

“LORD HELP ME TO KNOW”

Ephesians 1:15-23

This is a copy of the sermon preached by Dr. Paul Mims, Pastor, Cornerstone Baptist Church, October 9, 2011.

We love to watch children in the process of learning. Their perceptions of life are very amusing and often profound - especially their concepts of God. A group of children wrote letters to God. Here are some of their questions and statements:

“Dear God, I went to a wedding and they kissed right in church. Is that ok? Neil

“Dear God, Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones why don’t you just keep the ones you got now?”
Jane

“Dear God, I think the stapler is one of your greatest inventions.” Ruth

“Dear God, In Bible times did they really talk that funny?” Jennifer

“Dear God, I think about you sometimes even when I am not praying.” Elliot

“Dear God, I am an American. What are you?” Robert

“Dear God, I bet that it is very hard to love all the people in the world. There are only four in our family and I can never do it.” Nan

“Dear God. If you watch in church on Sunday I will show you my new shoes.” Mickey

“Dear God, maybe Cain and Abel would not kill so much if they had their own room. It worked with my brother.”
Larry

“Dear God, thank you for the baby brother you sent, but what I prayed for was a puppy.” Joyce

His name was Victor, but he felt like a loser. He did not do very well in school. When he was sixteen, a teacher advised him to drop out of high school and get a job. But he did not do any better at working so by the time he was thirty two, he had failed at seventy six jobs.

But a turning point in Victor’s life came when he applied for job number seventy seven. As part of the interview process he was required to take an I.Q. test to measure his intelligence. A score of 100 was considered normal. Victor scored 161. He was a genius. The knowledge of this fact transformed his life. Victor Serienko went on to become famous for his research in laser surgery. He also became president of MENSA, an organization for geniuses – all because a test indicated that he was special.

It had been about four years since the apostle Paul had been with the believers in the church at Ephesus. He was now in prison in Rome. Reports had come to him about the Ephesus believers. He writes to ground them deeper in the faith. They were new to Christianity and lacked understanding of the riches of their faith and how special they were to God. He told them that they were in the mind of God before the creation of the world. Their salvation and their coming to know God was all because of his love for them in Christ. Now, he wanted them to know the deeper things of the faith because in knowing these truths they would have a grasp of what God wanted to do in their lives. The same is true of us. If we can come to possess this knowledge we will have a greater love for our Lord and a greater usefulness in his kingdom. Some of us don’t know who we are or who God is. When we know him we can truly know ourselves. To make it personal for each of us, we shall look at these concepts in the first person. The use of “I” and “me” means you also.

LORD, HELP ME TO HAVE A CLEAR KNOWLEDGE OF YOU. (Verse 17) “...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the clear knowledge of him.”

These early Christians had so recently come out of paganism with its fears, superstitions, and immoral lifestyles. They were living in the midst of a heathen culture and were seeking to apply their new knowledge of the true God to everyday life. Paul teaches them that they were “sealed with the Holy Spirit” who would illumine their understanding and enlighten them about the Way – as Christianity was known in those days.

How can I come to a clear knowledge of God? My concept of him must surely begin with the scriptures. It must be formed by the way that God presents himself in his written revelation. In Ephesians, Chapter 1, I read that the Father had special delight in planning my salvation. He chose me in Christ (1:3). He loved me and adopted me into his family (1:5). He redeemed me by the blood of his own Son and forgave me of all my sin (1:7). He made know to me his purpose in saving me (1:9). He made me an heir of all of his riches (1:11). He put in me a glorious hope (1:12). He placed his Holy Spirit in me as a seal indicating that I belong to him forever (1:13).

A clear knowledge of God also will come through my daily walk with him. It is as I experience him in everyday life that I begin to see how he is involved in the present with me. It is here that I have the eyes of my heart illumined. (Verse 18) “...having the eyes of your hearts illuminated so that you may know the hope for which he called you.” This is how he works on my heart and enlightens my inner being and shows me what riches I already possess in Christ. He helps me to know myself and removes my ignorance and helps me to purify my motives.

William Randolph Hearst, the late newspaper publisher, had a passion for collecting great pieces of art. As he traveled over the world, he bought the art that appealed to him and stored it in one of his warehouses. One day, he was reading an art magazine that described a particular painting that was of great value. He was determined to have it at all costs. He sent his agent all over the world to the great art exhibitions to find the painting and purchase it for him. Months passed, and finally, the agent announced that he had found the painting. “Where did you find it?” Hearst asked. “It was in your warehouse. You bought it several years ago,” the agent said. He discovered what he already possessed. That is what I do in my daily walk with the Lord. I am in a process of discovering what I already possess and I am getting a clearer understanding of God.

LORD, HELP ME TO KNOW THE STRENGTH THAT IS AVAILABLE TO ME. (Verse 19) “...and what the surpassing greatness of his power with respect to us who believe, as seen in the manifestation of his infinite might.”

A word study is helpful here. “Power” is the Greek word “*dunamis*” from which our English word “dynamite” comes. Paul uses three words to show how this power is used on our behalf: “*energeia*” from which our word “energy” comes which indicates activity, working on our behalf, manifestation to us; “*Ischus*” which means might, great inherent strength; and “*kratos*” which means exercised strength on our behalf. Paul uses all of these words to say that this is the power that raised Christ from the dead and is the same power that he used to raise us from our state of spiritual death and make us alive in Christ.

This is the awesome strength that is available to us when we learn how to obtain it and to use it. It is in the trials of life that sap our strength and show us what spiritual weaklings we are that we are able to see God’s strength when we call upon him for help.

How do we obtain this strength? A minister received an email from a friend who had endured a difficult trial in the last several years. He wrote to say that his trials had changed his view of what it means to know God. He said that he had learned that there are at least three levels of knowing God. The first is the level of experience. When we experience a certain trial we can help others who are going through the same thing. Second, is the level of knowledge. This comes from Bible study classes, worship, reading good books, or going to college or seminary. Most people consider knowledge a higher level of the spiritual life. “This is the level I tried to work from, but it did not seem adequate” the friend said. But there is a third level which he called the level of wisdom. This level comes only by prayer. He offered this insight about a level three relationship with God: “We begin to see things through God’s eyes and less through our eyes. Peace only comes through this level. It is not measurable, explainable, nor understandable. Levels one and two are not prerequisites. I see prayer lifting the illiterate to great levels of peace and wisdom where certain PhDs in religion may feel empty. Our prayers cease to be less ‘gimme’ and more ‘help me to see what you want me to learn through this to deepen my relationship with you.’” This was one minister writing to another minister and sharing the fact that he had learned how to find the awesome strength that was available to him.

LORD, HELP ME TO KNOW FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST. (Verse 23) “...the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

Christ is head of the church. Salvation places us in the body of Christ, the church. It is in the context of the body of

believers who are being made disciples for a mission of world evangelization that we begin to see the fullness of who we are and what we are to do in the world. It is here that a Christian finds his basic purpose in being alive. All other interests such as vocation are secondary to this.

Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you." We are fulfilled in him and in his mission. He fills the emptiness of our hearts. Can't you just look into some peoples' eyes and see the emptiness? It is hard to hide.

Our world is looking for hope and without hope there can be no fulfillment. There is the constant search for meaning and for something to fill the void of life. One day, my wife, Janice was talking to a lady she met at the city dump. They were disposing of their garbage at the same time and began to talk for a few minutes. The lady indicated that she had no interest in religion for it had failed her in the past. Then, Janice said to her, "What do you do with that big hole in your heart?" This startled her and made her realize that she was seeking something to fill that hole. She asked Janice, "How did you know?" She was hungering for fulfillment.

What does fulfillment in Christ look like? Stuart Townend is the son of a minister in England. He has written a praise song that is popular on the internet and church gatherings all over the world. His lyrics paint a picture of fulfillment in Christ:

"In Christ alone my hope is found, he is my light, my strength, my song, this Cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm. What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled and striving cease. My comforter, my all in all, here in the love of Christ I stand. No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me. From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny."

We find a great part of our fulfillment in helping others come to know Christ through our service to the Kingdom through the church. You know that you have done something eternal when you lead a person to faith in Christ. This is a time when all who are in the church need to turn our attention to the people who come across our path each day and be concerned about their finding the fulfillment that we have discovered in Christ.

A number of years ago, off the coast of Massachusetts, a ship rammed a submarine. The submarine sank before anyone could escape. The entire crew was trapped. Ships rushed to the scene, but there was nothing they could do. Divers went down to evaluate the situation. One man put his helmeted ear to the side of the vessel and listened for any sounds. What he heard was someone tapping Morse Code. It was this: "Is...There...Any...Hope?"

Can you hear that question being asked all around you? Is there any hope for my marriage, my children, my sanity, my sin, my unbelief, my messed up life? The answer is yes! A thousand times Yes! Praise Be To His Name!