Knowledge of God

The great need of believers is to grow in the knowledge of God. Note that the God we are to know is clearly identified. He is not the god of our own minds and thoughts — the god we conceive when we picture what God is like — the god made by men's minds and hands — the god of religion.

- => The God we are to know is the God of Jesus Christ: that is, the God whom Jesus Christ worshipped when He was on earth as a Man; the God whom Jesus Christ came to reveal to men. There is no other God — not a true and living God. If we are to really know God, we must come to know the God whom Christ worshipped and revealed.
- => The God we are to know is the Father of glory, that is, the only true and living God, the Supreme Majesty and Sovereign Lord of the Universe — the One who is the Supreme intelligence and power of the universe and who has created all and rules over all — the One who is omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (present everywhere), and so expansive that His very being and presence reaches out beyond the stars and embraces all that is or ever will be — the One who declares that He has “set His glory *above* the heavens” (Psa. 8:1).

This is the God we are to know. As stated, He is the only living and true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the God of glory. Believers must grow more and more in the knowledge of Him; they must gain an ever-increasing knowledge of Him.

Three things are essential if believers are to grow in the knowledge of God. And remember these things are so important that Paul prayed unceasingly for God to give them to the believer.

1. First, to grow in the knowledge of God a believer must have the *Spirit of wisdom* (sophia). (See *Wisdom*, Eph. 1:8.)
 - a. Note the phrase “the Spirit of wisdom.” What the believer needs from God is *a spirit...*
 - a spirit that reaches out and grasps after wisdom
 - a spirit that hungers and thirsts after wisdom
 - a spirit that seeks and seeks after wisdom
 - b. Wisdom can best be understood by the single words *what* and *how*. Wisdom means knowing what something is, what is behind something, and what can be done. It is knowing how to use or relate to something. Therefore, spiritual wisdom means...
 - knowing who God is and how to relate to Him
 - knowing the truth and how to use it
 - knowing what to do and how to do it
 - knowing how to live more and more fruitful lives — for the glory of God and for the welfare of men
 - c. Wisdom differs from knowledge. Knowledge is the grasping of facts, but grasping facts is not enough. Much more is needed: a person must know how to use the facts. That is where wisdom comes in. Wisdom knows how to use the facts. The point is this: it is not enough to know the facts about God; a person must know God personally. He must know how to experience the facts about God. He must use the facts to develop a personal relationship with God — a growing relationship — a relationship that is

intimate, and grows deeper and deeper. This is the meaning of the word *knowledge* (*epignosei*): a personal and intimate relationship with God; a personal experience with God. It is not an intellectual knowledge of God, but an experiential knowledge of God.

Thought 1. If the believer is to grow in the knowledge of God, he must seek the wisdom of God more than anything else on this earth. It is the person who hungers and thirsts after God and His righteousness that is filled.

Mat 7:24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

Col 2:3 *In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

2 Tim 3:15 *And how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*

2. Second, to grow in the knowledge of God a believer must have the *Spirit of revelation*.
 - a. Again, note the phrase “the Spirit of revelation.” It is the Holy Spirit who reveals God to the believer. This is made abundantly clear by Scripture.

1 Cor 2:9-12 *However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

The believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God (Jn. 14:16-17; 14:26; 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:16). The Spirit of God dwells in him to teach him the deep things of God. But note what the believer must have in order to grow in the knowledge of God: “the Spirit of revelation”...

- is a spirit that drives after God
 - is a spirit that seeks to know God
 - is a spirit that hungers and thirsts after God above all else
- b. The word *revelation* (*apokalypseos*) means to manifest; to reveal; to unveil; to uncover; to open. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal the knowledge of God to Christians. In fact it is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning of all truth

to the Christian (Jn. 14:26; 16:12-15). This is clearly seen in 1 Cor. 1:9-16 where the wisdom of the world is contrasted with the wisdom of God. A spiritual Christian sees (through the Spirit revealing to him) the meaning behind world events as well as day-to-day experiences. He understands who and what is behind the events of history and human experience. Therefore, he gains a growing knowledge of God day by day.

Thought 1. If the believer is to grow in his knowledge of God, the richness and deep things of God must be opened up to the believer. But the things of God are like everything else that is worthwhile: they are not just handed over to men. A man must seek to learn more and more about God. He must seek to have the truth of God revealed to him.

Thought 2. Lehman Strauss points out that human philosophy says, “know thyself” (*Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 132). However, Jesus said, “Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (Jn. 17:3).

To know oneself is important — very, very important. But the greatest thing in all the world is to know God personally and to know that one shall live with God forever. God and eternal life are the summits of knowledge. It is better to know that one shall never die, than to know all there is about oneself and lose that knowledge at death.

3. Third, to grow in the knowledge of God a believer must have the *eyes of his heart enlightened*. This is a beautiful description of the heart: “the eyes of your heart.” The heart must be opened so that the light of God can be seen and grasped. An open heart is the responsibility of both the believer and the Holy Spirit.

=> The believer must open his heart and focus its affection, intelligence and will upon knowing God.

=> The believer must seek the Holy Spirit to enlighten and flood his heart with the things of God.

2 Cor 4:6 *For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

Eph 1:18 *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.*

1 Pet 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Psa 18:28 *You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.*

Psa 119:130 *The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

III. Ephesians 01:18 Results of Knowing God

The results of knowing God are threefold.

1. A believer comes to know the hope of God's calling. What is the hope of the believer's call? It is what has already been covered in the great spiritual blessings of God (Eph. 1:13-14):

=> that we should be holy and blameless, living in His sight forever and ever (v. 4).

=> that we should experience what it means to be adopted as sons of God — forever and ever (vv. 5-6).

=> that we should experience eternal redemption and forgiveness of sin (v. 7).

=> that we should possess the wisdom and understanding of God (v. 8).

=> that we should live in the perfect heaven and earth where there will be no more division but only peace and unity in Christ Jesus (vv. 9-10).

Very simply stated, God has called us to stand before Him in the name and righteousness of Jesus Christ — to stand before Him just as Jesus Christ stands before Him: perfect. It is evident that we are not perfect — not now, not yet. But the day is coming when we shall be. Right now we experience the blessings of God only in part, only imperfectly. But when the glorious *Day of Redemption* comes, we shall be made just like our Lord Jesus Christ, righteous and perfect, enabled to live in God's presence, worshipping and serving Him forever and ever. This is the believer's hope; this is the believer's calling.

Mat 13:43 *“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”*

Rom 8:16-17 *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Rom 8:29-30 *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

Phil 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

1 John 3:2 *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

Col 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

2. A believer comes to know God's inheritance — His inheritance in the saints. Believers are themselves the inheritance, that is, the heritage and possession of God. When we come to know God, we learn who we are — the glorious position God has given us: He has made us His very own possession and heritage. (See *Inheritance*, Eph. 1:11-13.)
3. A believer comes to know and to experience the enormous power of God. In discussing this glorious result, Paul explodes into a discussion of God's power which was clearly shown in what He did for Christ. Because of its length, it is discussed in a separate subject in the next outline.

Eph 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. ■