

# **“GIVING THANKS FOR THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE”**

in a series on *the Thanksgiving Prayers of Paul*

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**Readings:** 1 Corinthians 1:4-6; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16

Paul declares in Romans 8:28 that “**we know** that in all things God works for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.”

How do we know that? Does the empirical evidence of life affirm that all things are working together for our good? Paul writes out of a personal testimony that includes being blinded, beaten, arrested, imprisoned, flogged, shipwrecked and snake bit. Paul writes to Christians who know the reality of martyrdom. The knowledge of which he speaks, the knowledge that he declares all Christians possess is certainly something other a natural head knowledge gained through observation, instruction or experience.

Backing up in Romans 8 to verses 5-6: “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”

Remember Job? Job who despite doing everything “right” and living by the rules, lost his fortunes, his home, his children, his health and his reputation. Observation led Job’s friends to indict him of sin and his wife to counsel him to just curse God and die. But Job knew, he knew, that God was real and God was faithful. In Job 19:25 Job declares what he knows to be true contrary to the facts of life. “I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes – how my heart yearns within me!”

Job was bearing witness to a reality beyond what others could see. Job was sitting in what Frances Schaeffer calls the seat of faith.

There are two seats that we can sit in moment by moment: the chair of naturalism or the chair of supernaturalism. The chair of naturalism believes only in what it can access by the five senses through the rational mind and reasoned thought. The chair of faith knows that there’s a sixth sense, the mind of Christ, and reality of the revelation of a real and eternal God.

(walk through I Corinthians chapters 1 and 2)

Indeed, the knowledge of God is too wonderful for me and yet God gives us that very gift! Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift!

The knowledge we are talking about today is not knowledge that can be gained solely by study – it is a gift given by God through faith to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

The big fancy word for all of this is “epistemology.” It is the study of how we know what we know.

1. Head knowledge = observation, instruction and experience
2. Heart knowledge = experience and inspiration
3. Gut knowledge = 6<sup>th</sup> sense, inspiration & revelation

And how is this knowledge attained and then developed?

First, (spiritual) knowledge must be given by God and received by faith.

God promises in Jeremiah 24:7 “I will give them a heart to know me.” And so He does.

Do you remember when Jesus asked the disciples what, by observation, the world knew of Him? “Who do people say that I am?” The disciples answered that the world’s answers ranged from John the Baptist – to whom Jesus was related and with whom he may have shared a physical family resemblance. Others observed that Jesus was a prophet and a miracle worker, but nothing more. Then he turns the question to the disciples themselves.

“You know me best. You’ve been with me day in and day out. You’ve witnessed the miracles, you’ve seen me under stress, you know me. So, who do you say that I am?”

And Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus then affirms that Peter is correct – but listen to “how” Jesus says that Peter knows the truth.

Matthew 16:17 reveals that Jesus replied to Peter’s confession by saying, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.”

Everyone didn’t know who Jesus was. Apparently everyone who met Jesus face to face, heard Him speak, ate bread miraculously multiplied in his hands, drank wine from water at his command didn’t “get” it. There were even doubters among those who witnessed the raising of the dead by Jesus’ command. Empirical evidence will never be enough to convince people – God must plant the knowledge of the Truth in the human heart by faith. Indeed, it is a gift.

A genuine confession that Jesus is the Christ is not something that is gained by reason, rational thought, nor instruction. It is not a knowledge that comes by way of the world. Confession of Christ is actually evidence of divine blessing.

Not only that, the gift of knowing the truth about Jesus is life. Jesus declares in John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

We are here today to thank God for the gift of the knowledge of who He is.

And knowing God, we want to know Him more! Philippians 3:10 captures the sentiment, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection!” Amen? Amen.

Once received, the gift of spiritual knowledge is to be cultivated and used.

Paul acknowledges in First Corinthians 2 verse 2 that he “resolved to know nothing...except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” That, my friends, is what it means to be single-minded. That is what it means to set our minds on things that are above, where Christ is seated, and not on the things of the earth. That is what it means to allow every thought to be held captive by Jesus Christ. That is what it means to cultivate the mind of Christ in all matter of life.

Having received the gift of the knowledge of God and of His only Son, Jesus Christ, we find ourselves compelled to intentionally immerse ourselves in the study of who He is, gain His perspective on all things, understand how He operates, and then allow His Holy Spirit to bring us into conformity with that knowledge.

Our actions often betray that although we “know” we do not live as if we know. Our knowledge is not lived out in acknowledgment.

Six times in the sixth chapter of his first letter to the Christians in Corinth, Paul starts a question with the same phrase, “Do you not know?” This is the “how many times do I have to tell you” question of the apostle to Christians who although they know better, are not doing better.

If you know, then you should live as if you know.

I John 2:3-4 begs the question of whether or not our actions line up with what we say we know.

“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar and the truth is not in him.” Reading on, verses 5-6 say “This is how we know we are in him: whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”

So, I ask, are we putting our knowledge of Christ on display or are we just paying him lip service?

Do we possess a knowledge of God and then turning around and failing to acknowledge God in our moment by moment walk of faith?

Let me close with a simple test...

See if you can finish this line: “Jesus loves me, this I know” (For the Bible tells me so.)

Our knowledge of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord rests with our receiving the truth God chooses to reveal in His Word.

Colossians 2 verse 3 tells us that in Jesus Christ are “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” and the book of Hebrews affirms that angels longed to look at the things of God that we take for granted. So, today, even now, let us genuinely thank God for the gift that surpasses all others – the gift through whom all the gifts come – Jesus Christ our Lord. To Him be glory and honor and praise, now and forevermore. **Amen.**