

# Knowing God

Jeremiah 9:23-24

David Feddes

<sup>23</sup> Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, <sup>24</sup> but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:23-24 ESV)

## **Evidence or hearsay**

A. W. Tozer: To most people God is an inference, not a reality. He is a deduction from evidence which they consider adequate, but he remains personally unknown to the individual. Others know of him only by hearsay. They have heard about Him from others, and have put belief in Him into the back of their minds along with various odds and ends that make up their total creed.

# Personal experience

Over against all this cloudy vagueness stands the clear scriptural doctrine that God can be known in personal experience. People can know God with at least the same degree of immediacy as they know any other person or thing. (A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*)

- **Taste** and **see** that the Lord is good. (Ps 34:8)
- My sheep **hear** my voice. (John 10:27)
- The Lord **touched** my mouth. (Jer 1:9)

# Heart organs

What can all this mean except that we have in our hearts organs by means of which we can know God as certainly as we know material things through our familiar five senses? We possess spiritual faculties by means of which we can know God and the spiritual world if we will obey the Spirit's urge and begin to use them. These senses must be quickened to active life again by the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. (A. W. Tozer)

# **Inward numbness**

But why do the very ransomed children of God themselves know so little of that habitual, conscious communion with God which Scripture offers? The answer is because of our chronic unbelief. Faith enables our spiritual sense to function. Where faith is defective the result will be inward insensibility and numbness toward spiritual things. (A. W. Tozer)

## **Bad thought habits**

God and the spiritual world are real. We can reckon upon them with as much assurance as we reckon upon the familiar world around us. Spiritual things are there (or rather we should say here) inviting our attention and challenging our trust. Our trouble is that we have established bad thought habits. We habitually think of the visible world as real and doubt the reality of any other. Sin has so clouded the lenses of our hearts that we cannot see that other reality, the City of God, shining around us. (A. W. Tozer)

# God-consciousness

The soul has eyes with which to see and ears with which to hear. Feeble they may be from long disuse, but by the life-giving touch of Christ they are now alive and capable of sharpest sight and most sensitive hearing. As we begin to focus upon God, the things of the spirit will take shape before our inner eyes. A new God-consciousness will seize upon us and we shall begin to taste and see and inwardly feel God, who is our life and our all. (A. W. Tozer)



# Not knowing God

- “The priests did not ask, ‘Where is the LORD?’ Those who deal with the law **did not know me**; the leaders rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, following worthless idols.” (Jeremiah 2:8)
- “My people are fools; **they do not know me**. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good.” (Jer 4:22)

## Which king knows God?

“Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor. Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. **Is that not what it means to know me?**” declares the LORD. (Jer 22:13-16)



# **Do you know God?**

- What makes you come alive?
- What guides you?
- What makes you feel secure?
- What scares you?
- What are you ashamed of?
- What do you glory in?

# **What makes you come alive?**

But my people have changed their glory  
for that which does not profit...

my people have committed two evils:

they have forsaken me,

the fountain of living waters,

and hewed out cisterns for themselves,

broken cisterns that can hold no water.

(Jeremiah 2:11,13)





## **What guides you?**

They hold fast to deceit; they refuse to return... Even the stork in the heavens knows her times, and the turtledove, swallow, and crane keep the time of their coming, but my people know not the rules of the LORD. How can you say, “We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us”? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie... they have rejected the word of the LORD, so what wisdom is in them? (Jeremiah 8:7-9)



**Be a birdbrain!**



## **What makes you feel secure?**

Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!” ... “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD. (Jer 7:4-11)



## **What scares you?**

“Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them... Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.” There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? (Jeremiah 10:2-7)

**Scared of  
scarecrows?**



# **What are you ashamed of?**

Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen. (Jer 6:15, 8:12)

Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us. For we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God. (Jer 3:24-25)



## **What are you ashamed of?**

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:32)

I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16)



# What do you glory in?

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he **understands and knows me**, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

# Facing our lack

We must recognize how much we lack knowledge of God. We must learn to measure ourselves not by our knowledge about God, not by our gifts and responsibilities in the church, but by how we pray and by what goes on in our hearts. Many of us, I suspect, have no idea how impoverished we are at this level. Let us ask the Lord to show us.

(J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*)

## A heart to know God

“Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians. My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. **I will give them a heart to know me,** that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.” (Jeremiah 24:5-7)

## **New covenant: sins forgiven, hearts that know God**

“I will make a new covenant... I will put my law in their minds and **write it on their hearts**. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because **they will all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jer 31:31-34)

# Jesus makes God known

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, **has made him known.** (John 1:18)

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent... **I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known** in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” (John 17:3,26)

# Knowing Christ Jesus

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of **the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ... that I may **know him** and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.  
(Philippians 3:8-14)

## **Nothing to brag about...**

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Cor 1:26-29)

# **Nothing to brag about... except the Lord Jesus Christ!**

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.” (1 Cor 1:30-31)

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Gal 6:14)



## Knowing God better

How can we turn our knowledge *about* God into knowledge *of* God? The rule for doing this is demanding but simple. It is that we turn each truth that we learn *about* God into matter for meditation *before* God, leading to prayer and praise *to* God... Meditation is a lost art today, and Christian people suffer grievously from their ignorance of the practice. (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*)

# Meditation

Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God. It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God.

(J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*)

# Knowing in relationship

- God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:9)
- Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)

# Knowing God

Grace and peace be yours in abundance **through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord**. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness **through our knowledge of him** who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may **participate in the divine nature** and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:2-4)