

(Fall Gateway 1993)

KNOWING GOD

Part 1

A Personal Relationship with the Living God *Loving Him is NOT an Option*

The Essence of a Saving Faith

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.
John 17:3 (NIV)

The KNOW of John 17:3 is not restricted to simply knowing some things about the Lord God, it is rather an intimate knowledge, a personal relationship, that is being described.

* Matthew 7:21-23

* Genesis 4:1

An Examination of the New Covenant

* Hebrews 8:6-13

* Jeremiah 31:31-34

The work that Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross is called the NEW COVENANT. It consisted of 2 parts.

1. LEGAL - Our sins are forgiven (Justification).

2. EXPERIENTIAL - We receive a new motivation, a new heart (Sanctification).

The Necessity of the New Heart

The New Heart consists of a new desire to love the God of the Bible and to obey him. It is impossible for someone to really be a believer and not have this new heart. You cannot have your sins forgiven without also desiring to obey the God of the universe (John 14:21).

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Romans 6:1-2 (NIV)

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Romans 6:17-18 (NIV)

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 2:3-4 (NIV)

No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

1 John 3:9-10 (NIV)

Salvation is falling in LOVE with the Living God

Biblical salvation is NOT just an intellectual understanding and acceptance of the Good News of Jesus Christ dying to save us from our sins. Salvation also involves our emotions. You cannot enter into a relationship with Living God and remain a Stoic.

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor like yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:34-40 (NIV)

Coram Deo (practical stuff)

The Dilemma of Confessing your sins (1 John 1:9). If your sins are completely forgiven when you believe, why should you go on confessing future sins? The answer is found in sorting out our position from our experience in Jesus Christ.

KNOWING GOD

Part 2

Which God is Your God?

He is NOT Like us

It is an ONTOLOGICAL Problem

The God of Scripture is very different from us. When we compare ourselves to the Saving God of the Bible we are confronted by a problem of BEING (Ontological Problem). In His BEING God is very different from us. In some limited ways we are made like Him.

Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: "I am grieved that I have make Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions."

1 Samuel 15:10-11 (NIV)

He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.

1 Samuel 15:29 (NIV)

Difficult Passage #1 (Predestination and Responsibility)

* Romans 9:10-21

Key Question -> Can I be held accountable for something that I am unable to do?

One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will? But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?" Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?'

Romans 9:19-21 (NIV)

The Problem of Paradox

A statement or proposition which on the face of it seems self-contradictory, absurd, or at variance with common sense, though, on investigation or when explained, it may prove to be well-founded.

(Oxford English Dictionary (OED), definition #2, page 450.)

Predestination vs Responsibility

1. It is not Predestination vs Free-Will, for this is a contradiction and therefore false.
2. Affirming Responsibility in a Predestined world is NOT a contradiction.
3. Affirming Responsibility in a Predestined world is NOT neatly workable according to our categories of thinking.

Difficult Passage #2 (Original Sin)

* Romans 5:12-19

Key Question -> Can I be blamed for something that I did not do?

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned —.... Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

Romans 5:12,18 (NIV)

The fact that we are blamed for Adam's sin leaves us in a very difficult position. Does God have the moral right to blame me for something that I did not do?

Coram Deo (practical stuff)

1. Does the God of the Bible offend you? (God in the hands of angry sinners)
2. You must decide whether or not you are going to sit in judgement on the God of Scripture.
3. It may be true that your God would not do what we have described above, BUT, only the Biblical God saves.
3. It takes a gift of faith to fall in love with as He really is. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
4. When you share your faith make sure that you and the person you are leading to a saving faith in Jesus Christ is committing to the biblical God.

KNOWING GOD

Part 3

The Holiness of God *The Justification of Hell*

Defining the Holiness of God

The Holiness of God is not just one of the attributes of God, but rather what he IS in himself.

1. He is *OTHER*

The fundamental meaning of the word Holiness in Hebrew is separation. Our God is "OTHER" than we are. In the Holiness of God we come face to face with the transcendence of God. Because he is complete in every possible way we are easily overwhelmed by his presence.

... includes such ideas as "absolute unapproachability" and "absolute overpoweringness" or "awful majesty." It awakens in man a sense of absolute "creature-feeling," leading to absolute self-abasement.
(Systematic Theology, by Louis Berkhof, page 73.)

But, he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."
Exodus 33:23 (NIV)

2. He is *PURE*

Because our God is OTHER than we are he cannot do anything that is not absolutely right. Absolute PURITY necessarily results from a HOLY God.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.
1 John 1:5 (NIV)

* 2 Samuel 6:1-8 -> the touch of Uzzah

* Isaiah 6:1-6 -> our filthy presence before a Holy God

Getting Your DUE

1. Since our God cannot do anything that is not perfectly RIGHT, he must be perfectly JUST. If God were UNJUST, he would cease to be God.
2. A definition of Justice is GETTING YOUR DUE.
3. Our DUE from a Holy God, for offending him and breaking his law, is a perfect punishment.
4. Since we, as finite individuals, are not capable of fulfilling a perfect punishment the closest that we can come is ETERNAL punishment in Hell. Even this does not SATISFY his justice.
5. The JUSTIFICATION OF HELL is necessarily tied to the HOLINESS OF GOD.

He Paid Your DUE

* Romans 3:21-26

... he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:26 (NIV)

Only Jesus Christ perfectly SATISFIED the demands of the Father's justice and PAID for all of the sins of all those who were to believe in him. There existed no other means way for satisfying the demands of God's justice.

Practical Implications of the Holiness of God

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.
Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)

The desire to pursue personal Holiness is the necessary result of entering into a personal relationship with the God of all Holiness.

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Part 4

The Love of God

It's Almost Too Good To Be True

Does God Love Everyone?

The answer is YES and NO. YES, he does love EVERYONE, but NO, not to the same degree. The solution lies in our understanding of Common and Special Grace.

COMMON GRACE

* Matthew 5:43-48

* Acts 14:14-17

Common Grace is so called because it is common to all mankind. Its benefits are experienced by the whole human race without discrimination between one person and another.

(Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, edited by Walter A. Elwell, page 479.)

Everyone experiences Common Grace, or God's love in a limited form, because they are his creation and made in his image. Any good thing that the reprobate (those who will never believe) experience is a direct result of God's love.

SPECIAL GRACE

* Romans 9:13

* 1 John 4:7-12

Special Grace is the grace by which God redeems, sanctifies, and glorifies his people. Unlike common grace, which is universally given, special grace is bestowed only on those whom God elects to eternal life through faith in his Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

(Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, edited by Walter A. Elwell, page 480.)

Only the believer experiences God's love to its fullest degree. With respect to salvation, the unbeliever sits under the wrath of God, while the believer receives his love without limit.

Unconditional Acceptance

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
Romans 8:1 (NIV)

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)

1. No one accepts you unconditionally except your Lord.
2. Since you are unconditionally accepted you are freed up to reach out to others.
3. Unconditional acceptance enables you to put up with the FIRST response, while you are waiting for the SECOND response.

Coram Deo

Paul's Prayer for US

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:17b-19 (NIV)

The significance of the Lord's Supper is understood when one recognizes that it is tied to the contemplation of the God to its fullest extent, the death of the Messiah as payment for the sins of his people.