

The Knowledge of Christ

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing Christ as God and man for salvation and happiness, and highlights the role of divine revelation and the Holy Spirit in receiving this knowledge.

Scripture: Matthew 11:27, John 6:45, John 14:18, John 17:3, Ephesians 1:17, Colossians 1:9, Hebrews 11:16, 1 John 2:27, 1 John 5:20

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Knowing God"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches on the profound declaration made by Jesus Christ about eternal life being found in knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent. This knowledge is not merely intellectual, but a deep, spiritual revelation that leads to possessing life everlasting. The sermon emphasizes that true eternal life begins on earth, sown in grace and harvested in glory, through a personal and intimate knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. Philpot highlights the exclusive and precious nature of this knowledge, which is a divine gift granted only to those chosen by the Father, and its critical role in salvation and eternal happiness.

Transcript

Chapter One from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

In that wondrous prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ as the great High Priest over the house of God, offered up to his heavenly Father on the eve of his sufferings and death, there is a declaration which demands of all who fear God the deepest and most attentive consideration. It is this: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John xvii. 3.) These words are often incorrectly quoted, by which much of their force and meaning is lost, "And this is life eternal, to know thee." But the Lord's words are, "that they might know thee." In the original the article stands before "life eternal," so that the meaning of the whole passage is, "And this is the life eternal which he has to give, that they whom thou hast given him may know thee." He thus explains what this eternal life is, and that it is given to the objects of his Father's love and choice, that they, and they only, might have the inward and unfailing possession of it in time and for eternity. In the preceding verse the blessed Lord had told his heavenly Father that he had "given him power over all flesh," for this express purpose, "that he should give eternal life to as many as God had given him." But for the instruction of the Church of God for all time, that she might clearly understand and know what this eternal life is which he has to bestow, and that on a matter so vital, so essential, no mistake might be made, he graciously adds the explanation

to which we have already referred.

By this plain and decisive declaration, he would for ever show that the eternal life which he has to give is no visionary, imaginary, dim, and dreamy heaven; no mere deliverance at death from illness, pain, and suffering; no narrow escape from hell, just at the last gasp; no reward of merit, or purchase of a deathbed repentance; no fruit of juggling ceremonies or absolving priests, got in the very article of dissolution, by a drop of oil or a little bread and wine; no entrance for unregenerate souls into a paradise of unknown bliss, of which on earth there had been no foretaste, and for which no previous meetness or spiritual preparedness had been inwardly wrought. All such carnal views of heaven, all such natural notions of a state of happiness after death of deceivers and deceived, the blessed Lord at once and for ever cast out by declaring with his own lips of truth and grace that the eternal life which he had to bestow consisted in two things: the knowledge of the only true God and the knowledge of himself as the sent of the Father.

The importance and significance of this declaration it is impossible to overstate. Its infinite weight is determined by eternal life being laid in the opposite scale; its immeasurable breadth by the commencement of heaven dating from a life on earth. For eternal life begins below, to be consummated above; is sown in grace, to be harvested in glory. Thus Enoch walked with God before he was translated; Abraham was the friend of God; and Moses saw the Lord face to face. These and all the Old Testament saints "desired a heavenly country" before they reached it. Heb. xi. 16.) But how could they desire a country of which they had no knowledge, foretaste, or enjoyment? Can we desire that of which we know nothing, feel nothing, taste nothing, enjoy nothing? "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," is the experience of every soul that by the letting down of heaven upon earth finds earth itself the very portal of heaven. But how can it know there is a God in heaven, unless it has found that God on earth; or desire none beside him even here below, unless here below it has felt and known his love?

But it is not our purpose to open or enlarge upon this declaration of the blessed Lord in its general bearings, or as comprehending the whole of the important truth couched therein. The part which rests with weight upon our own mind at this present moment is that which places the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ on the same level with the knowledge of the only true God. How deep, then, how mysterious, and yet how blessed must that knowledge be to obtain, to possess, to enjoy which is to be put into possession, whilst here below, of life everlasting. Science, learning, knowledge, general or special, mental ability, mechanical skill, political wisdom, intellectual refinement, and every attainment which, in a state of high civilisation, elevates men above the slaves of drunkenness and debauchery, are well for time. Who can despise modern wonders of science and skill, though he that fears God and trembles at his word may call to mind the woes denounced against ancient Tyre for her riches and her pride, (Ezek. xxvi.; xxvii.; xxviii.) and may see with fear that what she was England is, and that the same sins may call down the same doom. But what are all the attainments of science, all the wonders of art, all the triumphs of engineering skill for eternity? Yes; were all the science and art, all the skill, wealth, and power, now divided among thousands. concentrated in one individual, what would the whole collective array be compared with one grain of grace, one ray of divine teaching, one drop of atoning blood in the conscience, or one gleam of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost?

If, then, this spiritual and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ whom God hath sent is a free gift, and yet is only bestowed upon those whom the Father has given to his dear Son, how precious the possession, but O how exclusive the boon! How as with a two-edged sword this word out of the mouth of the Son of God (Rev. i. 16) cuts both ways; how, as a key worn on his shoulder and wielded by his divine hand, it

shuts as well as opens; how, whilst with one hand it raises millions to hope and heaven, with the other it sinks millions into despair and hell. As a healing word from the Lord's lips it brings rest and peace to prayerful hearts, wounded consciences, and contrite spirits; but, as a word of truth and righteousness it for ever seals the doom of the ignorant and unbelieving, the self-confident and the self-righteous, the dead in sin and the dead in profession.

As all true Christians believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and man, this spiritual, saving knowledge of his Person and work, his love and grace, his blood and righteousness, divides itself into two branches: a gracious acquaintance with his Deity as the eternal Son of God, and gracious knowledge of his humanity as the Son of man.

As we have reason to believe that what we were enabled to write upon the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord has been received with a measure of acceptance by those who know and love the truth as it is in Jesus, we have felt encouraged now to bring before them some reflections on the sacred humanity of the blessed Redeemer. To know him as God, to know him as man, to know him as God-man, and this by a divine revelation of his glorious Person, blood, and love to our souls - this is, indeed, to have eternal life in our breasts. Nor can he be savingly known in any other way but by divine and special revelation. "For no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matt. xi. 27.)

The Apostle, therefore prays for the saints at Ephesus, that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened." (Eph. i. 17, 18). He prayed for the same blessing for them as he had enjoyed for himself, as he speaks, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." (Gal. i. 15, 16.) He knew, therefore, in himself, in his own blessed and happy experience, what it was to be "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" (Col. i. 9;) and to be blessed with "all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment (or knowledge) of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii. 2, 3.) Thus he travailed in birth again for the Galatians until "Christ was formed in them;" (Gal. iv. 19;) and prayed for the Ephesians, that "Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith." (Eph. iii. 17.) He speaks also of their having "learned Christ," "heard of Christ," and "been taught of Christ," (Eph. iv. 20, 21) all which expressions point to a divine discovery of his Person and work to the heart. The blessed Lord also assured his sorrowing disciples that he would "come to them," and that they should "see" him, and "live" upon him; that they should "know that he was in them," and that he would "manifest himself to them and make his abode with them." (John xiv. 18-23.)

Nor were these blessings and favours limited to the Lord's own immediate disciples. As "the precious ointment which was poured upon the head" of our great High Priest "went down to the skirts of his garments," (Psa. cxxxiii. 2) so there is "an anointing which teacheth" the lowest and least of the members of the mystical body of Christ "of all things, and is truth. and no lie." (I John ii. 27.) By this unction from above every one that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Christ; (John vi. 45;) and knoweth for "himself that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." (I John v. 20.) If, then, we are favoured with this teaching, and "a man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven," (John iii. 27) we shall see by the eyes of our enlightened understanding "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," and what we thus see we shall believe, love, and adore.

Should we not, then, with all holy awe and godly reverence, seek to approach this mystery of wisdom, power and love' for all salvation and all happiness, as well as all grace and glory, are wrapped up in it. Right views are indispensable to a right faith, and a right faith is indispensable to salvation. To stumble at the foundation is, concerning faith, to make shipwreck altogether; for as Immanuel, God with us, is the grand Object of faith, to err in views of his eternal Deity, or to err in views of his sacred humanity, is alike destructive. There are points of truth which are not fundamental, though erroneous views on any one point must lead to God's dishonouring consequences in strict proportion to its importance and magnitude; but there are certain foundation truths to err concerning which is to insure for the erroneous and the unbelieving the blackness of darkness for ever.

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