

Knowing God

March 3, 2013 ~ Jeremiah 9.23-24

v23 ~ “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let not the rich man glory in his riches”

❖ *III*: “Book: What Got You Here Won’t Get You There” ~Marshall Goldsmith

✧ “People will do something – including changing their behavior – only if it can be demonstrated that doing so is in their own best interests as defined by their own values.”

◇ WIIFE ~ “What’s in it for me?” ~ fundamental principle of free-market economics

✧ “If you press people to identify the motives behind their self-interest it usually boils down to four items: money, power, status and popularity.” (celebrity more common now)

✧ These are what people want ~ what they value ~ what they boast in

Four (4) reasons why boasting in these is irrational for Christians (*anyone really*)

1. They are merely temporal ~ Solomon addressed in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes

✧ **Ecc 2.16** ~ wisdom ~ “there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever”

✧ **Prov 20.29** ~ strength ~ “The glory of young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their grey head.”

✧ **Prov 23.5** ~ wealth ~ “Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle towards heaven.”

▪ **Ecc 5.12** ~ worry ~ “The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.”

2. They are not due to our own efforts or abilities alone

✧ Women show off their beauty ~ Men show off their skills & abilities ~ Parents brag about their children’s achievements . . .

◇ But Paul asks the proud Corinthians (**1 Cor 1.7**) ~ “.. who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”

3. Even that which we have a role in is due to God

✧ Again Paul in said this to the Corinthians (**1 Cor 15.9-10**) ~ “I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

◇ *III*: “Farming movie” ~ Rejects thanking God / God didn’t work the fields . . .

Xition: We’ve given 3 reasons to not brag ~ Here is the 4th . . .

4. Boasting in these blinds us to what we should boast in . . .

✧ And this last reason takes us to the next verse . . .

v24a ~ “But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me”

❖ “What does it mean to understand and know God?”

❖ *III: “Knowing God” ~by JI Packer ~ Purchased it on March 6th, 1983 (30 years ago)*

✧ This book was a major influence in my early Christian walk ~ many margin ?’s

✧ JI Packer raised my eyes heavenward to behold the glory & majesty of God

✧ “There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity.” Quote from sermon 20 year old C. Spurgeon

✧ But Packer also warned of a great risk in studying theology / studying God

✧ “We need to ask ourselves: what is my ultimate aim and object in occupying my mind with these things? What do I intend to do with my knowledge about God, once I’ve got it? For the fact that we have to face is this: that if we pursue theological knowledge for its own sake, it’s bound to go bad on us. It will make us proud and conceited. The very greatness of the subject-matter will intoxicate us, and we shall come to think of ourselves as a cut above other Christians because of our interest in it and grasp of it ..”

✧ Throughout my life I’ve played “Whack-a-mole” with my pride ~ poorly

❖ To glory is to boast ~ We are to boast that we understand and know God

✧ Note we’re not to know “about God” or “of God” or even “God’s Word”

v24b1 ~ “But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me”

❖ “What happens if we don’t understand something or someone?”

✧ We are disappointed ~ we may become confused / frustrated / angry

✧ **Gen 11.7** ~ “let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech”

✧ My hearing is going / I’m frustrated by & I frustrate people (*wife, workers*)

✧ “Are you frustrated by something in your life?” ~ Understanding is lacking

✧ If you suffer chronic frustration maybe you don’t understand or accept God

❖ “What must we do to understand anything / anybody?” ~ **study** . . .

✧ The more we study Scripture the more we understand God

✧ But only if we’re open to learning / to being changed by what we read

✧ We can memorize the entire Bible and be lost ~ demons believe & tremble

Xition: So study gains us some understanding of God . . . “What about knowing?”

v24b2 ~ “But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me”

- ❖ **III: “Knowing God”** ~ “I walked in the sunshine with a scholar who had .. forfeited his prospects of academic advancement by clashing with church dignitaries over the gospel of grace. “But it doesn’t matter,’ he said at length, ‘for I’ve known God and they haven’t.’”
- ✧ I can remember reading that long, long ago ~ and sensing bitterness
- ✧ But now I know he spoke it with no bitterness ~ but with a sad thankfulness
 - ◇ He was not bitter against those that could be called his enemies . . .
 - ◇ He was instead sad that they didn’t know God ~ yet thankful that he did
 - ◇ His thankfulness allowed him to bear their injustice against him

v24b2 ~ “But let him who glories glory in this . . .” ~ glory = boast

- ❖ Let me back up and briefly address the earlier phrase
 - ✧ We are encouraged to glory ~ to rejoice in thankfulness as this man did
 - ✧ **III: “Article: Exultation of Heart and Life”** ~D. Young ~ “We are to have much grief and pity, continual sorrow of heart, because of the world’s sins, but it argues a great lack and a great loss if we have not much joy because of God’s salvation.”

What does it mean to “glory in that we know God”

- ❖ “What did this man mean when he said ‘I’ve known God and they haven’t.’?”
 - ✧ “By this, did the man imply these other men were not saved?”
 - ✧ “Do all Christians know God?” ~ If so, “Do they all know God equally well?”
 - ✧ For preaching a sermon, I sure ask a lot of questions . . . ☺
- ❖ I want to address the words “understand” and “know”
 - ✧ There is commonality here – but also a significant difference

Two similarities and a difference between “understand” and “know”

❖ Similarities

1. Only believers can know and understand God
2. But believers know and understand God to varying degrees

❖ Difference

- ✧ God hides much from those that read His Word (*unbelievers & believers alike*)
 - ◇ But some understanding of God is gleaned from reading His Word
- ✧ But to know God requires God’s active participation
 - ◇ Let me again quote Packer, as he describes this very well:

- ◇ “It is clear .. that knowing God is of necessity a more complex business than knowing a fellow man .. just as knowing my fellow man is more complex than knowing a horse .. unlike horses, people cover up, and do not show everybody all that is in their hearts. Thus, the quality and extent of our knowledge of them depends more on them than on us. ***pause*** Our knowing them is more directly the result of their allowing us to know them than of our attempting to get to know them.”
 - *III: Getting to know Tabitha ~ (difficult – one picture of Gobi desert)*
- ◇ Packer goes on to describe meeting a famous respected leader . . .
 - **“Would we not be silent, let them talk and listen attentively?”**
- ◇ Listening requires effort .. Good listening is active .. (*hanging on every word*)
 - It would also be obedient listening...
 - If asked a question we’d answer ~ If given an order we’d obey
- ❖ To truly know God we must listen closely and obey without delay
 - ✧ Elijah fled from Jezebel and was hiding in a cave... (**1 Kings 19.1-10**)
 - ◇ The word of the Lord came to him and asked, **“What are you doing here?”**
 - ◇ Elijah recited his sad tale and then we read this . . .
 - **Read 1 Kings 19.11-12** ~ wind / earthquake / fire / still small voice
 - ✧ God does not come to us as we expect / how we expect / or when we expect
 - ✧ God does not usually reveal Himself to us without significant effort on our part
 - ◇ **Jer 29.13** “.. you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”
 - ◇ This was in answer to the word of God to Moses in **Dt 4.29**

v24c1 ~ “That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord.”

- ❖ **“What is lovingkindness?”** This word is not in use today...
 - ✧ Other versions read, **“steadfast love”** or **“unfailing love”**
 - ✧ There are only 19 delights in the whole Bible
 - ◇ Another is in **Micah 7.18**
 - **“God does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.”**
 - ✧ This pictures God compassion for His creation ~ especially His people
- ❖ God delights in all of these (**MERCY | RIGHTEOUSNESS | JUSTICE**)
 - ✧ **“How can God consistently fulfill all 3 of these objectives?”**
 - ✧ “How can He be compassionate to sinners, render justice to the oppressed (*those sinned against*) yet remain righteous?” (**Ps 85.10**)

Xition: Let’s close with some observations about this text . . .

Observations About the Text

- ❖ “What does man tend to glory in or boast about?”
 - ✧ wisdom ~ strength ~ wealth
 - ◇ Note that none of these involve conduct and all are centered on self
- ❖ “But what is it we’re to boast about regarding God?”
 - ✧ lovingkindness ~ judgment ~ righteousness
 - ◇ Note these involve character & conduct & are centered on others
- ❖ III: Youth ~ “Will those who are 20 or younger raise your hands?”
 - ✧ You may think that worship services are intended for adults . . .
 - ◇ You may not be tempted to boast of wisdom, strength or wealth
 - ◇ These may not have a hold on your heart .. but they will one day unless ..
 - ✧ What God delights in should speak to your heart
 - ◇ God delights in mercy, justice and righteousness
 - You may not value or pursue wisdom, strength or wealth
 - But you can value & practice mercy, justice and righteousness in your life
 - Whether you’re a girl that’s 9 or 19, a boy that’s 6 or 16 . . .

Heart Diagnostic Questions

- ❖ III: Sprint retrospective questions . . .
 1. “What went well this sprint?”
 2. “What went poorly this sprint?”
 3. “What can we do better next time?”
- ❖ Be honest in reflecting on answers to these questions . . .
 1. “How well do you understand and know God?” very well | not very well
 2. “Do you want to understand and know God?” yes, very much | no, not so much
 3. “What will you do differently tomorrow to understand and know God more?”

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

To God our Savior, who alone is wise,

Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.

Amen *pause* Go in peace . . .