

Knowing God

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, O. Let's just pray before we get into God's Word.
- O Lord, we hear Jesus teaching us to say, hallowed be thy name. And in our hearts there is an amen.
- That's our desire. We live in an age, we live in a culture, in which your name is regularly abused.
- Hallowed be thy name. We want your name to be revered, respected, upheld, as holy in our lives. And yet we also hear the Savior say to us, just a sentence or two later, that we should say every time we pray, forgive us our sins.
- Oh God, our Father, how can we hallow your name in our lives when we're constantly having to ask for forgiveness?
- [1 : 3 0] But that's precisely what does hallow your name. that we are completely dependent on you, that we have not arrived at some state of sinless perfection, that we are on the way, that we are works in progress, and we are your work in progress.
- And so your name is hallowed. Your name is worthy of revered, to be revered and respected, to be honoured in everything, because we are 100% dependent on you for the people we become.
- We are 100% dependent on you to fulfil the promise of Scripture that we shall be like your Son.
- We all err in so many ways, Father. So hear our humble cry today as we pray that your word would do what Jesus asked that you would do with it, that your word today would sanctify us, that it would set us apart, that it would separate us from all that's unclean and unholy, and that you would set us apart for yourself, for your honour, for your glory, for your name to be hallowed.
- Lord, let your word have its way in our hearts today in spite of the preacher. Let the Holy Spirit apply the truth of your word to cleanse us from all that dishonours you.
- [3 : 1 2] In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, folks, we're thinking today about knowing God.
- And you would think, well, who's going to claim that they know God? Well, I'm putting my hand in the air. Anybody else want to put their hand in the air that you know God?
- Yeah, we know God. Isn't that astonishing? Sinners that we are, prone to failure, constantly falling on our faces, we know God.
- It shouldn't be possible, should it? But it is. It's a reality. So, you know, you meet people in the street and they'll say, how's life?
- I think as Christians, when we greet each other in the street, we should say, how's eternal life? How's your eternal life?
- [4 : 2 5] Are you enjoying your eternal life? Because, you see, eternal life isn't something that starts when we die. Eternal life is now.
- It's here and now. It's reality now. I'm going to look at that today. So, you pray for the preacher.

I'll just pray that the Lord uses me to send you home with something today that will enrich your life in a way that you weren't enriched before you come in today. That's what it's all about.

We're all dependent on each other. We're the body of Christ and none of us is a freelancer. Jesus said a very interesting and painful thing to a lady once.

He said, you're worshipping in ignorance. Now, just imagine if you met Jesus casually in the street and he said to you, so where have you been?

[5 : 36] No, I've just been to church. I was worshipping. And he says, oh well, that's a pity. And you say, what? Well, he says, you're worshipping in ignorance.

You're worshipping what you don't know. You've got the rituals. You've got the hymns, the songs, the prayers, the tradition.

You've got all of that, but you're worshipping in ignorance. You don't know what you're worshipping. Jesus said that to the woman of Samaria. He said, you Samaritans are worshipping what you don't know.

But the thing is, you don't need to be a Samaritan to worship in ignorance.

If you read any of the prophets, really, but I've got a section here from Amos chapter 5, the Lord says this about the worship of Israel in Amos' day.

[6 : 40] Now, just imagine if God was to say this to us today. I hate, I despise your religious feasts. And I take no doubt, no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them.

And the peace offerings of your fatted lambs, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs to the melody of your harps.

I will not listen. But, let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

You see, what God was saying to his people through Amos, the prophet, was that you don't know me. You could not be the unjust society that you are.

[7 : 51] You could not be unfair and unholy and unrighteous. You could not live in the criminal ways that you do if you knew me.

And then you come into the temple and you offer me your sacrifices and you light your incense and the smoke goes up and the priest says the prayers and you've got all the ritual.

But you don't know me because I'm a God of justice. I love justice and I hate your injustice. And I hate the hypocrisy of your services, of your ceremonies, of your sacrifices.

I hate all that hypocrisy. I want nothing to do with it. You know how you can show that you know me? You can become a just society.

You can be a righteous society. You can be a people who love righteousness and hate wickedness. You can be a people who call yourselves to account before I need to call you to account.

[8 : 54] You can be that kind of people because that's the society I'm looking for. That's the community I want to bless.

And so people's, this was God's people in the time of Amos and they were worshipping in ignorance because God was looking for justice and he was looking for righteousness and they thought he was happy with a few grains of corn.

Let's just throw a token to the Lord and that will keep him happy. But I could defraud my neighbour through the week in the way I conduct my business and God doesn't see, he doesn't notice, he's not really involved.

That's a serious place to get to. James the Apostle, this is not an Old Testament viewpoint. James the Apostle said much the same thing. He said, religion that is pure and undefiled before God.

Now, hold on, there's an implication in that phrase. It is possible to have a religion that is impure and defiled. Otherwise, there'd be no point in the Apostle saying it.

[10 : 17] Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, the Father, is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Now that, that's very strange because you don't expect an Apostle to say these things. you expect an Apostle to say, you know, you're saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.

And this looks as though James is saying, oh no, you're going to be saved by your good works, by looking after orphans and widows and keeping yourself pure. But that's not actually what James is saying.

And the proof of that is in the very first two verses of James' letter. He says, count it all joy, my brothers. Who's he speaking to?

He's not speaking to people who need to be saved. He's speaking to people who are saved. So he's not saying to them, this is how you get saved.

[11 : 32] You look after the orphans and the widows and you keep yourself pure. He's not saying that's how you get saved. He's saying, this is how if you're truly saved, you will worship God.

This is what amounts to worship in God's eyes. This is what amounts to a true reverence before God. This is how you will show, you will give evidence that you are saved.

you'll give evidence that you're saved by caring for the widows, by caring for the orphans and by being concerned not to get polluted by the world in which you live.

That will be the evidence that God has saved you because he's turned you around, he's turned your heart around. You don't have an appetite anymore for the things of the world. You don't have an appetite for sin anymore.

It doesn't mean you don't sin, but you don't like sinning. You don't enjoy sinning. It leaves a sour taste in your mouth and you have to run to the cross again and again and again and say, oh God, I so thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus.

[12 : 41] Cleanse me from my sin, Lord. And so we say, hallowed be thy name. And a few minutes later we say, forgive us our sins.

forgiveness. And God's name is hallowed in the fact that we ask him for forgiveness again and again. That's how we respect God.

We don't respect God by calling him a liar and saying that we don't have any sin to be forgiven. We show our love and our respect and our reverence for his holy name precisely in that we ask for forgiveness.

forgiveness. And he's so ready to forgive. He's so quick to forgive. I'm listening for a hallelujah here with it.

Don't hear one so far. Need to go to a Pentecostal church for that, I think. We're living in days of great ignorance, brothers and sisters.

[13 : 48] In fact, some of the most ignorant people on the planet today are the most intelligent. And the reason for that is because many of them in prestigious places of learning have been indoctrinated when they imagined, and so did their parents by the way, they imagined they were being educated.

But they've been indoctrinated. And that's the reason behind the takeovers of the campuses. people have lost the power to think for themselves.

They're doing the exact opposite of what they're at university to do. They're supposed to be learning, but they think they've learned it all and that everybody else is out of step. Brothers and sisters, that's indoctrination, that's not education.

We live in days of great ignorance, and the God revealed in the Bible is an educating God. He hates ignorance.

He just hates ignorance because ignorance is all about control. It's all about the person who is ignorant can be controlled by the person in the know.

[15 : 04] Have you noticed that? the one who's in the know can control the people who are ignorant. It's dangerous to be ignorant, and it's ungodly to be ignorant because we have an educating God.

He wants to be known, and we need to know him. that's better than knowing about him.

Satan knows about him. Let me tell you reliably, Satan is more orthodox in his theology than you or I. He knows God really, really well from an intellectual point of view, but he's still the devil.

So, brothers and sisters, it's not enough for us to know about God. we're going to get into our passage in a minute here, but let's just consider that the devil is opposed to education.

He loves indoctrination because it's all about control. He targets human minds and he seeks to control the world population against its own best interests. In other words, against our knowledge of God.

[16 : 22] God, Paul said to the Corinthians, the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel, the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

Satan is opposed to education. He's in favor of indoctrination. He wants to blind people's minds against the light and the glory of the knowledge of God.

Peter said something absolutely wonderful. He says, God has given you everything you need to live a godly life.

Absolutely everything. Let me ask you, do you find it a struggle to live a godly life? Are you anything like me? Do you fall on your face several times a week? Do you have reactions to things that are not godly, that are not good, that are not wholesome?

Do you ever watch anything on TV and think, why did I defile myself with that rubbish? Well, there's good news.

[17 : 38] Because he has given us everything we need for godly living. And how does he do that? Listen to what Peter says. his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

Through the knowledge of him. Who's the him? It's Jesus. You see, the more we get to know Jesus, the more we know him, the more we know him rather than knowing about him, the more we have a relationship with Jesus, the more equipped we are to live a godly life in an ungodly world.

The sum total of that is, folks, you cannot know Jesus too well. You can't become too familiar with your Savior. David Helm is a favorite commentator of mine and he said this.

This is a staggering statement. Just take this very slowly. Once you have become aware that the main business you are here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place of their own accord.

Once you have become aware that the main business you are here for is to know God. If I was to ask anybody here today, why do you think you're on the planet right now?

[19 : 27] What's the purpose of being here? Are we just out the road of the buses? Do we have a real purpose for being here? Here it is.

Here's a man who has realized what the scripture is saying all the way through. Once you've become aware that the main business that you're here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place of their own accord.

Now, I'm pretty sure you could ask almost anybody you care, in any church, anywhere, what the main purpose of being here is. I don't think they would, on the whole, give you the answer that they're here primarily to get to know God.

Hello? Are we? Daniel prophesied a time when there would be a person of great evil on the face of the earth.

And he would persecute the people of God. And he said that this man would work through seduction and flattery and he would call people over to his side so that they would violate the covenant they had with God.

[20 : 51] But he said there will be successful opposition from those who, wait for it, know their God. those who know their God, said Daniel, will be strong.

And that became the case. There was a family called the Maccabees who were a very, very upstanding family who had a genuine fear of the Lord and they detested the evil that this man was bringing into their country.

And they rose up against him and they threw him out and they threw out all that had been defiling in the temple. They cleansed the temple and to this day they still celebrate that victory when Antiochus Epiphanes was thrown out and overpowered.

They were strong in the Lord and in his mighty power as Paul said to the Ephesians. That's the way we need to be. But we're strong in the Lord when we know the Lord.

And God is saying don't be strangers to me. Don't be strangers. Throughout scripture he constantly says of Israel, Am I not Israel's father?

[22 : 06] Is Ephraim not my firstborn son? A father doesn't want to be estranged from his children. He knows that the best way he can bless his children is if they have a good relationship, if they're intimate, if they enjoy each other's company.

This problem about knowing God God goes a long way back. How far back do you think it goes that human beings have difficulty knowing God? Genesis 3?

Huh? Genesis 3. It goes all the way back to there. We're told that Adam and Eve, having sinned, having disobeyed, having done what they were told not to do, heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

And so they ran toward them with open arms and said, oh God, it's good to see you. No, they didn't do anything of the sort. Genesis 3 verse 8 says, the man and his wife, having heard God walking in the garden, hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

My brothers and sisters, I think that's the saddest verse in the whole of scripture. I don't think there is a sadder verse. Because what had happened here, they had lost the knowledge of God.

[23 : 44] Because you see, when you know God, you don't hide from him, you hide in him. he becomes your refuge, he becomes your shelter.

And the more you feel that you're a sinner, that you need the grace of God, the more ready he is to be a shelter for you. And the cross is the ultimate shelter.

God raised up the cross of Jesus Christ to be his shelter for sinners against his own wrath.

Because God has to judge sin. He would not be a just God if he winked at sin and just brushed it under heaven's carpet. That's not God.

He's a holy God. He's a pure God. He must judge sin. But he loves sinners. He loves us. And so he raised up the ultimate shelter against his own wrath and his own judgment.

[24 : 48] And his own son stretched out his arms and became our shelter forever. God is a holy God. He has to be a holy God.

Okay, so now we come to our portion of scripture. Behold, the days are coming. This is Jeremiah 31 at verse 31.

We're just going to read to verse 37. Jeremiah 31 at verse 31. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was her husband, declares the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

[26 : 08] And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me. From the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar, Lord of hosts is his name.

If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.

Thus says the Lord, if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the Lord.

Amen. This is God's word to us. How many of us here enjoy the benefits and the privileges of the new covenant?

[27 : 24] Okay. This is the new covenant in my blood, said Jesus. And so when we celebrate communion, we remember until he comes again that we are under a new covenant, not the old covenant, we're under the new covenant.

The covenant that costs God everything and costs us nothing. It's costly to be a disciple, but it's not costly to get saved.

It's absolutely free. Salvation is free. Do you want to be right with God? Do you need to get right with God today? salvation is free.

God's riches at Christ's expense is grace. He's done it all. There is nothing that we can add to what he's done. We don't save ourselves under any circumstances.

You know, there are millions of people in the world today in different denominations, some of them in this denomination, I'm sad to say, but they honestly think that when they die, they're kind of hoping that God feels a sense of debt towards them.

[28 : 43] Hello? They're hoping that when they die, God feels a sense of indebtedness towards them, that they've done so much for God, that they've been so kind, that they've avoided doing all the things that God doesn't like, and that because of all this, they hope that somehow or other, his ledger is going to be more in our favor and less against us.

And that somehow or other, God will feel he's got some kind of indebtedness toward us, that he needs to repay us by letting us into heaven. That's religion as many people understand it.

That's what they think it is. It's about trying to impress God. We spend all our lives trying to impress God. Oh, I never miss church. I never miss a prayer meeting. Oh, I do tons of baking for the church.

And of course, I wouldn't let an old lady stumble across the road, I would help her. And so I'm expecting by the end of all my years of good behavior that somehow or other God feels a sense of indebtedness and feels almost impressed with me.

So I'm hoping I'm going to get a report card from God that's got a kind of A++ at the top. It's not going to be like that.

[30 : 08] Because you see, I personally, I don't live my life to impress God. How on earth are you supposed to impress someone who knows everything about you? How do you do that?

How do you impress someone who knows everything you've ever done? just imagine if your entire life story could be replayed in video and posted up on the internet for the whole world to see.

You fancy, would you like to be there for that performance? Would you like to see every detail of your life on the screen flashing there for everybody to see out in the open? I don't think any of us would like that, would we?

But God knows everything there is to know about us. He has seen the video. He's made the video. He knows everything about us and still he loves us.

Just before this new covenant passage that we read, the Lord said to Jeremiah, or he said through Jeremiah to his people, his wayward people, he said, I have loved you with an everlasting love.

[31 : 26] That's the only kind of love God will ever give you. An everlasting love, a love that doesn't say I've had enough and walk out in disgust. God's love is everlasting.

He is true, he's faithful. He won't give up on you. Never, ever. But the thing I really wanted to let jump off the page for all of us today is this.

Think about how he describes this new covenant because when Jesus said this is the new covenant in my blood and we all know that New Testament impact of that. But Jesus was thinking back 500 years to when Jeremiah said this.

It was Jeremiah who predicted the new covenant that we now enjoy. But listen to this. Let's just see what it says here.

I will make a new covenant with Beltsill Baptist Church. He didn't say anything of the sort, did he?

[32 : 48] I will make a new covenant with the evangelicals of Scotland. covenant. No, he didn't say that either. He said, I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

And so when Jesus stood up and said this is the new covenant in my blood, he was thinking in terms of his own people. He was thinking in terms of God's prophesied promise from 500 years previously.

this is the new covenant in my blood. And what are the terms of that new covenant? Just listen to this. This is astonishing. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord.

I will put my law within them. Huh? Hello? Well, that doesn't feel right. Surely not. We're Christians. We're not under law. We're under grace, aren't we? What's God doing here?

The law, you see, was a gift of grace. Because God can't do anything without grace. Everything God does is a gift of grace. So the law was a gift of grace.

[34 : 00] And God said, I'm taking this gift of grace that people have violated again and again and again, and I'm going to put that same law, that same gift of grace, I'm going to write it on their hearts.

It's going to be internalized. It's going to be part of their very nature. This, brothers and sisters, is what the Holy Spirit has done for you. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ today, the Holy Spirit has written the law of God upon your heart.

You have an inclination towards goodness. You have an inclination toward righteousness. You are now able not to sin. Sin is not inevitable.

You're not a slave to sin. If you're discouraged and despondent because you keep falling on your face, it's not because you can't overcome your sin. It's because you're unbelieving that you can't overcome your sin.

If we believe what God's word tells us, then we believe that we are not slaves to sin and we are able not to sin.

[35 : 08] Let's say that again, as slowly as it needs for all of us to take it in. This is a big point that God is giving us here. He's saying you are able not to sin. Why?

Because I've written my law upon your heart. Your heart and my law are in the same place. Your heart agrees with my law. You love righteousness and you hate wickedness.

That's why you react against wickedness when you see it and injustice when you see it. So the Lord says he's going to do this and he says there's another thing here.

No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother saying know the Lord for they shall all know me. They shall all know me.

You see we're back to where we were at the start a few minutes ago. They shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their sin and remember their iniquities no more.

[36 : 18] See Jesus said to the Samaritan woman you're worshipping in ignorance. You're worshipping what you don't know. But the reality is that Jesus said in his high priestly prayer this is eternal life.

Now I wonder if you've heard this definition before. Because most of us think that eternal life has to do with the length of our life. That it's just life that goes on forever.

But that's not the definition Jesus gives us. This is eternal life. And he's speaking to his father. This is eternal life. That they know you.

That they know you. The only true God. And Jesus the Messiah whom you have sent. That's eternal life.

love. And so it's quite legitimate for you and me to meet each other on the street and say how's eternal life today? How's eternal life today?

[37 : 24] Are you enjoying it? Are you enjoying knowing your God? Because that's eternal life. To know him and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

brothers and sisters don't settle for less. Don't settle for ignorant worship. Ask God to give you a hunger.

You know one of the wonderful things about God is that if you get a hunger and a thirst for God it's God who gives you the hunger and it's God who will satisfy the hunger.

God gives you the hunger and then he satisfies it. If you pray no other prayer today ask that God will create in you a hunger that's like a fire that can't be put out.

Her brother Raymond read for us at the beginning one thing have I asked of the Lord that will I seek that I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever. That's our prayer that's the hunger.

[38 : 32] Let's rejoice in a God who wants to be known and don't let us be ignorant worshippers. Let's draw near to God in spirit and in truth.

Let's pray. Father we marvel at your kindness. We humble ourselves before you and we pray Lord that you would bring into our lives anything that cuts us down to size.

Please dear God deliver us from self-reliance. Please cut us down to size. Humble us if need be humiliate us because that would be great protection against the pride of this world and the pride that hell tries to generate in all your people.

Cut us down to size us. Father that we may grow downwards in humiliation and upwards in adoration as we look at you. Be glorified in us O Lord.

Hallowed be thy name. And forgive us our sins. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.