

Knowing God through prayer

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[0 : 0 0] This morning in the passage that we read together in 2nd Timothy chapter 1 and verse 12. 2nd Timothy chapter 1 and verse 12.

For the which cause I also suffer these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Especially the second half of that verse. For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Over the last three weeks we've been looking at the subject of knowing God in various aspects of it. We began by a definition from John 17 verse 3 of how the knowledge of God is in fact, as Jesus puts it there, it is that which leads into directly the possession of eternal life.

Indeed he says this is eternal life to know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. We then saw how knowing God is related to knowing Jesus and knowing him particularly as the Saviour who died for sinners, knowing him in his death.

[1 : 3 3] Then last time we looked at the knowledge of God through repentance. Looking especially at it in the prophecy of Hosea, how he speaks there of knowing God through repentance, bringing us to the knowledge of God.

And today I would like to look with you at this text where knowing God is related specifically to faith, but how it also includes the matter of assurance and indeed something too of hope.

I know, Paul says, whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Now the concern of the apostle here is to set before Timothy, how he needs to continue in the way that he is doing in the proclamation of the gospel to be a partaker with the apostle himself of what he tells us in verse 8 is the afflictions, are the afflictions of the gospel.

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord or of me as prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.

[2 : 5 9] But then he comes as he always does to the basic ground of his confidence, which is always Jesus Christ himself. He says, I have been appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles and the things that I'm asking you to continue, even if it means suffering these things.

He says, I also suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed or I am not put to shame. For I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded.

He comes to set it out before Timothy by way of personal testimony. For he says, I know whom I have believed.

Now here is the apostle writing a little time before he died. He knew he was going to die soon. He knew that the time of his departure, as it is in chapter 4, was at hand.

He knew that the time of leaving this world and entering eternity was vain. This was something that the apostle's mind was set upon as imminent.

[4 : 08] And he needed at that time something that would stand, something that he could set across to Timothy and to others, was necessary for him at that time.

It wasn't a time of foolish reflections, not a time of looking to things that would be useless to him in passing through death. It was a time when he needed something that was solid beneath his feet.

A time of the most serious and earnest reflection. A time when he could face death with confidence.

That is what he's doing. I know whom I have believed. And I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

And there are two things that we could use as our headings to guide us today through what he says in this text. There is first of all a knowledge bearing assurance.

[5 : 19] A knowledge bearing assurance. And then he speaks secondly of assurance as the fruit of that knowledge.

Assurance the fruit of that knowledge. A knowledge bearing assurance first of all. For I know, he says, I am not ashamed.

For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able. And the thing that I really want to focus on especially today here is the relation between this assurance that Paul speaks of in these words, I am persuaded.

The relation between that and what he has said earlier, For I know him or I know whom I have believed. And to see the precision with which he actually speaks here, the precise relation between the assurance, the persuasion, the strong persuasion and the knowledge, the knowing of which he has spoken.

And how in that relation we have to see that it is an assurance that comes from knowing. It's a particular relation, a particular consequence.

[6 : 44] He's not saying, I believe him whom I know, therefore I have assurance. He is saying, for I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded.

The consequence of knowing is this persuasion. The assurance that he speaks of, the confidence that he has, the persuasion that he says, here is a persuasion relating to the future, is the direct fruit of knowing Jesus for himself.

I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to do this. In other words, it's an assurance that's dependent on the knowledge.

There's no doubt whatsoever that assurance is very intimately connected with, some people would even say, is within or a part of, faith, believing.

That is unquestionably biblical. That assurance, while we need not say that it is of the essence of faith, in other words, you can have genuine faith without having assurance of faith.

[8 : 01] The fact that you and I sometimes do not possess the assurance of faith does not necessarily mean that the faith we possess is not genuine. You can have genuine faith without any strong assurance of faith.

But what the Apostle is telling us is that assurance is not just tied to faith. Indeed, assurance is not necessarily first and foremost tied to faith.

Because what he's telling us is that assurance is something that for him comes naturally from knowing Christ. It is one of the consequences, it is one of the fruits of knowing Christ for himself.

It is one of the things that arises out of this knowledge of Jesus that he possesses. For I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded.

Not I have believed whom I do know and I am persuaded. But I know whom I have believed.

[9 : 13] The conviction, the persuasion is dependent on the knowledge. And it's dependent on it in such a way as the knowledge of Christ comes first, then follows assurance.

Assurance. You could say that it's a believing assurance or an assured faith that's dependent on knowing him.

I know whom I have believed. One sense, of course, as we'll see in a minute, faith is what unites us to Christ so as to know him.

But yet it's true that it's the faith that has taken us into this personal relationship with him. And that is what he is emphasizing here lies behind, more than anything else, lies behind his conviction that Jesus is able to keep that which he has committed unto him against that day.

It is the way that he knows him that leads him to say, I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded. Now that's important to keep in mind.

[10 : 27] Because it tells us that the best way to come to assurance of faith, the best way to come to have an assured faith, if you like, is not to look at your faith itself.

It's not to examine your faith, though you and I must do and can do that. But the best way of coming to assurance is not by taking your faith and taking it apart and looking at it.

Nor looking at yourself as someone who believes and looking in upon yourself and asking various questions about your belief and the way you believe and so on.

No, the best way of coming to assurance, to this confident looking to the future that the Apostle is outlining, is this knowing of Christ.

It's not so much the firmness of faith that gives assurance as the familiarity with Christ, without which firmness of faith itself will be impossible.

[11 : 33] It's familiarity with Him. It's nearness to Him. It's intimacy of knowledge with Him.

It's closeness to Him. It's the teachings of Himself as you know Himself personally. That is what strengthens your faith. That is what leads to your persuasion and conviction and assurance.

For I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded. You go to Christ Himself every time. That is the source of all your persuasion and your confidence.

Now then there are two things under this first heading of a knowledge bearing assurance that also arise out of the text.

First of all, we can see from it that knowledge is necessary to faith. Knowledge is necessary to faith.

[12 : 35] Why do we say that? Well, because some people, you'll come across people saying that faith is something that really counters knowledge. Or that faith is something that comes about as something that contradicts with knowledge.

That faith is something that takes over from knowledge. Or putting it in some way like that. As if faith and knowledge were mutually contradictory.

As if faith was somehow taking a leap into the dark without really knowing where you're going to land at all. And that's a big mistake.

To think of faith in those terms is a big mistake. There may be times when, like Abraham, God will call upon us to do something without truly knowing the end in sight precisely for what it is.

But then you see, what we're told of Abraham in Hebrews 11 is that he went out into a place he would afterward receive as an inheritance. He obeyed God not knowing where he was going.

[13 : 39] He didn't know the precise land that he was going to. But he did know where his faith was taking him because he was following the promise of God. He looked for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

But he knew that. And he was acting upon that knowledge in the faith that he used to obey the command of God. His faith was not against knowledge.

His faith was not a leap in the dark knowing nothing of the way ahead. He was acting upon the moment. He was acting upon the way ahead. But faith for us is not that kind of lack of information.

It's not something to be commended, to be able to say, well, we're doing something but we don't really know much of the Bible. And we're not concerned to know much of any head knowledge whatsoever.

We're going to proceed in faith and that's it. No faith itself is related to the information that God gives through his revealed truth in the scriptures and the application of them by his Spirit to the mind of his people. It is through this that we indeed come to faith and it is through this that faith itself is set to work and continues to work. It is not despite knowledge or against knowledge but through knowledge. Knowledge is necessary for faith. The Bible itself reminds us of that. Romans 10 tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing.

[15 : 28] Faith comes through the knowledge that God has given us of his will in his Word. We read it, we hear it preached, faith comes through that hearing. And just because faith itself is a gift of God, a product of the regenerating work of his Spirit in our souls, that does not mean at all that faith is contrary to, counter to, or against knowledge. The knowledge God has given us in the Bible is what brings us to faith. Faith comes by hearing. Your faith is then fed by that same Word of God. Your faith is enlarged, not against knowledge, but more and more through knowledge, especially the knowledge of Christ's Christ himself. It's a knowledge bearing assurance. It's a knowledge that's necessary to faith. How thankful we should be that we today have a Bible. That we can go to the Bible. That we can hear sermons in the Bible. That we can freely meet together to worship God and to hear of his word.

How thankful we should be that we can freely. How thankful we should be that there is a desire in our heart to read the Scriptures. To read books that interpret the Scriptures for us. How thankful we are surely that God has given us this knowledge of himself by which we may come to faith in Jesus Christ.

It is a knowledge necessary to faith. But Paul is obviously going much further than that knowledge that we have simply of the Word in our minds. For I know whom I have believed is a lot more than saying, I know of a Bible that tells me about Jesus Christ. He's talking here of knowing Jesus himself.

We're back to the Bible that we are back to the Bible that we are back to the Bible that we are back to the same emphasis that we said at the beginning. We would be reiterating again and again through these studies that it's not simply a head knowledge or an intellectual knowledge, but that that itself is designed to lead us to this personal knowledge. This knowledge of Jesus himself personally in a relationship with him.

So it's not just a matter of knowledge being necessary to faith. We must also say that this faith is necessary along with knowledge. This faith is necessary along with knowledge if we're to come to this assurance. For I know, he says, whom I have believed. We mustn't leave that part of it out.

[18 : 22] He doesn't just say, for I know, he doesn't just say, for I know him and I am persuaded. He is saying, for I know whom I have believed. There is a faith necessary along with knowledge in our minds. Now that means that on the one hand we can have this knowledge in our minds, without faith, without faith, without faith, without this knowledge of Jesus, of the will of God, of his truth. But you can have a head knowledge, without faith, without believing, without trusting in Christ. That's why we're emphasizing that faith is necessary along with it.

And what does he mean here? For I know whom I have believed. Well, he doesn't just say, I know him through assenting to his truth. That is part of faith, but it's not all of faith. This literally means an entrustment of himself into the hands of the Lord.

We'll see the consequences of that in the latter part of the text in a minute. It's an entrustment of ourselves to the Lord. If you go to your Westminster Confession of Faith, you'll find that it tells you that the primary acts, or the actions is what it means, of faith, are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Jesus Christ for justification, sanctification, and eternal life.

It is an entrustment of ourselves to Christ.

And the entrustment, as we'll see, of our entire persons, of our whole well-being, present and future well-being, into the hand of this Savior.

[20 : 53] It is a committing of ourselves to him, just as it's a receiving of his entire person into our possession to be our Savior.

You cannot accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, but you are at the same time consciously entrusting yourself and your entire well-being into his hand.

That is what the Apostle is telling us here. I know whom I have believed and am persuaded. I know whom I have entrusted myself to.

I know because I have received him as my Savior, but in receiving him, I have entrusted myself to him. My entire life is in his hand. That's what he means.

And it is that faith that unites us to Christ in our effectual calling. I know that the first of these is true of everybody.

[21 : 57] This knowledge of Christ through the Scriptures, the knowledge that we need that brings us to faith, the knowledge of the Scriptures, the knowledge of the Word.

You know about Christ, you know about the revelation God has given you of himself in his Word. You know the Bible, you know the teachings of the Bible, you know it to read it for yourself, to hear it.

You know it on that level. It is true of every single person here that we know the Scriptures, that we know Jesus Christ in the Bible.

But is it true of everybody, the second step, the faith that is necessary along with knowledge?

And so, is it true of everyone that we have this knowledge, not just the head knowledge, but this personal knowledge of which he's speaking, that is itself along with faith and entrustment of ourselves to him?

[22 : 58] And if not, why is that the case? And when will it be the case of you and I that we come to that knowing of Christ, in which we are entrusted to him and in which we have made him by faith our Savior?

Why is it true of anyone here in such a privileged position as you are in to know the Bible and its teachings, that you do not get how this faith, that you are not yet in this position of saying, I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded?

That you of all people should still have to say that is a very real spiritual tragedy and a very solemn thing you would not exchange.

You would place today in this pew with anyone out in the world who is ignorant of the Gospel and ignorant entirely of Jesus Christ who know little or nothing about them except as a swear word on their lips.

You would not exchange your place here with any of them, would you? Of course not. So therefore, your privilege is such that you must press on to know himself and to commit yourself to him and to make him your own so that you can say, I know whom I have believed.

[24 : 34] Imagine on the day of judgment. For a few minutes. Though we can never appreciate the momentousness of that. Paul is looking ahead to that.

This day, he says, that day, he's going on to speak about his keep, the Lord is keeping against that day what he has committed unto. He has in mind the day of his account to God.

Just imagine all the peoples that will be gathered in the presence of the judgment seat of Christ and all who are ignorant or who did not seek to respond to the message of the Gospel, to the invitations of God's people to come to hear the Gospel, who chose to live in ignorance and sin rather than to come to hear the Word of God or to familiarize themselves with it.

You and I, together with them, will be facing the throne of Christ. Will they have to say to you, on that day, I'm surprised to find you here.

To find you along with us. To find you along with the ignorant. To find you along with those who themselves did not know the Bible at all.

[25 : 59] Will they be able to say of any of us at all, we're surprised that you are going to be in eternity with us. You who knew the Bible, how come you are here?

Will it not be for you, every one of us here, to be able to say before we die, to be able to say, yes, even before this day is out, if you make it, you resolve as you and I must.

I know whom I have believed. And I am persuaded that facing death, I can do so with confidence in Him and because of Him.

is there anything so tragic in all world as the lost eternity of the well-informed?

is there anything so tragic as someone who knows so much of Christ and still knows Him not in a saving manner?

[27 : 16] is there anything so tragic as a soul in heaven renew in this world much of the Bible?

the knowledge that's necessary to faith must never leave us with that knowledge itself and nothing more. We must have the faith that's necessary along with the knowledge.

The faith that brings us to know Christ personally with the knowledge that exceeds the head knowledge. With the knowledge that can say, I know whom I have believed.

I wish you had been at the assembly on Thursday evening listening to some of the missionary delegates because one of the speakers that evening was a man from Peru, a senior minister of the gospel in Peru called Pedro Alana.

And he was giving thanks to God for the experience that he had been given, the privilege that he had had of coming to know Jesus Christ through the missionary efforts of people like he named the late James McIntosh who brought to him in the college in Lima in Peru, he said, he brought me to know three things or they brought me to know three things.

[28 : 45] They taught me, first of all, of the truth of God. They taught him, secondly, he said, of that truth as it is found in Jesus Christ.

And they taught me, thirdly, that I can live it for myself by faith in that Jesus. If you had seen that man, you would have known from his face how thankful that God had not left him in the great jungle of Lima in ignorance, that he had given him not just a Bible but the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

and here you and I are today confronted with a knowledge that bears assurance that's impressed upon us as something that you and I need ourselves for today.

if you were ignorant of Christ there may be some excuse for us to live without knowing him and believing him and committing ourselves to him but what reason or excuse will there be for us when we know about him so much and yet know him not?

I know whom I have believed he says. Then he comes to the assurance itself that is the fruit of knowledge and he talks about it in a very interesting way.

[30 : 24] I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. There are two things there as well that we can look at much more briefly.

First of all what we can call Paul's deposit that which I have committed unto him. What does he mean by this? Well we've already anticipated that because what he means by that is the entire commitment of himself his person his well-being his present his future into the hands of the Lord that which I have committed unto him is his whole well-being for this life and for the life to come.

everything that Paul will be in time and eternity he says by faith by this believing I have committed that unto him.

that is his deposit that's why you find the Bible so frequently the testimony of the Lord's people in the Psalms especially you find these great words used we use them in the Psalms that we sung today already where we find the Psalmist speaking about God as his fortress God as his refuge he shall hide me in his pavilion all of which speak of security safe keeping a deposit that will never ever be broken in upon and removed and fiend or corrupt I am persuaded he says that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day against that day of Christ's return against that momentous judgment of the Lord's own judgment when every single detail of life will be singled out and sifted through and when every single word and every thought and every action of the Apostle Paul will be brought before him on that day when every single thing he knows as he speaks these words as he writes this to Timothy that the judgment throne of Christ for him is very near and very real and very intense and very detailed but he says

I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him my entire self is in the safe keeping of Jesus Christ's ability Jesus Christ himself is my strong room my safe my impregnable fortress you see that is what knowing him leads to this is a wonderful thing in the text he doesn't have to wait till he gets to heaven to reach an assurance by which life is truly thrilling thrilling he has it now as he writes to Timothy and he has it through the knowledge that he has of the Lord I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded in consequence that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day isn't that what we find in the Lord himself when he came to die father he said into thy hands

[34:10] I commit thy spirit he came at that time to commit his soul into the safe keeping of his father's hand and now the apostle is saying that that same Jesus himself is the one into whose hands that is the essence of faith of the essence of faith that he has committed himself and his entire well-being into the hands of this Christ and because he knows and what he does he is now able to say that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto against that day Paul's deposit and secondly Christ's safe keeping the only way that Paul will be disappointed is if Christ fails to be what he must be in his work as saviour the only way that Paul will be put to shame the only way that his faith will fail of its end is if Christ fails to be the complete and sufficient and perfect saviour of sinners that is the only way that this can fail and Paul knows that will never be the case he is able to keep this my deposit is safe

Paul is saying my deposit is safe it is in the most secure possible place and condition I am in Christ I am united to him and he to me I abide in him and he abides in me and therefore I am persuaded that he is able to keep this against that day that's not just assurance for an apostle it's an assurance for every believer to count it's the possession of people who would not dare to call themselves anything like the apostle Paul or even others that they know in this world but you can dare to say this that you know whom you have believed and in consequence you are persuaded he is able to keep all that you have committed unto against that day that Christ will not fail you in the test of the great day of judgment didn't Jesus himself say in the sermon on the mount lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through to steal but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust does not corrupt and where thieves do not break through to steal but where your treasure is there will your heart be yours are you in safe keeping today is your entire well being is your whole person is your future in this world is your future in eternity is it within a safe deposit is it in

Christ himself can you say I know him whom I have believed and I'm persuaded that he is able to do if he is your savior you can because that belongs to you as someone in Christ that's what Moses looked forward to by faith he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt why for he hath respect to the recompense of the reward the most precious things the most valuable commodities in this world today are guarded with the utmost security but there is no security firm or security guard in the world no burglar alarms no security systems that can guarantee 100% every single day but an ingenious thief will not come and devise a way for it and plunder the treasure that is being guarded there isn't a security guard in the world today that can confirm to you 100% that there is absolutely no way ever that what is guarded will not be plundered but there is such a thing before us there is no possibility that the depositing of ourselves into the hands of Christ will ever fail to be kept by him there is no possibility of ever coming short of the fullness of glory that is with him in heaven

I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded come what may remember he's talking in his sufferings he's talking facing death he's talking facing the judgment seat of Christ I know and I am persuaded that he is able and he is able to keep everything of my well being what shall we then say he said in Romans 8 to these things if God before us who can be against us he that spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all how shall he not with him also freely give us all things who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect it is God that justifies who is he that condemns it is Christ that died nay rather that is risen again who is even at the right hand of God who makes intercession also for us who shall separate us from the love of Christ tribulation distress persecution famine nakedness peril sword nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us for I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in

Christ Jesus our Lord what a great thing it is to know O Lord our God we pray that thou would sanctify thy word to us we pray that it may lodge in our hearts that that faith that is necessary for us to approach thee and to approach eternity will be found exercised by us we do thank thee for thy revelation we do thank thee for every term expressed in it we do thank thee for the work of thy Holy Spirit that brings the gift of faith to us we pray Lord that thou would help us every day that we live to live by faith and not by sight to raise us above this present world that we might look towards eternity with the confidence of the apostle to be able to say that we are persuaded that thou art able to keep us even against that great day bless us now we pray thee go before us in the rest of the day and pardon all our sin for Jesus sake

[42 : 52] Amen let us sing in conclusion Psalm 23 the whole of the psalm to the Choon St. Columba