

Knowledge of God

Joe Slater

We usually associate knowledge with facts and truths that we know intellectually. And make no mistake about it, that kind of knowledge is critically important! In Scripture, however, “knowledge of God” surpasses the mental accumulation of facts about God, and includes the spiritual relationship we have with Him.

When God, through the prophet Hosea, lamented “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*” (4:6), intellectual knowledge was only part of the issue. Yes, the priests had failed in their duty to teach the Law, thus both they and the people had forgotten it.

But the trouble extended to the Israelites failure to know God, not just to know about Him. They were His chosen people, yet they behaved like pagans! “*There is no truth, or mercy, or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed*” (4:1b-2). They weren’t like God at all; they didn’t know Him.

God pleaded further in Hosea 6:6, “*For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*” But wait! Didn’t the Law of Moses require the Israelites to offer sacrifice and burnt offerings? Assuredly, it did! But merely burning an ox on an altar in rote obedience wasn’t what God desired. He intended for their sacrifices to change them, to make them merciful as He is merciful. He wanted them to know Him, not merely go through the motions ritually.

Jesus said that eternal life is to know the true God (John 17:3). Paul’s great desire was to “*know (Christ) and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*” (Philippians 3:10). You know about God; but do you know Him?

A Tried & True Way to Live

"Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God" (John 13:3).

There are three things in life that give you purpose: (1) where you came from; (2) why you're here; and (3) where you are going when this life is over. We came forth from God, being made in his image. We are more than conquerors in Christ who loved us, and we are returning to be with the Father and Jesus when it's all said and done.

I believe the reason most people become diehard sports fans is because they get to see life in fast motion. There are the wins, losses, heartbreaks, disappointments, comebacks, and the unbelievable outcomes. Life is like that but it takes much longer. Staying focused on Jesus through it all is the only way to make it to the finish line. Christianity is all about separating the genuine from the superficial.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). Throughout the scriptures we are encouraged to persevere, endure, not grow weary and never lose heart.

Regardless of the response Jesus received, he stayed focused on his mission. Misunderstood – didn’t change his mission. Unappreciated – didn’t change his mission. Hated by some – didn’t change his mission.

--Roger Holm (Tijeras, NM)

FOOLISH PREACHERS

Phillips Brooks was one of the most noted of Protestant preachers during the last quarter of the 19th century. He was very impressive in his appearance, quite large in physical form and of a fine countenance. When he visited Boston in those days, multitudes of the great and small would seek to hear him preach. One of his frequent hearers wrote him a letter which reveals a great side of the preacher:

“Dear Dr. Brooks: I am a tailor in a little shop near your church. Whenever I have the opportunity, I always go to hear you preach. Each time as I hear you preach I seem to forget all about you, for you make me think of God.”

As for religious television, the screen is dominated by some of the most self-aggrandizing men ever to place themselves before the public. There have always been some of this type, even long before television. However, these in our day have access to the masses through television which could never assemble in any hall or coliseum ever built. And, to enhance their personal appeal and prestige, they seem to employ every stratagem and artifice of which the human mind is capable. The attention they draw to themselves through all sorts of grooming, mannerisms, and showman techniques are quite amazing to behold. In response to all of this the great crowds wave their hands and shout their acclamations as the preachers work the excited pitch higher and higher.

A man who professes to represent the spirit of Christ in the pulpit should be ashamed of drawing such attention to himself. Every such man should strive for the effect which was felt by the humble tailor when he heard Phillips Brooks – to make our hearers “think of God” and not ourselves should be our aim.

--Hershel Dyer (Tulsa, OK) via Old Paths