



THE LOINS OF TRUTH

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WHY KNOWING GOD MATTERS (PART III)

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The Loins of Truth is one of Christ In You Ministries' endeavours to restore the truths that have been lost and trampled to the ground. We hope that by this avenue, we can motivate our readers to search for truth as for hidden treasures.

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Much have already been said about the need and the significance of knowing who God is. While this knowledge is the key to unlock the doors to the truths that have long been obscured by bigotry and tradition, the journey does not end here. A Christian ought to graduate to a higher level of understanding about God. We cannot afford to be stuck with the question of who God is but we need to move ahead and seek to know what God is actually like. It is when we arrive at this level of understanding about God that we begin to see things from a different perspective and our relationship with our fellow men is transformed.

It is frustrating to see that many souls are discovering the truth about the Godhead but most of them are too caught up with this issue that they are unable to truly appreciate what it means when the Bible says that God is love. Consequently, the significance of knowing God becomes almost redundant and the power that lays hidden behind it is untapped and unprofitable.

The Reasons Behind the Misconception

To a great extent, our character is moulded by the picture of God that has been etched in our minds. All along, man has been bred with the notion that God is a tyrant who seeks to plunder and destroy any person or group of persons who dare to defy His commandments. This concept did not evolve over time but it is actually the immediate result of the lies Satan uttered about God in the garden of Eden. When Satan said to Eve that the forbidden fruit had in it the properties that enabled her to become like God, knowing good and evil, he was actually suggesting her that God was intentionally withholding better things from her and her husband. Here the Devil was actually distorting God's character and purposes by deceit and by so doing, Adam and Eve

lost faith in God and they no longer viewed their Creator as a good Being but rather as a tyrant and a liar.



The spirit of fear towards God was manifested in their open rebellion against Him by way of disobedience and also in their efforts to try and conceal the evidence(s) of the wrong they committed by sewing clothes from leaves and hiding from God when He came looking for them. Both Adam and Eve hid themselves from Him because they now thought that He was filled with wrath and He had come to punish or even destroy them. Because of what our first parents did, all humans were conceived and born with this strange and false idea of God, as we can see it being described in this verse:

"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." (Psalm 58:3)

The word 'estrangle' means to be alienated or isolated from something or someone. In this case, man is alienated from God right from the time of his conception. One cannot expect to know God, let alone understand His character, if one is conceived and born in a state of isolation from Him.

This principle is not hard to prove. Picture yourself being put into a situation where you had to be married to a stranger; how would you feel? I reckon that it would be one of the scariest things that anyone would have to go through, especially considering the fact that you have never had the chance to know what kind of person you would end up spending the rest of your life with. At best you would only know that you are

marrying so and so who is the son or daughter of so and so. In short, you would only be acquainted with the person's identity and not the character. You can get to know this person only when you begin to spend more time with him or her. By citing this example, I do not intend to discredit or defame this practice or offend any person or group of persons who are in favour of this system. But I am only describing what I think it would be like for those who have to function under this system.

Similarly, no one is born with the awareness that God exists as can be seen in these words:

"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Psalms 14:2,3)

Higher Thoughts and Ways

This is why a child or a grownup, in certain cases, needs to be told or educated about these things. But what this group of individuals receive at the beginning is a mere intellectual knowledge about God. To know what God is, one has to spend time with Him. If this factor is absent in one's life, one can never get to the point of really knowing God after all and one is in danger of fostering the idea that God operates and functions at the same level as we humans do. Why I say this attitude is dangerous? It is because if we do not know the God we worship, we tend to assume what His character is, based on the understanding we have of ourselves and how we operate, think and react to certain situations in life. In other words, we bring God down to our level. But take note what God declared concerning His ways and thoughts.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8,9)

In verse seven of this same passage, God calls the wicked *"to forsake his way, and the unrighteous his*

thoughts." (Isaiah 55:7). Unfortunately, most do not heed this message. Instead we boast of our knowledge about the Godhead truth and at times display a demeanour as if to say that we now have the right to sit in judgement over our neighbours who do not share the same knowledge that we are so privileged to possess.

Merciful God

This same crisis plagued the Jews especially those belonging to the Pharisaic community. This group of men prided themselves on account of the knowledge they have concerning the word of God. They were 'experts' of the Mosaic law and the writings of the prophets. They were branded as the "theologians of the day" and they were considered as the sole expositors of the scriptures. But all this knowledge came to nought because they were promoting a religion that lacked one vital element, namely, love. The chief reason of this problem lies in the fact that these men, though they may have had a correct understanding of scripture concerning God's identity, they were utterly ignorant of His character. As a result, we find many instances in the Bible where they openly manifested a judgemental and an unkind spirit. God disapproves of this kind of spirit and calls for a change of heart.

"Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let them that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:23,24)

To the scribes and the Pharisees living in the first century and to us living today, God sends a powerful message wherein He denounces anyone who takes pride on account of the wisdom and knowledge he has attained, even if that knowledge pertains to the truth about God and His Son, for God declares that a man ought to glory in the fact that he not only knows that God is the LORD but that He is a God who delights in loving-kindness, judgement and righteousness.

Uncircumcised Hearts

Let me remind you that the Jews were neither Trinitarians nor Unitarians. They knew exactly who God was and yet God numbered them with the heathen nations that surrounded them because they could not see Him in the way that He wanted to be seen by them. They were utterly blinded to the fact that He is love. Therefore, in Jeremiah chapter nine and verses twenty-five and twenty-six, God goes on to say thus:

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the uttermost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart." (Jeremiah 9:25,26)

Christ's Mission

The 'house of Israel' today is suffering from this problem of uncircumcised heart. To deal with this problem, Jesus Christ came with a mission to reveal the true nature and character of the Father in heaven. And Christ is the only person who is eligible to do this because He is the only one who has seen God face to face.

"No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John 1:18)

Jesus employed a number of ways to reveal God to fallen man. Most importantly, He bore the character of the Father and through His life, people were beginning to see what God was really like. It is in this way that Jesus said to Philip that whoever had seen Him, had seen the Father also. Another method that Christ employed was the use of parables.

The Prodigal Son

In my opinion, the parable that stood out as a revelation of God's character was the parable of the prodigal son as recorded in Luke chapter fifteen and verses eleven through thirty-two.

In this parable, the father typified the heavenly Father and the younger son

represented the sinner who wants to go astray. The servants represented the angels and the Pharisees were represented by the older son. In this analogy, Jesus presented the loving nature of the Father. It is He who is being offended on a regular basis. If we estimate God's character to be like our own, it would be natural to view God as One being filled with rage and anger. What would follow is punishment and reproach.

Unchangeable God

Contrary to popular belief, our sins do not have the power to effect a change in God. The Bible clearly teaches us that God is love and He is unchangeable. This is one of the reasons why a sinner does not experience the full fruits that his sin deserves.

"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Malachi 3:6

In fact, David understood this and he voiced this truth in his Psalms.

"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as the father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." (Psalms 103:8-14)

These beautiful words of David reassure us that we do not have a reason to fear that God would deal with us harshly because of our weaknesses. Besides, if earthly parents can manifest tender love toward their children, it is an absurd thing to think that their love is equal or even greater than the love of God. Jesus also said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:11)

Like the prodigal son, no matter how sinful we think we are, know that we have a Father who loves us and is willing to accept us with open arms when we come to Him with a repentant heart. The word of God admonishes us to come to Him with all our sins and weaknesses and we shall be washed as white as snow.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

The point that I want to make here is that sin changes man's attitude towards God but not the other way around. Though the prodigal son no longer counted himself worthy to be called a son, but from the father's point of view, there was no sin too great that could alter the fact that his son was his son.

Pharisaic Syndrome

Let us not, like the older son in the parable, seek to sit in judgement over our neighbour. The reason the older son did this was because he knew not what kind of a man his father really was. He revered his father out of fear thinking that he would face the music lest he failed to perform his duties to the letter. Though he knew who his father was and lived and dwelled in his house, he utterly failed in his estimation of him. Therefore, to his surprise, he could not believe that his younger brother was accepted with open arms. The picture that he had of his father, to a great extent, influenced and moulded his character. Therefore, it was not a surprise that he did not display any joy in the return of the repentant sinner.

Many a Christian suffers from this sickness. We think that God is pleased by our performance and so we seek to gain His favour by our works or by remaining in the fold. Like the pharisees, we think that by merely adhering to the precepts of the law, we are counted righteous before God. But this is the opposite of what the Bible teaches us. It is faith that Abraham was counted a righteous man. Faith that rests in the assurance that we serve a God who loves.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." (Romans 3:20)

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ... For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:4-9)

Our erroneous opinion of God has moulded our character to the kind that does not reflect the true image of the One who is merciful and kind. No wonder that many have developed a wrong impression of Christianity as a whole.

When We Were Enemies

The parable also reveals yet another startling account of God's love for us. When the prodigal son was still a long way from home, the father recognised his form and ran to meet him. This shows that the father had not forgotten his son and for so long he had yearned to show his willingness to reconcile and forgive. These things were already available to the wayward son long before he knew he needed them. This, once again, is a reflection of the character of our heavenly Father.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son..." (Romans 5:10)

Long before we even knew that we were God's enemies; long before we knew we needed forgiveness and reconciliation, God had already paved a way by which these things would be available to the human race. All we need to do is to believe and accept that Christ is the way through which these blessings can be accessed.

Such is the character of the God that we serve. He would not be upset because we commit sins. But at the same time, He wants us to give our lives to Him so that He can change us and cause us to walk in His ways *"for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:10)

WHY KNOWING GOD MATTERS (PART IV)

Reuben Warjri

In parts one through three of this series, I have touched upon a few aspects of what it means to know God. In this fourth and final part, we shall discover that “knowing” God takes on an entirely new dimension. In fact, I am about to discuss the final and the ultimate goal of what “knowing” God really means.

John 17:3

When I was first introduced to the truth about God and His Son, the verse that was often quoted and applied in sermons, lectures or even articles written by various authors was John 17:3. In my experience, this verse, which was otherwise eclipsed in utter obscurity, suddenly appeared in the limelight. It now ranked among the most popular verses, next only to John 3:16, and I know that all OTG members can relate to what I am saying. The sheer popularity of this verse is largely attributed to the fact that it provides us with a solid prove that the Father alone is the only true God, and more so, when these words are the actual words of Jesus Himself. Once again, I invite you to take a look at the verse in question.

“This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” (John 17:3)

Though spoken by Christ Himself, these words cannot be taken at face value. As I have mentioned in part III of this series that a mere intellectual knowledge is not enough to give us life, therefore, it stands to reason that Christ’s words have a deeper and profounder connotation behind them.

How “Know” is Used

To decode the message of Christ, we need to understand the meaning of the word “know.” The Bible uses this word not only to imply having a knowledge of something, but it also connotes the process by which husband and wife become “one flesh” through the process of sexual intercourse. An example of this usage is found in the book of Genesis.

“And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and

said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.” (Genesis 4:1)

It was only after Adam “knew” his wife that she conceived and gave birth to Cain. This is not the only place where this same word is used in this fashion in the Bible. We also find it in the New Testament, in the account given in Luke concerning the conversation that took place between Gabriel and Mary.

“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS.... Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man?” (Luke 1:30-34)

Lesser and Greater Truths

At the time when this conversation took place, Mary had already been acquainted with Joseph. In fact, she was engaged to be married to him. Hence, when she said “I know not a man,” she meant that she was still a virgin. She had yet to experience the process of being “one flesh.” So, in John 17:3, Jesus was employing the physical and lesser truth to illustrate the spiritual and greater truth of what it means to have a complete knowledge of God and His Son. Just as husband and wife are one in the flesh when they are physically joined to one another, man is one in spirit with God and Christ when his spirit is joined to the Comforter. This truth is once again voiced out by Christ in John chapter seventeen.

“... as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” (John 17:21)

“I in them, and Thou in Me.” (John 17:23)

Each member of God’s church has to be joined to the Spirit of Christ in order to be one body. In another sense, God’s church, the spiritual body of Christ, experiences the oneness that is made possible only through the indwelling of the Comforter – individually and

corporately. This truth is spelled out in the words of Christ and in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.” (John 14:23)

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building is fitly framed together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

The words of Christ lay more emphasis on the indwelling of the Spirit on an individual level whereas, Paul painted a picture of how the indwelling of the Spirit takes place within the body of believers in a collective manner. These two statements do not contradict each other.

Lively Stones

Peter integrates these two statements thus: *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house...” (1 Peter 2:5)*

The individuals that make up the spiritual temple and body of Christ are the ones who have Christ living in them. Christ is the glue that binds each individual or stone together so that they are “fitly framed together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” Without Christ living in us, we are counted as dead. We ought to allow Christ to dwell in us because it is only when He dwells in us that we can truly become alive. (Read 1 John 5:11,12). This and only this entitles us for eternal life. For this reason, it should be our earnest desire to be one with Christ, not only in doctrine but more so in the spirit. This is what it ultimately means to “know” God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent.

“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” (1 Corinthians 6:17)

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