

"True Knowledge"

I know there is a God, and I want a true knowledge of the God who created me. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're examining the wealth that comes from the full assurance of knowing God and our Lord Jesus.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. If you want true knowledge and not what people think, then go to the Scriptures. The world is full of theological spin and feel-good religion, but true knowledge is found in searching the Scriptures, God's inspired and authoritative Word is the standard by which we can measure whether we're hearing and what we are hearing is accurately true. Thanks for taking time with us. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

The Bereans were not content to hear the preaching of the apostle Paul. They checked out what they heard by going to the Word of God. Acts 17:11 says, "Now these were more noble-minded than those (of) in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." Many of the Bereans believed in Jesus Christ, but others rejected Paul and the gospel truth. They stirred up the crowds against Paul. I hope and pray you're willing to hear what the Scripture says. I want everyone to know the love of God.

Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:17 to 19 that "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." When people know the love of God and the truth of God's word, they find true a blessing. And I don't anyone to lose the opportunity of living close to God in this life or in the life to come.

Now we offer this study on true knowledge free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have programs and free materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. And you can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 2:1 to 4, and examine the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that can be found in knowing Christ Jesus.

Our reading today is from Colossians chapter 2 verses 1 through 4. And here the apostle Paul is showing his great love for this young church. Who could be influenced by a lot of things that could hurt them. So he says to them.

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.

Of course that's what we want too is a true knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that we can turn to Your word so that we might know what is true and separate it from the things that are of speculations and falsehood. And Father we pray that we may do Your will always and love You. In Jesus name, Amen.

People of this world have looked at life quite differently than what the true knowledge in Christ teaches us. In many cases people's perspectives and attitudes have followed the wide and easy road that leads to destruction. They feel satisfied with their present life but have lost sight of God and the hereafter. They feel content to take God and salvation for granted. Many are so focused on their own pleasure, they've lost sight of the accountability they have to God. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 11 and verse 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment."

Today we're looking at several common ideas that people hold about life and comparing them to the true knowledge revealed in the Word of God. First, some people have chosen to hold only to the "truth that works for me." They are practical, pragmatic. As long as they are happy and avoid trouble, they're content with what they believe. A Christian, on the other hand, seeks to please God. He wants to be a true disciple of Christ and find the truth that sets him free from the curse of sin and lies. Falsehoods lead to false hope. It would be tragic to face God on the last day unprepared and unsaved, realizing that you had enjoyed this life but will be rejected in the life to come. Earthly ways may work for the present, but only following Christ can work for eternity.

Second, some think that we can't know the truth and that there are no absolutes. They think that because we can't know everything, that we can't know anything. Well if we had to know everything, no one could function at all in this world. I don't have to know everything to drive a car, to graduate from college, or to do my job. I do have to know what matters. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:31 to 32 that, "If you abide in my word, (then) you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

The word of God gives us what we need to know to function as Christians. God has revealed what matters and what's profitable. 2 Timothy 3 verses 16 to 17 says that, "All Scripture is inspired (that is God breathed) by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The inspired word of God teaches us what we need to know, what we must not do, what we need to correct, and how to be people trained in righteousness. God's word is given to bring us to maturity in righteousness and as good servants. We can be functionally everything that God desires through study and implementing the word of God. The Lord hasn't neglected to teach us the words of eternal life. They've always been available in God's word.

Third, some believe in being tolerant and letting others do as they please. Well now this sounds civil and kind, but it ignores the difference between what matters and what doesn't. Many things don't matter, and we shouldn't spend our lives criticizing and judging others over things that don't matter. What God calls sin, however, is different; it matters! God's moral laws aren't meaningless. People often lose sight of the harm of immoral behavior. Sin offends God, it harms others, and condemns the soul. Sin is our enemy. The evil in this world must be opposed, and that's why we have the police, the courts, and the military. Without them, our lives would be filled with chaos and misery.

Now God doesn't give us moral laws for no reason. God's laws are "for our good always" (Deuteronomy 6 and verse 24). You see God is wiser than we are. He knows what harms happen when people break His commandments. People commit sin for pleasure, but they rarely consider the heartbreak it causes others. Lying, cheating, stealing, drunkenness, lust, sexual sins, selfish-ambition, haughty pride, and such things have caused untold pain and misery. When people are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, they turn their hearts from God. 1 Kings 11 and verse 4 says, "For when Solomon

was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods (away from God); and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.”

Sin enslaves. And the Lord said in John 8 and verse 34, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” Now slaves of sin will do anything to retain the pleasure of sin. Drug addicts will shame themselves and rob others just to get more drugs. Sadly, some Christians who were once faithful to the Lord choose the pleasures of sin over the Lord. Peter describes this in 2 Peter 2:20 to 22, “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “a dog returns to its own vomit,” and, “A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.” Sin makes us ugly and ashamed; and it separates us from God.

For this reason, because we love the souls of everyone, we cannot remain quiet about sin. God told the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 3:17 to 19, “Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. When I say to the wicked, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.” Don’t despise the person who calls you to repent. He’s being faithful to God and loving toward your soul.

Repentance works with the grace of God to bring healing to a lost sinner. The prodigal son only brought harm and shame to himself while he lived in sin. And when he came to his senses, he repented and returned to a life of righteousness. God’s grace can forgive our sins, but it doesn’t work if we won’t repent. Repentance is how we correct our lives and become the people of God, the people God intended for us to be. 2 Peter 3 and verse 9 says that, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

Fourth, some see no place for “institutional religion”; they want spirituality but without being part of a church. While most people believe there is a supernatural power, many have rejected being part of a faith community. A recent Barna survey says that only 20 percent of Americans are “self-identified as Christians who value their faith and attend church at least monthly.” While problems with religion is the focus of many, the Scriptures provide a very different view of the church. The church as God intended it to be is quite different from religion in our culture.

The Lord Jesus never recommended the church start a war or kill heretics; those came from men and these men had selfish ambition. Romans 12:17 to 21 teaches: Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The Lord never recommended that the church have rich hierarchies of power within these places; He taught that leaders should be servants. The Lord Jesus called His apostles to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. “It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your

servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20 verses 25 to 28).

The Lord Jesus never sought to use ministry as a means to make millionaires. New Testament Christianity involves an abundant life of spiritual devotion to God; it isn't a health and wealth gospel. The apostles Peter and John could tell the lame man that they healed at the temple in Acts 3 and verse 6, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” You see true Christians seek to lay up their treasures in heaven.

When Simon the Sorcerer wanted to buy the ability to give miraculous gifts to others, Peter responded in Acts 8:20 to 23, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.” Church is not a business to make money; it's a ministry to bless others.

The Lord never sought to turn worship also into entertainment; you see He wants worship to be in spirit and in truth. The Lord Jesus said in John 4:23 to 24, “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” You see in true worship, God is glorified and praised. Pleasing people with entertaining to get them in the door to watch the show has never been God's intention.

What is the church? Well the Lord Jesus built His church, and it belongs to Him (Matthew 16 verse 18). It's a family, the family of God (1 Timothy 3 and verse 15). God is our Father and the Lord Jesus is a brother to all of us in the church (Hebrews 2 and verse 11). The church is the kingdom. The blood-purchased church of Acts 20 and verse 28 is the blood purchased kingdom of Revelation 5:9 and 10. It is the body of Christ, and Christ is it's head (Ephesians 5 verses 21 and 22 also in Ephesians 1: 21, 22 and 3). Yes the church is also the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22 to 31).

The church consists of local congregations; but its headquarters is in heaven with the Lord, its one and only head. He is King of kings and Lord of lords; He has all authority in heaven and on earth now. And when local congregations were established in the New Testament, they appointed elders or shepherds and deacons (Philippians 1 and verse 1). There were no archbishops over many congregations. On the first day of the week, what we call Sunday, they gathered to sing, to pray, to study God's word, to take the Lord's Supper, and then to support good works financially. The purpose of the church is to save the lost and to keep saved those who are saved. You cannot have Christ without the church.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that in Your love and in Your grace and in Your wisdom You created a church so that we could be a part of it. A part of Your family a member of Your body. And Father we pray that we will love You that we will serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

If you found the truth and realized what you had been taught was not true, what would you do? Would you ignore or doubt it? Or would you accept it? When the prodigal son came to his senses, he repented and came home. When the Jews who crucified Jesus realized that He really was Lord and Christ, they gladly received Peter's message, repented, and were baptized; and they became Christians. When Paul realized Jesus was risen from the dead and Lord, he stopped persecuting the church and followed Christ.

It's difficult to accept what we've heard repeatedly isn't really true. Changing our beliefs can radically change our lives. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed

by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Are you willing to follow Jesus?

To become a Christian you must listen to what the Lord says and follow Him in faith and trust. You must turn from sin and hunger for righteousness. If you don't repent, you really don't believe. Peter told the people on the day of Pentecost in the first gospel sermon in Acts 2 and verse 38, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Now people didn't argue with what Peter said or try to change what he said. They gladly heard the message, repented and were baptized (verse 41).

They didn't ask Jesus to come into their hearts or say a sinner's prayer. No, they repented and were baptized. Their forgiveness followed repentance and baptism. They weren't saved and then baptized but were baptized and then saved. God acts in baptism to make us alive with Christ and forgive our sins (Colossians 2 verses 12, 13). Let's follow God's plan.

We hope that today's study about true knowledge has caused you to think. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office, it's toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area on our website www.searchtv.org. SEARCH is on YouTube! We ask that you subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and then like the programs that you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. If you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.