

Grace for Knowing God

by Bob Hoekstra

God's grace is available to us in order to get to know Him better and have a personal close relationship with Him.

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Scripture: John 6:57, John 14:10, John 17:3, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 2:13, Philippians 3:8, Colossians 1:27, 2 Peter 1:2, 2 Peter 3:18

Topics: "Knowing God", "Christian Living"

Description

This sermon focuses on the theme of Grace for Knowing God, emphasizing the importance of developing a deep relationship with God through His grace. It highlights the concept of being in Christ and Christ being in us, leading to a transformative life lived by faith in the Son of God. The sermon encourages believers to seek a multiplied abundance of grace and peace through growing in the knowledge and intimacy of God and Jesus our Lord.

Transcript

Well, our study for this time together is from our Growing in the Grace of God series. This is study number five of six, entitled Grace for Knowing God. Grace for Knowing God.

Let's pray together, shall we, asking the Lord to work as we open the word. Lord, we come seeking you now, ask you to work by your Holy Spirit in our hearts and our minds, captivating our hearts, establishing our hearts, renewing our minds, teaching us more and more how to thank the Lord from your perspective. And we thank you for this majestic theme of grace in your word.

It is just too good. It's good beyond words, it's good beyond measure. And we thank you that it's part of the good news of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And we pray you administer such life to us now, we pray, in his name, amen. Grace for Knowing God. By way of introduction, God's grace is available to us in order that we might get to know him better and better.

This is the pinnacle of the reasons God has his grace available to us, and they are comprehensive in scope. Relationship is the heart of the kingdom of heaven. Us meeting the Lord, us growing in the knowing of the Lord.

And grace for knowing God. We're just talking about the pinnacle point that God leads us to in grace. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 13.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ. We were far off. How could you comprehend the spatial dilemma of how distant we were from God before we met the Lord Jesus Christ? We're now in Christ Jesus.

How close is that? We'll talk about that in this study. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off, this describes every Christian, this describes us. We were far off.

We were distant, separated, alienated from God. But we have been brought near, brought near, brought to the possibility, the availability of a personal close relationship with the Lord God Almighty. We can add here Ephesians 1.7. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

The shedding of the blood of Christ provides forgiveness to alienated sinners. This is part of the riches of His grace. This is not exhaustive of the riches of His grace.

Think of how much rich grace was poured out though just to take all of us from far off, guilty in sin and death and transgression and erasing that sin, washing away that sin and opening the door to bring us near to the Lord. By this shed blood, given the opportunity of intimate, close one-on-one friendship and relationship with the Lord. Now with that in mind, with that in view, our next heading, Getting to Know God.

Again, I believe you could say biblically that this is the highest use of God's grace, that we may grow in knowing the Lord. 2 Peter 3.18 2 Peter 3.18 This is a great verse for our subject on the grace of God. 2 Peter 3.18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

God's grace and knowing God are linked here together in this verse. We are to grow in these realities. We are to grow in the grace of God.

The grace of God that brought us from far off to near. We are to grow in the knowing of this Lord God that we have been brought nigh unto. God's grace and knowing God, they go together.

You can see it biblically and we'll see it in many places. But it is fascinating that right here in one verse they're linked together. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

May I use a little different noun form? But grow in the grace and knowing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Sometimes people think the knowledge of the Lord is just speaking biblically of facts and information gathered and collected. Well, certainly there are facts and information about God that just permeate the Word of God.

But they are not there just so we have more information. It's there so that we have a relationship with the Lord. I know a lot of information and facts about my wife.

My wife of 42 plus years. A lot of information I've gleaned through the years. From her, from her family, all of that.

But you can't say a marriage is just collecting all that data. An historian can do that kind of work. But to be married is to know one another.

To get acquainted with one another. And so it is with the Lord God Almighty. In fact, the scriptures in Ephesians use the husband and wife relationship as an illustration of Christ and His bride.

We're to be growing in the knowing of the Lord. That word knowing, I like it because it gives the emphasis of relationship, not just information. Or if you're getting some great information in the Word, it is unto a knowing of the Lord.

He knows us. He wants us to get to know Him. John chapter 17.

This is a great verse on this issue of knowing the Lord. John 17 verse 3. In the high priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ as He was approaching the cross. He prayed, and this is eternal life.

Boy, how would you complete a sentence that starts out like that? And this is eternal life. If you started out a sentence, this is included in eternal life. You could biblically, validly fill out the statement with all kinds of things.

And still be biblically accurate. But if you open it up, and this is eternal life. There has to be an equality with that statement, eternal life, and what you conclude the sentence with.

What's big enough in one statement to catch the whole scope of what eternal life is about? And this is eternal life. That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Getting acquainted with God is what eternal life is all about.

Getting acquainted with Him. Eternal life is not just unending existence in a forgiven state. Though praise the Lord it is that.

That's included in eternal life. But that doesn't equal eternal life. It's way bigger than that.

And this is eternal life. That we may know the Lord. That's what it's all about.

It's about a lifelong, eternity long relationship with the Lord. You know it is a sad thing. That too many Christians, after meeting the Lord God through Jesus Christ.

In new birth and salvation. They do not grow in acquaintanceship with the Lord. To fall back on that analogy in Ephesians 5. Husband and wife relationship.

A picture God is building of the relationship between Christ and His bride. What if when I married my wife Dini. What if I said to her, I'm so happy to be your husband.

So delighted you're my wife. This is a glorious moment. And I have great love and concern for you.

And I'll be checking in every five, ten years to see how you're doing. That's how devoted I am. Well, it's absolutely ludicrous to think in those terms.

Anyone would say instantly, well that's not a marriage. No, that would be a violation of marriage. Marriage with love from God and love for God.

And love that two people develop in toward each other before God. That's an ongoing daily dynamic of relationship. Husbands and wives should be getting to know each other better and better and better.

Throughout their pilgrimage here on earth. Well, how much more so? Christians should be getting to know their God. The Lord wants us to get acquainted with Him.

He's a God of love. And His heart of love. He knows that the greatest thing He could ever give us is Himself.

And He wants to be giving Himself to us. He wants to be revealing Himself. He wants us to know the glories of Himself.

He wants us to be blessed by all of the impact. Comes into a heart and life as they're growing and knowing the Lord. You know how that works in a human relationship.

I've testified of it in marriage. I've been greatly blessed through the years to get to know my wife better and better. And there are other believers along the way I've known.

And there was a huge impact on my life. Really, no one has been an impacting instrument in my life such as my wife has been. But I've known other Christians and as I got acquainted with them, great was the impact on my life of what? Of who they were becoming in Christ.

Well, how about if we're just getting to know God? Getting acquainted with Him. Learning His heart, His mind, His character. And see, this is revealed in the Word of God.

And He wants to take the things that are revealed in the Word, introduce them into our heart and mind, and then work them into us and through us, blessing others as well. This is eternal life. Here's the great thing.

Not just that we will exist forever in a forgiven state. Praise be to God for that great blessing. But in that forgiven state, that cleansed, justified state, we can be walking with the Lord, learning of the Lord.

Glorying in the Lord. Boasting in the Lord. Blessed and touched by the Lord.

And be doing that forever. A lifetime on earth is not sufficient to fully get to know the Lord. It's a wonderful arena to begin.

And we should be growing in the knowing of the Lord from new birth till we're gone from this earth. But it's going to last for eternity. We're just to get at it now.

Eternal life. You might say also life itself is described in this issue of getting to know the Lord. People who are born onto this planet and do not respond to the message of creation, that there's a great God who made this, and then respond to the provoking of the conscience within, that there's accountability and a moral right and wrong, and that we somehow need to settle these things with the one, obviously, who is so majestic who created it.

What a wasted life. And this is eternal life, getting to know the Lord. Philippians chapter 3 speaks of these wonderful truths.

Philippians chapter 3. It's the main theme of this chapter, getting to know the Lord. Look at verse 8. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ. I count all things loss.

Everything was of negative value, a minus value, if it was going to get in the way of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. That's what Paul said. I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

That could be translated for the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. The excellence. The surpassing value.

That treasure which excels every other thing of any value in time or eternity. The excellence. The surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

The knowing of Christ Jesus my Lord. Building a growing relationship with the Lord is the number one issue in the scriptures. It's the number one issue in life.

It's the number one issue in eternity. It's the number one issue for us personally. No wonder in verse 10 Paul said that I may know him.

That was Paul's goal. That I may know him. Well Paul you've been saved for many years now.

You already know him. Knowing the Lord is not just an introduction and a few exposures to him. It's a lifelong of growing in knowing the Lord.

That I may know him. That was Paul's heart's desire. That was his life goal.

That was his constant prayer. That was his explanation of what his life was all about. In fact if you add verse 13 here.

Brethren I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do. Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. What was this one thing that Paul did? By the way. Who would read Paul's life and think that he would reduce it to one thing I do.

Looks like he did a few dozen things in the kingdom of heaven. He had all kinds of gifts and all kinds of roles. All kinds of history and testimony.

He boiled it down to this. One thing I do. What was that? It was pressing toward the goal.

What's his goal? That I may know him. Paul viewed his whole life as consumed with one issue. Pressing on to know the Lord.

That was his goal. He described it as the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. The prize.

Every benefit that comes from knowing the Lord. The upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Come get to know me is the call of heaven to all of us on earth.

Getting to know God. That's what life's all about. That's what the grace of God is ultimately about.

You say, well what about all these other things? Learning and serving and sacrificing and growing and discipling and being disciplined. That's all about. It's all to the end that we might know him.

Anything that God has called us to in our life of service and growth here on earth. Anything he's preparing us for in heaven. It's going to all be related to this one majestic reality.

And dear ones. When we forget this or ignore this. What happens? This cold religious wind blows across our heart and mind.

There's just a barrenness. A lifelessness. A disinterest.

A coldness. Oh, but when we are pressing on to know the Lord. When we agree with Paul.

That the knowledge of the Lord, the knowing of Christ is the surpassing value in life. It just adds a glory to everything. Brings everything into focus.

Everything else falls in line under and behind that. Everything else is sort of also an outworking of that. You remove this from the Christian life.

You're cutting the heart out of the life. And many, many a Christian is struggling in dryness and deadness and barrenness. And I really believe this is the issue.

They have not learned in the word that it's all about getting to know the Lord. Or they have forgotten that. Or they've gotten distracted from that.

Getting to know the Lord. God's grace is available to work on our mind, on our heart, on our very spirit. The very core of our being.

To give us a passion for this subject. And you know, what a glimpse into the heart of God is the subject of the grace of God. I mean, Peter wrote, this is the God of all grace.

Grace isn't just a whole bunch of blessed issues for us. This is characteristic of our God. He's the God of all grace.

That's just who He is. No wonder that's how He works. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 17.

A great prayer. Ephesians 1, 17. A prayer that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of Him.

Here's the language of grace again. Give. That God may give to you.

When we're asking God to give us things, we're asking for God to work by His grace in our lives. Grace is from God. It must be given.

It can't be earned. It can't be bartered for. It must be received.

And to receive it, it must be given. And it's the Lord Himself who wants to give these things. What is Paul praying that God would give to the saints at Ephesus and all the saints who would ever read this ever after? That God may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

In the knowing of Him. Oh, the blessings listed here in the first chapter of Ephesians. Oh, what rich blessings of grace.

Right here, just in the first part of this first chapter. Then it's followed with a prayer. Well, that's the way to walk with the Lord.

Be learning of the revealed truths of the Word of God. That God has laid out for us in His Word. And pray that His Spirit, verse 18, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.

That God by His Holy Spirit would enlighten us concerning these things that He wants us to know about Himself. And then we just pray back to Him the things He has revealed. Oh Lord, let me get to know You in these ways.

Work these ways in my life. Let me get to know You as the source of these blessings. A spirit of wisdom and revelation.

God by His Holy Spirit giving us a spiritual mindset that is focused on getting to know the Lord. And is actually giving us wisdom and revelation in the knowing of the Lord. The Lord by His Spirit enlightening us to get to know the Lord with wisdom and insight.

What He's like, what He wants to do for us, in us, with us, through us. It's really a prayer for spiritual enlightenment unto a greater knowing of the Lord. Well, getting to know God.

That's a good glimpse in the scripture of that consideration. Our next heading, the phrase, In Christ. What does that have to do with grace for knowing God? Well, part of the intimacy of relationship that is available to each of us in Christ is captured in this great phrase, In Christ.

I hope that phrase has captured your attention in the word. For years as a young believer and early as a young pastor, I just slid right over in reading the phrase, In Christ. I just took it as coinciding with the truth that I'm a Christian.

Okay, In Christ, yeah, that's me, I'm a Christian. Well, yeah, those thoughts are related, but that's the barest, that's the slimmest, that's the most initial of issues in that great phrase, In Christ. In Christ, it speaks of closeness of relationship with the Lord.

And by the way, it also speaks of the resources and the realities of grace that are in Christ Jesus, our Lord. In Christ, what a phenomenal phrase. Let's read a couple of rich verses in the word on this subject.

Galatians 6.15 Galatians 6.15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but a new creation. That's what avails. That's what makes a difference.

That's what changes things. That's what impacts lives, being a new creation. And this is in Christ Jesus.

Start of that verse, Galatians 6.15 In Christ Jesus. This is our spiritual address, really. This is where we live spiritually, in Christ.

It's where we're located, it's where we're found. It's also how we live. We not only are connected to Christ so much so that we are in Christ, not only is that where we live, it's how we live.

In other words, we are to learn to live by drawing upon the resources that are ours in Christ. I often think of a fish in an ocean in this setting, you know. If a fish is in an ocean, yeah, that's where he lives.

Mr. Fish, where is he to be found? In ocean. But there's way more to it than that. The fish also lives on all the resources that are found there in that ocean.

And ocean is a good term when you're talking about grace. Ephesians 3, the unfathomable riches of Christ. So in Christ Jesus, that's where we live, that's how we live.

And here's a great truth about those who are connected to Christ that way. Where they dwell in him and they live on the blessings that are found in him. Here's a truth.

For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision or uncircumcision avails anything. Those who are connected with Christ, those who have been brought near, who once were far off. Human religious circumstances do not matter a bit.

Circumcision, religious people. Uncircumcision, people in the world that know nothing of, care nothing of religious matters. That's often the way those terms are used in the New Testament.

You might say, oh, this person, I know this person who's such a religious person. If they just got saved, what a phenomenal instrument they'd be. Well, someone else might say, I know this person who's so worldly, so ungodly.

If they got saved, nobody could be used like this person. Someone else might think, well, I think God wants to really save this person because he's so religious. And then others say, you know, I don't think this person can get saved.

They're just so worldly. You know what? When it comes to this matter of relationship with Jesus Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything. It's not significant.

It doesn't settle issues. It doesn't guarantee salvation or guarantee great fruitfulness in salvation. In fact, all of the human issues of circumstance, they do not avail anything in the kingdom of heaven.

Oh, in the family of men, human circumstance is huge. And this is one of the biggest ones that has ever existed in the history of humanity. Circumcised, oh, one of the called ones.

A Hebrew, a Jew, a son of Abraham, according to the flesh, in his line, circumcised. Oh, and then everyone else, the uncircumcised. What temptation to pride for those who were circumcised? What casting off to degradation and disinterest and shame those who aren't circumcised? This is one of those huge lines humanity has drawn.

And it goes on from there. Are you a man? Are you a woman? Are you educated or uneducated? Are you young? Are you old? Are you rich? Are you poor? Are you from my country or another country? Are you this color or that color? People set their entire life around those issues on earth. And then you come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

These things don't avail anything. They don't qualify anyone for the blessings of God. They don't disqualify people for the blessings of God.

Well, then what avails? What matters? What brings access? What brings change? What is significant? Well, in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision or uncircumcision avails anything but a new creation. That's what avails. That's what opens access to the gates of heaven.

That's what opens up the resources of God's grace to people's lives. New creation. Being made new by God.

Being given a new life. It didn't come through any human bloodline. Or any human riches.

Or any human status. It just comes straight from God. Behold, if any man is in Christ, he's a new creation.

That's what avails. That's what changes. That's what impacts.

That's what opens the door of God's work in lives. In Christ. It has so much to do with our relationship with the Lord Jesus.

In Christ. And see, we're not just those who are far off, who've now been brought near. That's not the end of the matter.

It's those who are far off. Here's God. Here's us.

Far off. Yes, we're brought near by the blood of Christ. But the goodness and the glory just begins there.

Because this phrase tells us, we who have been brought near are now in Christ. You know, you take hands apart, bring them together. Yes, the shedding of blood, forgiveness of sins.

Now we're close. We can communicate with the Lord. Oh, but he has something much bigger than that.

You can just enfold the hands. We are in Christ Jesus. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3. This is an astounding truth.

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. Yes, our spiritual address, we're now in Christ Jesus for time and eternity. But here we're told what is there in Christ for us to personally draw upon by humble dependence.

Oh, the riches of his grace. Makes me think of the end of verse 7, Ephesians 1, we've read about the riches of his grace. Forgiveness, redemption according to the riches of his grace.

Well, verse 3 had already mentioned the whole scope of the riches of his grace. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know, we want God to be blessed, to rejoice.

And really this word blessed be is sort of a word of, well, it's a word of grateful praise. A word of grateful praise. It's related to our English word eulogize.

Where people speak great things of another person. Well, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let our God and Heavenly Father be eulogized, be spoken highly of, be greatly blessed in our words.

Why? Upon what basis? What is the consideration of this blessing? Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. When we consider what is ours in Christ, it stirs us to bless God. To just speak words of grateful praise concerning the Lord God.

He has blessed us. Past tense. It's already happened.

He has blessed us with what? You know, sometimes we pray, God bless me. And that's a good prayer. But, you know, when we ask for God to bless us, this verse gives an underpinning.

Letting us know he's already blessed us with these things. What we're praying for is that the blessing would become evident in our pilgrimage. Look what God has done for those who are in Christ.

He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Past tense. Every spiritual blessing that heaven affords to man on earth here below has already been given to us in Christ.

You know, sometimes it feels like we're way down here on earth and God's way up there in heaven. We're in great need and we're crying out, Lord, parachute down. A grace care package, please, for me.

And God's so kind and merciful. He sees our needs and he supplies, you know. And we might even have the picture.

This great blessing is coming from far away to me in this needy spot here on earth below. Well, that's what it feels like. That's what it looks like to us.

But here's how God views it. When we were far off, we were out there where there were no blessings. When we were brought near to Christ, we were brought to the one in whom are all the blessings.

And seeing in the word that we are not only near him, we are connected to him. We are in him. Tells us that we now dwell in the place where all the blessings are found.

We have been blessed. This doesn't mean that we know all the spiritual blessings that are ours yet. This doesn't even mean that we are experiencing the ones that we know about.

It does mean they're all ours. Because we now dwell in the place where those blessings are found. And see, that's what the Lord wants to do.

Tell us how rich we are in Christ and then teach us to pray like verse 17. Oh, you would give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowing of you. The understanding of the eyes of our understanding being enlightened.

That we might know what is the hope of his calling. What are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe.

These are all blessings. Already ours. They've been given to us.

Now we pray, Lord, let me know these. You know, personally, experientially, testimonially, let me know these. I heard a story years ago that related so beautifully to this Ephesians 1-3 verse.

I loved it. I just fell in love with it. If the Lord will help me, enable me to put the pieces together.

I'll try to tell you the story I heard. Maybe you've heard it. It's such a great picture of the riches that are ours in Christ.

And how God wants us to know them. There was a slave in the south, in the U.S., back in the days after the Civil War. He had in his pocket a piece of paper with the signature of his favorite person on earth, Abraham Lincoln.

And anyone who knows the history, the awful stories of bondage and all connected with slavery, and then the Civil War, and then what Abraham Lincoln spoke forth, the Emancipation Proclamation and all, you can appreciate why this slave highly regarded President Lincoln. And he had obtained his signature that he carried around in his pocket on his person. And he loved to pull out, you know, oh, look what I got.

And he would show the person, you know, this is my man. And this is his signature. And I'm blessed and pleased and honored to have it.

One day, he pulled that out and showed it to a friend. And this friend knew how to read. This slave we're speaking of did not yet know how to read.

And his friend said to him, when he said, look, I've got the president's signature. The friend said to him, well, do you know what you have there in your pocket? He said, oh, yeah, I've got the signature of my man here. He said, no, no, no.

Do you know what that signature is on? He said, no, I can't read. And it was his personal right legally to freedom. He was in bondage, still living as a slave.

Didn't even realize that he already could walk because that had been granted to him. When I heard that, I thought, you know, boy, that fits my own spiritual testimony. You know? And maybe it does a lot of us Christians.

You know, we carry around the word. And we know the name of Jesus. We might even be able to point out the name of Jesus.

He's our man. He's the Lord of glory, you know? And we treasure this. And we love that name.

And then someone who's been spiritually enlightened, someone who's discerning, might say to us, you know what you have there? You know? This is Jesus' book. Look, there's his name. I know what I've got here.

He's the one. And they could say to us, well, what you have there is your emancipation proclamation. You've been set free from sin and death.

You are free to abound in the goodness of the Lord. And many saints are sort of spiritually illiterate. They haven't been in the word of God.

They haven't been searching out the word of God. They haven't been in fellowship with others who are growing in the knowing of the Lord, who can help them as we can help one another along in our pilgrimage. God help us.

We need to be praying in our lives, verse 18, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened that we might know these things. And then we can proclaim these things to others and see them walk in the freedom that is in Christ Jesus. Many a Christian is seriously hampered in bondage, not walking in the liberty that's theirs in Christ, especially liberty from sin and death, liberty unto life and godliness and growth, because they're not really getting to know God.

They don't know what is theirs in Christ. They don't know that abounding grace is there in Christ and it's already been given to them and it's there to draw upon in humble dependence. So abounding grace lies untapped, unused in their pilgrimage with the Lord.

Getting to know God, that's what the Christian life is all about. And this knowing of the Lord is so rich indeed that it's not just a closeness, it's a oneness, a oneness in the Lord. We are in Christ Jesus and we are enriched with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

But here's another issue to look at, our next heading. Not only are we in Christ, but Christ is in us. I think again the knitting of hand in hand and fingers overlapped.

But we're not just adjacent hand to hand, but hand in hand intertwined. We're in Him, He's in us. It's wonderful to be in Christ Jesus.

But here's another wonderful truth on top of that. Christ Jesus dwells in us. Knowing the Lord intimately, not only are we in Him, but He lives in us.

Look at Colossians chapter 1 verse 27. Colossians 1 verse 27. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. The Lord Jesus Christ dwells in us, even as we dwell in Him. What a glory this is.

What a glorious hope this is. This word hope, it's gigantic. The New Testament word hope is not wish.

People often use in English the word hope. Is it going to rain today? Well, I hope so, or I hope not. You think you'll walk in victory this week or next week? Well, I hope so.

You think you'll make it to heaven someday? Well, I hope so. It's almost like you can see the fingers crossed. Still at my age, I don't know what that means.

It's probably a cousin of knock on wood. Some kind of superstition or something. But that's not the New Testament word hope.

The New Testament word has synonyms like expectation, guarantee, certainty of the work of God. It's a great word of faith. What is our great hope of victory, of fruitfulness, of pleasing and honoring God, impacting other lives? Here it is.

Christ Jesus lives in us. He works on us, in us, and through us. What's our hope of glory? That is, making it to glory someday.

It's Christ lives in us. He's our glorious hope that assures heaven for us. Christ living in us, us living in Christ.

I was thinking of that some years ago, some visible illustration, picture of that. And one that came to my mind was a sponge living in the ocean. That sponge living in the ocean is in ocean, in the ocean.

Likening it to us, we're in Christ. But there's this other wonderful truth. That Christ is in us.

Well, how does that work? Well, picture of a sponge. When a sponge grows in the ocean and lives in the ocean, yes, it's in the ocean. It's impacted by the resources of the ocean.

But that ocean permeates that sponge. The ocean is in the sponge as well. The breakdown in that analogy certainly is this.

That a sponge does not have a knowing, growing relationship with the ocean. Whereas we do with Christ. But I like that picture because it pictures two simultaneous indwellings.

We dwell in Christ, the ocean of His grace. But Christ in the ocean of His grace, that He and that dwell in us. And the more we get to know Him, it's like it opens up our heart and life for those glorious realities.

The Lord Jesus Christ and His magnificent grace to permeate our very being. Christ in us. That's a part of the rich knowing that we have with God.

There's a great verse that speaks of this. Galatians 2.20. Do you remember it? If you haven't gotten acquainted with this verse, you'll want to. Probably it's one of your favorites.

It's certainly one of my favorites. And I think it's wise for us to periodically return to this great verse of truth. And meditate upon it.

And mull it over and chew on it. And rejoice in it. And pray about it.

Galatians 2.20. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live. But Christ lives in me.

And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Oh, this is a mind renewing, faith building, life staggering kind of truth. I certainly don't know every issue that pertains to this verse.

I certainly don't experience the absolute fullness of this verse. But I tell you, I've fallen in love with this truth many years ago. 30 some years ago plus.

Maybe 35. I have been crucified with Christ. When Christ died on that cross, not only did He die for us, but all of us who believe in Him, we died there on that cross with Him.

That old life that we had developed that could never please God and couldn't be reformed or educated or cleaned up. It just needed to be what? Crucified. You know? Good riddance to bad rubbish.

You know? You got what you deserve, Bob Hoekstra. At the cross of Christ though. Oh, what grace.

What goodness for us. I've been crucified with Christ. Therefore, the next truth.

It is no longer I who live. The Christian life we're called to, we do not manufacture it ourselves. Oh, we get completely engaged in the whole process.

Stirring both the will and to do as God works in us. And wrestling with decisions and priorities and weakness and failure. We get totally involved.

But here's the thing. We're not the source of this life. We're the vessel in which this life develops.

Then where does this life come from? Well, it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. Christ wants to express his life from the depths of our spirit and soul and mind. Out through our words, our attitudes, our relationships, our priorities.

And you can just keep the list going on. It's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. Well, how do you proceed in that? How do you, again, do that? Well, we're told immediately.

And the life which I now live in the flesh. This ongoing pilgrimage that I carry out in the flesh. Not by the flesh.

Not by the flesh. But in the flesh. That is, in this flesh and bones human body.

This life which I now live in this flesh and bones human body. I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Now, we might not be able to explain all of that.

Sure, we won't. We'll be learning that all of our lives. But here's the thing.

If we'll just read this, meditate on it, consider the terms of it, and trust God to be doing it. That's living by faith. Trust God to be doing this.

He will live in and through our lives. What rich grace this is. Grace upon grace.

A couple of verses in conclusion now. On the study of grace for knowing God. John 14.10 This is fascinating.

Because the Galatians 2.20 truth sort of mirrors the way Jesus ministered here upon earth as the Son of Man. John 14.10 John 14.10 Jesus said, do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? Okay, that's language that we've seen describing us. Us in Christ, Christ in us.

Similar context of spiritual oneness. Jesus added, the words that I speak to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does the works. Wow.

That's quite an insight into how Jesus lived and served here on earth. Yes, he was God the Son. But he did not go about independently exercising his divine rights and prerogatives.

Philippians 2 says he laid that aside, became of no reputation, just became a servant. In other words, he lived like a man was supposed to live. By trusting in the Father, counting on the Father, looking to the Father, abiding in the Father, and the Father who dwelt in him did the works.

No wonder, Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. And John 1.14 When Jesus came, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Father was dwelling in and living through the Lord Jesus Christ. And the mighty works were the Father's works at work in the obedient, dependent, humble servant Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And do you know that Jesus applied that same truth to us? That same truth about the oneness he had with the Father? He applied it to us.

You can say if Christ exemplified it, there's a good example how we are to live. He depended on the Father, we are to depend on the Son who dwells in us. You can get that biblical implication, sure, but you know what? Jesus didn't leave it there.

He made the connection for us. Remember this verse, John 6.57 John 6.57 As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, Jesus said, so he who feeds on me will live because of me. This is another one of those verses, as so.

As it is in the first case, so it is to be in the second case. What's the first case? As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father. Now think about that.

The living Father, the Father of life, God in whom life innately alone dwells, the living Father sent Jesus the Son and he became an obedient, humble servant and he says, and I live. I live here on this earth. I'm seeing this life of Messiahship lived out as I was called to it because of the Father.

As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father. He again ties his life on earth to the presence and activity of the Heavenly Father with him in that pilgrimage. So, here's the second case.

So, he who feeds on me will live because of me. Those who spiritually feed on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in him, look to him, count on him, they will live, they will have a Christian life, develop and grow and effective and fruitful because of Jesus. To put it in simple terms, as Jesus trusted in the Father who dwelt with him, so we are to trust in the Lord Jesus who dwells with us and wants to develop a life in us.

And then, our last passage in this, Grace for Knowing God, 2 Peter 1, verse 2. Oh, look how this wraps up a study on Grace for Knowing God. 2 Peter 1, verse 2. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of, let's use that word knowing, in the knowing of God and of Jesus our Lord. Multiplied grace and peace is available to us.

Don't you sense sometimes that you don't need grace added to you today, you need grace multiplied to you today? On a very needy day, great challenge, great opportunity, you're just overwhelmed. You know, if God just had a heavenly eye dropper and just dropped out a little grace now and then on us, we would be blessed beyond measure. But, he doesn't use the language here of adding, he uses the language of what? Multiplication.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you. Yes, that's what I need. Well, that's what God has available.

Well, how do we enter into that? Look at the simplicity of it. In the knowing of God and of Jesus our Lord. As we're getting to know the Lord, it's like the Lord is taking, not an eye dropper of grace, but a high-pressured firefighting fire hose, you know, and just, take that.

And if you need more, there's more where that came from. It's an overflow from just getting acquainted with the God of all grace. And then the same kind of truth in verse 3. As his divine power has given to us, there again the language of grace, has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Think of that. God has already given us everything that we need to live life the way he intends and to grow in godliness as he desires. He's already given all of that to us.

Well, how do you practically enter into it? Through the knowing of him who called us. As we are getting to know the Lord, we are accessing everything that he has that pertains to life and godliness. Multiplied grace by trusting in him, getting to know him.

All things for life and godliness accessed by his grace through growing acquaintanceship with him. Grace for knowing God. It's the highest use of the grace of God.

It's the most heart-satisfying, life-developing arena for the grace of God to work. Let's pray together about that. Lord, may these great truths that we have read be the way we think and live and walk and talk and teach and serve and disciple.

Grace upon grace, for your glory, for our desperate hearts' need, for the developing of a life of testimony and fruitfulness. Lord, by your grace and through the work of your grace, we want to get to know you better and better and help others do the same thing. Lord, that we may know you is our heart's cry.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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