

This is Eternal Life

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[0 : 00] For a few moments, seeking God's blessing and health, let us turn back to that chapter that we read in John's Gospel, John chapter 17.

We are going to focus our attention this evening upon the third verse of that chapter, chapter 3 of John 17.

And this is eternal life, that they may know you the only through God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

This is one of the most precious chapters that we have in the whole of the Bible. It's taken up with the great high priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ before he went out to the cross and was crucified there for us.

Somebody once said that this was the Holy of Holies of John's Gospel. When you come to this chapter, you're coming to the Holy of Holies of John's Gospel.

[1 : 22] In the verse before this, in verse 2, Jesus was speaking of three gifts.

the gift that the Father gave him, all authority over all flesh. And he also gave him another gift, and that was the gift that is so precious in every age to God's believing people.

The gift of our people from the human race in every age and in every generation. As many as you have given him.

That's the second gift. And the third gift is the gift that the Son wants to give to the people that God gave him in the eternal covenant in past eternity.

That he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him. So there are three gifts mentioned there in verse 2.

[2 : 37] Now in verse 3, Jesus goes on to say what it means for any person, man or woman or boy or girl, to have eternal life.

And this is eternal life, he says. That they may know you the only through God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. But in order to appreciate something, what is involved in that glorious definition of eternal life, we could ask three questions and seek to answer those questions.

What does it mean to know God? Question 1. How did we come to lose our knowledge of God?

Question 2. And question 3. How can this knowledge of God be restored to us? We're going to try with God's help to answer these three questions here tonight.

What is meant by knowing God? It's the first question. Now notice that Jesus does not say that eternal life is to know about God.

[4 : 04] He doesn't say that at all. He doesn't say, this is eternal life that they may know about you. He says, this is eternal life that they may know you.

Know you, not know about you. There's an eternity of a difference between knowing about God and knowing God.

Eternal life doesn't consist of a person knowing about God. that he is God and that he exists. And they can even go as far as to believe that he created the whole of the universe and that he upholds the universe by his power.

But there's a difference between that and knowing God personally for ourselves. There are millions of people who believe and who know that there is a God and that he created the universe and that he upholds the universe and they would gladly put their assent to these things.

But they don't know God. And there are millions of others in a lost eternity tonight who, when they were here on earth, believed that there was a God in heaven and that he sent his Son into the world and that he upholds the universe.

[5 : 42] But they never knew God personally for themselves. And you can know all about God.

You can know everything that is to be known in the Bible about God. You can be an expert in theology. You can be a professor of theology.

But that doesn't mean that you know God as Jesus meant it in these words. This is eternal life, he said, that they may know you, not know about you.

And Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. We can know God and we can be experts in theology and be professors of theology and yet be devoid of eternal life and therefore dead spiritually and without God and without hope in the world.

So to know God and to know that there is a God are two different things altogether. The Bible tells us that the devil believes in God.

[7 : 01] The demons believe in God and they tremble. But that doesn't mean to say that they are going to be in heaven at the last.

So to know God and to know about God they are two different things completely. We all know that a queen in London in one of the palaces down there we know that there's a president in the United States in the White House.

We know that they exist. We know that they are there. We know quite a lot about them. But none of us here tonight can say that they know them personally.

Maybe you're shaking hands with the queen at one point or another but that's all as far as it went.

To know about the queen and to know the queen are two different things altogether.

To know God is to know him as God and recognize him as the God that the Bible tells us about.

[8 : 17] Recognize him as Lord recognize him as King recognize him as the ruler of the universe recognize him as our master. It means to reverence him.

It means to recognize him as Lord and master and King and ruler. It means to fear him.

To know God means to worship him. To know God means to adore him and love him and seek to serve him at the best of our ability.

To recognize his greatness to recognize his holiness. To recognize all that the Bible tells us about him. Recognizing that he is a spirit infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being.

Wisdom, power, holiness justice, goodness and truth it comes back to us, doesn't it? From our childhood days when we were catechized in the Sunday school.

[9 : 31] And put out amen to all these things about God. It means to submit ourselves gladly and obediently to God.

To worship him and to seek to keep his laws and to do his will gladly and joyfully. To know God also means to be on speaking terms with God every day and many times throughout the day.

To be on speaking terms with him personally. that he is not a stranger to us. God is a spirit and therefore we cannot see him as we can see our friend.

We cannot hear him the way we can hear our neighbour. But if we know God we shall be conscious of his presence and we shall be aware of his voice.

speaking to us when we gather together in worship like this for example. He speaks to us in many ways.

[10 : 51] He speaks to us in our consciences. He speaks to us as we look out on nature as the psalmist did. He looked up at the heavens and he said the heavens declare the glory of God.

I see the glory of God up there among the planets and among the stars and the sun and the moon. They were speaking to him of the glory of the maker.

And if we know God he will be our companion he will be our friend on life's journey and we shall be conscious of his voice often speaking to us.

the generations that went before us in the Christian pathway often spoke about God speaking to them and what they really meant was that the word of God came to them with power and with conviction about a certain thing.

Maybe somebody was ill and at death's door and the doctors and the medical people had given up hope about that passion or maybe it was during war time and somebody had been lost at sea or taken captive by the enemy and the people at home would be afraid what was happening and they were giving up hope they would ever see their son again or their daughter.

[12 : 33] But then somebody from the church would say don't be afraid I got the word of God on my way to your house tonight this verse of scripture spoke to me and I believe it and peace would come into the heart.

of that family and the word of God would be fulfilled in due time as being true. We shall hear him speaking to us in the trials of life if we know God.

We shall hear him encouraging us. We shall hear his voice in the Bible when we open it and read it for ourselves or when we hear the Bible being preached.

We'll lose sight of the preacher in the pulpit and we will listen to the still small voice within our hearts and within our souls. And when we gather together as we have this evening we'll be aware of the presence of God in our midst.

if we know God that will be a hallmark on our lives that we will detect the presence of God the influences of the Holy Spirit the freedom of the Holy Spirit in the place of worship.

[14 : 05] and as you go on in the Christian life your heart will often often flood over with joy and with love for God and he will be for you the greatest and best friend that you have in life.

The one that you share your deepest secrets with the one with whom you pour out your heart and tell all the sorrows and pains that he will hear you and know that he listens to you.

One of the greatest compliments that I received recently was when my little granddaughter aged three came into the sitting room where we were came out of the bedroom or wherever and she stood in the midst of us all and she said and she calls me Papa said Papa's my best friend and I tell you that was for me the greatest compliment I had received for a long time that that little soul would be looking upon me old and grey as being her best friend in this world.

Well turn that around and if you know God you can say Jesus is my best friend as we go through life and the fear we will have of God will not be a cringing slavish fear but a reverence a respect and awe that's how we shall fear him not a cringing fear recognising his righteousness recognising his holiness and recognising our own unworthiness in his presence and acknowledging our sinfulness before him and marvelling that under the power of the gospel he takes sinners like us into fellowship with himself by grace loving us befriending us and preparing us for glory to be with him forever and ever and we will marvel at that bringing us into a living loving intimate fellowship with himself it's a miracle a miracle that any of us should know

God this was the kind of relationship that Adam had with God before he fell in the garden of Eden when he was created first of all he was in full fellowship with God full of joy and peace in his heart how is it that not everybody in the world tonight know God in this way isn't this what we long for that everybody in our community everybody in our family everybody in our town everybody throughout the country and throughout the world would come to know God in this way that they would say yes Jesus is my friend and that takes us to the second question how did we come to lose our knowledge of God God and Adam and Eve refused to obey the command

[18 : 07] God gave them and listened to the voice of the serpent instead of the voice of God they lost the knowledge they had of God they lost many things in the garden of Eden that day they lost the peace they had in their hearts now they're afraid of God and the peace has gone we hear Adam saying to God in chapter 3 and verse 10 of Genesis I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked he was never afraid of God before and they lost their purity as well because they were ashamed Adam and Eve because they had no clothes on well they had no clothes on from the day that

God created them but it made no difference to them because they were pure and holy beings but things have changed I was ashamed I was afraid said Adam but also they lost the close intimacy that they had with God they were no longer in communion with God it was as if the telephone communication were to themselves and God had been snapped clean they couldn't get through to God and when they lost that they lost the knowledge of God and out of this want of the knowledge of God came all the other evils that have been a scourge to this world all the years since then to this very night it was because

Cain did not know God that he rose up and murdered his brother Abel but Abel had come to know God by his saving grace and he showed by the sacrifice he brought to God that he was looking forward to the lamb of God that was to come in the fullness of time the lamb that God had promised that would come the one who would bruise the head of the serpent and so he came with his lamb and offered it up on the altar he knew God and he looked forward in faith to the day when that lamb would atone for the sins of God's people people it was because of the lack of the knowledge of God that men and women began to create idols and images and bow down to them and worship them and as the days went on they began to worship the sun they worshipped the moon and the stars and the planets and in the heathen cultures even to this day itself you have the fire

God that they worship they have the mountain God and they have the river God the God that resides in the river the great river that replenishes the earth with its waters and they try to satisfy and appease these gods by giving offerings to them and since the fall in every age man has been aware of the emptiness in the heart and in the soul and man has tried to satisfy that emptiness in so many ways but failed and failed again and again man has worshipped at the temple of carnal pleasure at the temple of strong drink at the temple of drugs in these latter days and each generation creates its own gods whatever they may be our forefathers knew nothing about drugs when they were young and even ourselves the older generation here tonight knew nothing about drugs growing up but each generation creates new gods and we get so used to them that we don't think of them as gods anymore but you see anything that you're obsessed with anything that takes over your life that is your god whether it's fashion or football or rock music or drugs these things can become your god when they take over your life

I wonder this evening are you aware as you sit in your pew there of the emptiness that is in your heart and in your soul why is that emptiness there that emptiness is there because you don't know god you're not in a living relationship with god when paul was in athens with the gospel he saw many altars there many altars but one altar in particular drew his attention because of the superscription that was upon it and these words were written over that altar to the unknown god and that gave paul the opportunity of speaking to the people there about the unknown god about his god the god he worshipped and served the god who made all things the god who sent his son jesus christ into the world to save sinners the one who sent his son to atone for sin and paul went to the people at corinth and he said to them this unknown god i've come to tell you about him he sent his son jesus christ into the world to be the savior of sinners one soul saved that day it was well worth while well worth while going into that city of

[25 : 57] Athens with the gospel some people say that he shouldn't have gone there and that he shouldn't have gone near the place because he had no success the way god marks success is not the same as men and women mark success one soul saved from hell is well worth every effort that we can make to be without the knowledge of god is to be empty to be without the knowledge of god is to have nothing to hang on to when you come to the edges of time and you pass on into eternity you have nothing to hang on to death comes on the borders of time and eternity and death takes from you everything that you had your house your car all the money you have in the bank death will take that out of your grasp and you'll be left with nothing going into eternity if you don't know god you will leave your fame you will leave your fortune behind you you will leave your popularity you will leave your possessions that's how it's so foolish to be running after being popular with people what of it supposing you weren't popular if you have christ as your saviour you've got everything if you have the knowledge of god going from time into eternity then you've got something that death will not rob you of death cannot touch the knowledge of god that you have been given by the grace of god himself that's what jesus meant when he pointed to to mary mary who had been sitting listening to his teaching he said mary has chosen the good part and it shall never be taken from her death cannot take it away from her death cannot take the knowledge of god from us it can take a lot of things from us loved ones and friends and family but it can't take from us the knowledge that we have of god instead what death does is it ushers us into a dimension that is far more glorious than we've ever experienced here on earth death will usher us into a dimension of living and being that shall that we where we shall love god in a deeper and a more personal and a more glorious way than we have ever done here on earth

Paul puts it like this 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 12 now I know in part but then I shall know just as I also am known death will only rid us of the impediments that keep us from knowing god in a deeper and more glorious way but as you sit here this night you may be saying deep in your heart well I don't know god in that way I wish I did I would like to know him as my friend and my companion and my saviour can you tell me how can I get to know god now that brings us to the last question how can this knowledge of god be restored to us where there is only one way there is only one way and only one way by which sinners can come to know god and that is through faith and trust in his son jesus christ the lord it is through faith and trust in god's son whom he sent into the world to save sinners that is the way that we can come to know god for we need to take the two parts of this verse together otherwise we will be in error and this is eternal life that they may know you the only through god and jesus christ whom you have sent so you have to take that part of the verse as well you can't get to know god without first of all getting to know jesus christ as your savior

and as your lord he said himself in chapter 14 of this gospel verse 6 no one comes to the father except through me so there is no way that you or anybody else can get to know god except through jesus christ he is the way as he said himself he is the door into god's sheepfold indeed it would be less than eternal life to know god apart from jesus christ if you and i came to know god without jesus christ it wouldn't be eternal life for we would be coming face to face with an almighty being whose laws we had repeatedly violated and broken in a thousand pieces a being however lovingly he may be wanting to bless us he could not so long as we remained his enemies and our sins remained unforgiven he couldn't be our friend he couldn't be to us what we would want him to be and therefore if we are going to receive eternal life and come to know him you know what we need we need an outpouring of the holy spirit of god upon our hearts and souls we need to come under the mighty influences of the holy spirit who will show us our need of salvation we need to come under conviction of sin and that only comes through the holy spirits working in our hearts and souls and we will cry out then for salvation and we will begin to weep and we will go apart from everybody else to get alone to pray to God and call upon him to save our souls is that not what happens in days of revival when the holy spirit comes into a community there will be those who are going to the barn or barn or wherever behind a peat stack they used to see them there crying to God for mercy and for pardon why because the holy spirit was showing them their lost estate their eyes were beginning to be opened to see their need of salvation and that same holy spirit will help the sinner to pray pleading the pardon and cleansing that comes through the blood that was shed on

Calvary a sinner who repents of his sins and turns his back upon his former way of life and confesses that he is a lost sinner deserving to be cast eternally away out of God's presence forever and who comes and asks to be forgiven and pardoned by the blood of Calvary receives eternal life and then at once comes into a new relationship with God you see eternal life is not something we are going to get when we leave this world and go into the next it's something that we will get here and now and I'm speaking tonight in this church to many many who are sitting in front of me who have eternal life right now since they have repented of their sins and trusted in

Jesus as their saviour they've gone over from darkness to light and from death into life it's something that we are going to take with us into eternity eternal life eternal life begins when the sinner is born again of the mighty holy spirit of God when John was writing to the Christian church he said in this first letter chapter 5 verse 13 these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the son of God that you may know that you have eternal life and Jesus himself said in John 10 10 I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly so it's also true that it would not be eternal life for us to know

[36 : 49] Jesus Christ if he was not God it wouldn't be eternal life for us to know Jesus Christ if he were not at the same time God he would be to us only a good teacher a great prophet but a good teacher and a great prophet would not give us eternal life it's because Jesus is God and man that we can receive eternal life by coming to him and when we have no doubt about the divinity of Christ then we come to know him in the glory of his person we come to know him as the one whose blood speaks peace to our souls sure every one of us here tonight who are Christians can never forget that night or that day or that afternoon or that morning that the peace of

God came into their hearts and into their lives what brought it there the blood of Christ brought it there the Holy Spirit applying the precious blood of Christ to their souls Christ it to still be there to the day we die our own corrupt nature and that corrupt nature tries to cooperate with Satan that's what makes life so difficult for the believer he battles on against his own nature and also the devil who comes to lure him away from the ways of

Christ but grace grace gives us the power to resist grace gives us the strength to say no as we look again at Jesus Christ remember the man that John Bunyan saw behind the wall pouring oil on the fire that the evil one was trying to extinguish and the more he tried to extinguish it the bigger the blaze and the secret was the man on the other side of the wall that can of oil and as we look to the cross we get the grace to say no to the devil and to sin and we come to know him in his perfect righteousness and we treasure the robe of

Christ's righteousness more than anything else in the world they would not exchange the robe of Christ's righteousness with anything in the world supposing they offered you a million million pounds no not a minute would we surrender the robe of righteousness and through the prodigal son treasured that robe that the father gave him after he returned home he would look on it admire its

beauty and he would say it's mine it's mine after all that I've done wrong and I've hurt my father so much and I wandered so far away from home yet there's his mind now and he would treasure it all his life in the garments of

Christ's righteousness we know that we are accepted by God accepted in the beloved it says in another part of the Bible and we know him in communion and fellowship and recognize his voice speaking to us my sheep he said they hear my voice and they follow me the church in the old testament said the voice of my beloved this is this is the voice of my beloved listen to it there's no other voice like it why are we so keen to go to fellowship meetings and communions here and there and everywhere throughout the islands because we have fellowship one with another and in the fellowship of God's people we recognize the one who said I'm in the midst of them wherever two or three are gathered in my name and and we're in midst of the communion season just now make sure you go to other parts of the island sitting at home watching the television or whatever else you may be doing you're starving your soul of many a blessing that could be yours this is life eternal that they may know thee the only through

[42 : 46] God and Jesus Christ him thou hast sent says the authorised version it was the favourite verse of old John Knox the reformer for it was in this verse that he found peace with God in his last words on the day that he died lying on his death bed to his wife where go he said and read where I first cast my anchor for the first time his wife didn't need to be told she went straight to the Bible and looked up John's Gospel chapter 17 and she read verse 3 and this is eternal life that they may know you the only through God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent the old warrior listened with his eyes closed his breathing was becoming more and more labored the bed on which he lay spoke of death but the book and the verse spoke of life we don't know when

John Knox cast his anchor there for the first time we know he was present in the crowd the day George Wishart was burnt at the stake at the foot of Castle Wind opposite Castle Gate in Edinburgh many a first storm came over his soul in the years that followed as he stood for the truth but throughout those years the anchor bravely held he spent twelve years in exile eighteen months chained to the oars as a galley slave in one of the French galleys throughout all these stressful years of reformation in Scotland the anchor held firm and did not drag did not shift let me ask you as we come to the close of this service where have you cast your anchor maybe you're here tonight and you haven't cast your anchor anywhere and you're drifting with the tide and the wind and you're coming nearer and nearer to the rocky shores of eternity why don't you cast your anchor here this evening where many a person apart from

John Knox cast his anchor and her anchor whatever happens it will hold firm to the end the old hymn asks the question will your anchor hold in the storms of life this is life eternal that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent there is no eternal life apart from God's way may God help you to make your calling and your election sure tonight let us pray together gracious God we don't know hardly anybody in this congregation but you have the eye to see you all seeing all knowing God and you know where there's a stirring after yourself in a heart here and a heart there may that stirring get stronger and stronger until that person comes and makes peace with yourself may they come tonight even in this service and in the quietness of their own heart say oh

God I'm drifting and who knows that the rocks are nearer to me than I'm thinking help me before I make shipwreck of my soul and be lost forever help me to trust and believe in Jesus as my saviour open my eyes to see my danger open my ears so that I will hear your voice open my heart that I may give you back the life I owe that in thine ocean depths its flow may sweeter fuller be Lord you deserve the best that we can give and more for you gave your best for us hear us in our prayers in Jesus name amen and close now the service by singing psalm 84 psalm 84 from verse 8 to the end of the psalm 4 stands us this time psalm 84 at verse 8

Lord God of hosts my prayer hear O Jacob's God give ear see God our shield look on the face of thine anointed dear down to the end of the psalm O thou that art the Lord of hosts that man is truly blessed to by assured confidence on thee alone doth rest psalm 84 from verse 8 to the end Lord God of hosts my prayer hear O Jacob's God give ear Lord God of hosts my prayer hear O Jacob's God hear hear seek God her shield to calm the face of thy anointed dear on in thy course one day it excels a thousand brother in my waters will like deep adore and dwell in chains of sin for

[50 : 14] God the Lord the Lord has son and shield in praise and glory in and will will hold no good from them and the love bride me to him Davidiques hmm do to