

The Knowledge of God

by Paul Washer

The knowledge of God is the essential of life, and it is what brings us to the feet of Christ and makes us servants.

Duration: 25:59

Scripture: Jeremiah 9:23-24, Jeremiah 31:33-34, Matthew 6:33, John 16:12

Topics: "Knowledge Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by emphasizing the importance of knowing and understanding God. He quotes Jeremiah 9:23-24, where God declares that true boasting should come from knowing Him and His attributes of loving kindness, justice, and righteousness. The preacher acknowledges the daunting task of teaching about the attributes of God, as no metaphor or illustration can fully capture His glory. He then highlights the futility of wealth and human endeavors in redeeming the soul, emphasizing that salvation is a supernatural work of God through regeneration. The preacher concludes by mentioning the promise of the new covenant, which involves a heart transformation that enables a response to divine stimuli.

Transcript

Well, I want to welcome all of you here, and it is an absolutely tremendous privilege for us to have you here with us. Actually, this is, as you know, the first moments of the conference, and many, many people are still traveling, and we've had so many signed up that I'm going to have to believe God that He will somehow supernaturally expand these walls. But that's a good thing.

I know a theologian that a few years ago spoke about how if someone gave a conference on anything from balancing a checkbook to fixing your felt needs, that you would fill up the auditorium, but if someone preached on the attributes of God, no one would show up. And that is true in our day, but it's not true here at this moment. Let's praise God for that.

We're going to be looking at, this is a short introduction, it's going to last about 15 or 20 minutes, and it's just some things on the knowledge of God that I want to get, to put forth, to maybe give us some kind of context for what we're going to be doing here. If you'd open your Bible to Jeremiah, chapter 9, Jeremiah 9, verse 23. Thus says the Lord, let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might.

Let not a rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth. For I delight in these things, declares the Lord. Back to verse 24, but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me.

Probably the most frightful thing that I have ever sought to do will be done in the next three days. Frightful. More frightful than going down the Amazon in the pitch dark without a lantern.

More frightful than going through warfare. More frightful than anything else is to even suggest that you are going to stand before a group of people and to teach them on the attributes of God. What a frightful thing.

You know, as we know, pastors and preachers, we use metaphors and similes and comparisons and illustrations, and yet God stops us short at the very beginning. He says, to whom will you compare me? What illustration will you use to make known my glory? To men, it's more than an act, I'm afraid. I'm afraid.

But I want us just to look at this passage for just a moment. First of all, in verse 23, thus says the Lord. This is not the opinion of a man regarding what is essential.

If you were to talk to a numerous amount of men, you would get a numerous amount of suggestions with regard to what is essential. Some would say, of course, your health. Others would say insurance, good benefits at work.

Others would say people around you that love you. You can find all manner of men speaking today on what is essential to the human existence, and all of them are wrong, except for those who say the essential. Not just something, not just a good thing, not just part of what you may need to know.

No, the essential of life is to know and understand God. There is nothing above that. There is nothing beside that.

We can even say there's nothing below it because there's no comparison. It is to know God. Now, we need to step back here in the context of our contemporary Christianity and say that means more than understanding a few principles about the way you ought to live.

This is not about teaching ourselves wisdom so that we can have our best life now. This is about knowing God. We were created to know God and to glory in Him and to draw our life from Him.

And that's what he is getting to right here. Thus says the Lord. The essential of life is the knowledge of God.

Now, one thing that I truly want to do in these meetings, and those who are speaking, please listen to me. This is not a theology of glory. This is not just painting a magnificent picture of God.

It goes much deeper. I want to ask you a question that is so very important. We can say amen to all the things that we're going to hear.

We can be doctrinally orthodox. We can be pleasing to those theologians who know better. But my question for you, and most certainly my question for me is this.

Where is the reality of these truths in my life? That's what I want to know. I am so sick and tired of good theologians glorifying and relishing their theology. I want more than truth.

I want reality of those truths in my life. A parrot can repeat the Westminster. I want the truth deeply rooted and springing forth into fruit unto the glory of God.

It's a much deeper thing. Reality is the key. Now, let me ask you, in order to bring this to reality about the truth of God, let me ask you a question.

It's a question I've asked myself. We would all here probably say that the essential is a true understanding and a true knowledge of God. But how much is that truth seen in your meditation, in your thought life? How much of your thoughts are wasted on vanity? I can only ask you this because I've asked myself over and over again.

Again, dear brothers, listen to me. I am not just wanting to revel in truth because it is not all about truth. It's all about God.

And not just knowing propositional truths or doctrines that can be scribbled out on a rock. It's about God, the person of God. That's what I'm striving for.

That's what I desire. That these realities... It's like the man we were speaking about this in Zambia. I was there two weeks ago preaching.

We were speaking about this and getting a good laugh over it. The man who teaches every time he teaches on the sovereignty of God and yet walks around worried. It just doesn't fit.

The man who talks about God's beauty but doesn't seek after it hard, even violently. The man who talks about all the great things of God but his bags are filled with things of the world. We want more than just truth, brethren.

We want reality. Could this be the reason for the demise of the truly evangelical church in America? Could this be the reason why we have had to build churches on the bones of unconverted church members through entertainment, reaching felt needs and all these other things that have been amassed as a great arsenal to make our churches bigger? You cannot substitute certain things. You cannot displace the true knowledge of God with any other good thing and have a truly evangelical church.

A truly biblical church. We need the knowledge of God. It is an essential.

It is an essential. Look at the things that have been employed. Just look at them for a moment.

So many window dressings. So many gimmicks. So many methods.

So many things in order to prop up a Christian life that isn't even there. When what we need, what do we need? What do we need? What do we need in order to grow in sanctification? What do we need in order to grow in zeal, in heartfelt emotion? What do we need? I'll tell you what we need to grow in all these things and even greater. To grow in love, we need, we must have the knowledge of God.

Let me simply state for you how it works. So much of the Christian life is literally pulling oneself up by their bootstraps. Well, I need to love God.

Well, of course you do. I need to love Him more. So do I. Okay.

What? What do we do? More quiet time? A new book out that says ten steps to doing it? I mean, we all recognize that in all these areas we need greater passion, we need greater love. But where is it to come from? I'll tell you where. The knowledge of God.

The knowledge of God. What can make you love Him? Except knowing more of Him. Those of you who are married.

Now, I'm using this illustration and I am a sinful man. My wife is a sinful woman. And yet it still applies.

Then how much more with God? I love my wife now. Infinitely, it seems to me, more than I loved her when I first knew her. She's not as young.

Neither am I. There isn't that crispness, that catching of the eye. There's a lot of things given over to youth that we've never recovered. But I love my wife so much more.

And why is that? Because I know qualities, attributes, characteristics of my wife that promote in me these things. Now, if I can say that towards another person, fallen and recovered, how much more for a perfect God? You see, Christianity is not ten more steps. It's not pulling yourself up by your bootstraps.

It's not just recognizing that you lack in these areas of zeal and love and passion and going out and trying to find a remedy. But it is looking in the face of God. It is considering His attributes.

What is the greatest need of the church in America today? God! God is the need. A true and genuine knowledge of the Almighty. Now, just look at some things here quickly.

He says, thus says the Lord, and we're in Jeremiah 9.23. Thus says the Lord, let not a wise man boast of his wisdom. Let not a mighty man boast of his might. Let not a rich man boast of his riches.

Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom. We wouldn't think that appropriate. Why did He even say that? I mean, I could understand if He said, let not a fool boast of his wisdom, because a fool doesn't have any.

But He says, let not a wise man boast of his wisdom. And why is that? Well, first of all, if it is human wisdom, humanistic wisdom, wisdom gained apart from God, it's vanity, because the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. But even if He is truly a wise man, and it is truly wisdom that comes from God, still He should not boast.

Why? Because indeed, it does come from God. Who regards you as superior? What do you have that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you boast as though you have not received it? That's a good note for those of us who are serious about truth, and so quick to judge those who aren't quite as serious. What do you have that you have not received? Oh, my dear friend, why boast in wisdom, but boast in the One who gives it to the pitiful minds of men? And then He goes on and He says, let not the mighty man boast of his might.

Oh, we have mighty men, don't we? We are the remake of the Roman Empire. We have our mighty men. Our Lamechs who would go out and avenge themselves 77-fold for the smallest offense.

We have our Nimrods that are mighty men. Mighty hunters even before the Lord said of Him. Build themselves cities and name them after their sons.

We have mighty men. Just look in the Colosseums. Just look in the warfare, in war.

We have our heroes. Just look in the political arena. Look at Hollywood.

Look all around. There are heroes. There are mighty men.

There are the wealthy. But let all of those humble themselves in the dust. Let them be abased.

And why is that? Well, because of the fate that will befall them. Look at verse 21. For death has come up through our windows.

It has entered our palaces to cut off the children from the streets, the young men from the town squares. Speak thus declares the Lord, the corpses of men will fall like dung on the open field and like the sheaf after the reaper. Mighty man, pull back your chest.

Fall on your face before God and cry out for mercy. There are no mighty men. We go on and he says not only that, but he goes on to the rich man, a pitiful sort of creature.

The rich man. Why should the rich man not boast in his riches? I'll tell you why. Because all riches come from God.

Even the riches of the wicked come from God. You see, you need to understand something. The old Puritans used to say it like this.

God will give riches to the righteous so that they might be generous and become more righteous still. And God will give riches to the wicked in the same way a farmer gives abundant grain to his livestock to fatten them up for the slaughter. Like old Leonard Ravenhill used to say, now you understand why I preached in a lot of Baptist churches once.

But it's the case. I am so tired of protecting man. I will not do it.

Nor defend God. These things are true. God deserves all glory and men to be abased.

Now he goes on. And I want to say something very important about wealth and all human endeavor. The thing that makes it most vain is this.

It cannot redeem the soul. Something that we all know is in Psalms 49, 7 and 9. No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of the soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever, that he should live on eternally, that he should not undergo decay. And we say, yes, that is true.

Wealth will not redeem. Nor will intellectual truths about God. Nor will the highest doctrine on the face of the earth apart from the person about whom it is speaking.

See, we are so quick to jump on the secular man, but it is the religious man who needs the pounding on his head. Because again, I am so afraid, because this conference is about the attributes of God, that people are going to be drawn to it to learn more stuff, so that they can just be more puffed up. No, all truth is to bring us to the feet of Christ, and then leaving there to the feet of everyone else as servants.

Now, a background to the knowledge of God, just quickly, is so very important. First of all, I have said it is indispensable. Why is it indispensable? I want to give you a verse.

Just listen. It's in Psalms 50, but just listen. God says, These things you have done and I kept silent.

You thought that I was just like you. I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you in pieces and there will be none to deliver.

What was their great sin? They thought God was like them. What is the great sin in evangelical churches every Sunday morning? The worshipping of a God who is not the God of Scripture, but a projection and a figment of the people's imagination. And that God looks more like Santa Claus than He does the Yahweh of Scripture.

And so, every Sunday morning is the great hour of idolatry in this nation. So that I would think that God would sometimes stand back as He did in Malachi and say, Oh, that someone would come and shut the doors to this temple. I am tired of you lighting useless fires upon my altar.

Yes. Yes. It goes on.

It is indispensable. Also, this knowledge, this knowledge of God, is not gained merely through intellectual enterprise. This knowledge of God is something that springs forth from a doctrine all but lost.

The doctrine of regeneration. That salvation is more than just a human decision. It is a supernatural work of God whereby the hard, calloused heart of a man is taken out and in its place is put a heart that can respond to divine stimuli.

And that is the promise of the New Covenant. We hear a lot about the New Covenant today. I want to just read to you, just quickly, a passage.

And just listen. He says, But 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 on their hearts I will write it.

And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again. Each man his neighbor, and each man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

Because the true church of Jesus Christ, everyone in it is regenerated. And everyone in it, in the true church of Jesus Christ, will have a substantial saving knowledge of Him and His forgiveness. Also, it is a work of the Holy Spirit.

I am amazed sometimes when I go among brethren of the Reformed tradition and such, how this seems to be not just a lost doctrine, but a lost person. My dear friend, everything that you receive from Christ comes from mediation of the Holy Spirit. And it is so very important.

He says in John 16, I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. Why? The Spirit has not come. But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will disclose to you what is to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that are the Father's are Mine, therefore I said that He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. You know, one of the principal ministries of Jesus Christ, according to John 1, verse 18, is that He came and He exegeted the Father.

That's the technical term. Jesus came and explained the Father. He disclosed or revealed the Father to men.

And Jesus says the Holy Spirit, another Comforter, just like Him, is going to come and do the same thing. He's going to disclose. The one who truly desires truth must truly, truly, truly be a person, intimately given over with full desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God. Just because that terminology is used in a wrong way by so many, I will not allow those so many to rob Me of My heritage. It is true.

Apart from the Holy Spirit, there is no knowledge of God. And then, of course, we come to this, the Word of God. All Scripture is inspired by God in profitable teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

My dear friend, listen to me. This Book, at least the Old Covenant part of it, was at one time lost in the very religious center of the people of God. It was lost in the temple.

My dear friend, this Book, can we not say the same thing today? It does not matter if we hail this Book as inspired. It does not matter if we lay our life down on the ground that it is infallible. And it is, my friend, infallible.

The question is, do you preach it aware that your culture is powerful to distort even a properly exegeted sermon? Do we preach this Book raw? Do we tell people who God really is? Or do we fear men and desire reputations for ourselves? Many times I have been asked, people have said, Brother Paul, would you come to our church and preach on the attributes of God? And I'll always stop them. I say, well, I don't really think you know what you're getting yourself into. They say, well, what do you mean? I say, well, brother, you could divide your church.

They say, what do you mean? I mean, the attributes of God? I say, brother, the moment I begin to teach on things like the justice of God, the wrath of God, the sovereignty of God, you're going to have people in your congregation stand up and say, My God's not like that. I could never love a God like that. That is true.

Well, my dear friend, preach this thing raw. That's the best terminology that I can use. Preach it as it is.

Beware, beware of the culture from which we come. I am influenced by that culture. I'll not stand outside of it and say it has no part with me.

I'm influenced by that culture. But we are influenced by that culture. But we need to understand that recognizing that is half the battle won.

A knowledge of God that is the true and living God. Now, I want to say one other thing. He says, let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me.

Now, let me ask you a question. Who in their right mind would stand up and boast about how much they know about God? I mean, I have sat there with this text over and over. And I say, you have got to be kidding me.

I mean, if a man came to you and said that he had counted every grain of sand on the earth. Or another man came, his partner, and said he had counted every star in the heaven. Would you believe them? How much less would you believe a man who would actually boast of what he knows about God? The more you know about God, the more it has this great tendency, more than a tendency, this power to lay you in the dust and recognize you know nothing about God.

So what is it saying? And I think it is saying this. We are not encouraged to boast about our great knowledge of God. But about what God has revealed Himself to be.

And that is the difference. It is not this man who says, all eyes be focused on me and I will tell you about this great God. I will be the mediator between this God and you.

No. It is the man who does not stand there and focus the attention upon himself. But the man who stands there and says, look at what this God has done in history.

Look at what He has said about Himself. Look at what He has done in the testimony of this man who would be nothing more than a wretched beast apart from His grace. It is always pointing, forever pointing, forever pointing to God, to God, to God.

And in that, pointing forever and forever and always to the Christ of God. For the one who has seen Him has seen everything that needs to be seen or can be seen or is. Let's pray.

Father, I come before You and I... Lord, my heart should tremble and I pray, dear God, I pray that we will seek to know You as a person. To know You and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. Help us, Lord.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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