

What do I know? (1)

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As we consider what is of true worth, I wish to consider with you today the subject “What do I know?” Another way of putting it is to consider: “What knowledge do I have?” or “What knowledge is of true worth?”

The importance of knowledge

The issue of knowledge is very important; it affects all of us each day, and it can at times affect us very, very deeply.

In the world, people often associate knowledge with intelligence, as well as hard work: A person who is intelligent can understand more things; a person who works hard will acquire much knowledge.

In many situations of life, knowledge brings a sense of confidence, and it brings a sense of worth. A person who is knowledgeable can be quite confident in many situations of life.

When we go to school... we sit for examinations... generally the person who is knowledgeable will be confident. The person who does not know his work will generally be anxious and nervous.

Of course, there are those who are very knowledgeable who may be very anxious during examinations, and after they have answered the questions, they may think that they have done very poorly when in fact they have done very well. That is because their understanding of what is required is much higher than others. On the other hand, there are others who may have done poorly, but think they have managed well, because their standard is rather low.

In life, there are many things that people pursue and seek for. Knowledge can bring a sense of satisfaction, and in certain situations we feel happy because we know something that others do not know.

Why do people gossip? Why do people want to know so many things about other people? That is often because we know something that others do not know. In many situations we may be keen to understand things that others do not understand.

People who know little may have a sense of inferiority, and knowledge can help them (in their understanding) in such a situation.

Children may often feel insecure and inferior because they know little. When compared with their parents, with adults, they may feel that they are not very worthy... they are insecure... incapable. In order to help them in their situation, sometimes they will seek to know things to gain that sense of confidence.

A young boy once looked up an encyclopaedia, and he subsequently asked his father, "Which country produces the most cane sugar in the world?" His father did not know the answer. It could be that having this knowledge gave him a sense of confidence: "I now know something that my father does not know."

Well, which country produces the most cane sugar in the world? In reality, the situation changes from time to time. And, at the present time, as far as I know, Brazil is regarded as the country that produces the most cane sugar in the world. But, another report says, no, India produces more. At different points of time in history, the production changes, from year to year.

What value is this knowledge to us? To some people, it can be quite important. If you are an importer of sugar, if you produce chocolates in a factory, you may want to know which country produces the most sugar, and see whether you can get a better price. But for most of us, such knowledge does not have very much value.

And yet, we do want to acquire knowledge. When we have knowledge, it can help us in communication in speaking to people. People have a sense of confidence because they know what they are talking about.

Knowledge is important in making decisions... how to consider issues in this world. The more we know, the more it can help us to make wise decisions.

Knowledge is important when we lead people. People who follow you expect you to know before they will trust you.

Knowledge can also produce envy in others... admiration from other people. Often, we look to people who are highly educated, and we may think that they are in a better state than others. When you are a professor, people respect you. If you are an expert, people consult you. And so, people strive for such knowledge.

Different kinds of knowledge

Yes, there is a place for us to acquire knowledge – knowledge can at times be useful as we live in this world. But ultimately, what should we concentrate upon? What do I know? What kind of knowledge do I pursue? What knowledge that I acquire is of true worth?

Partial knowledge

Let us consider different kinds of knowledge. Not all knowledge is the same. There are different kinds of knowledge, and there are different degrees of worth and value. The Scriptures tell us there is such a thing as partial knowledge. We know to some extent, but we do not know fully.

1 Corinthians 13: 8-13

- 8 Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away.
- 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part;
- 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.
- 11 When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.
- 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.
- 13 But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

In the context of helping the Corinthians understand what is of the greatest value in life, the apostle Paul contrasts love with various other aspects of life. In **verse 8**, he says: Love never fails – love endures, love is of eternal quality and value. And then he says: but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away.

So here, when the apostle Paul says, if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away, what was he referring to? If he were referring to knowledge that is of eternal value and worth in itself, then it certainly will not be done away. Love is knowledge – the love of God is a form of knowledge, and love will always endure, but what the apostle Paul is speaking here is not that.

It is knowledge that has to do with understanding... awareness – we know of things and issues. He says: for we know in part, and we prophesy in part. Now we do not know the complete picture – there are many things we do not see, we do not understand. But, he says, when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

We have partial knowledge at the moment while we live on earth. In the future, God will show us things which He does not show us now. In the future, we will see things which we have not seen now: now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. “Fully known” in this context refers to God knowing us: God knows us fully; God has awareness of our lives completely.

“Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully”: our knowledge at the moment is partial – there are many things God has not shown us. In the future, we will be able to know much more – there are many things that God will show us. But, this kind of knowledge, while it can be helpful, is not necessarily helpful.

The apostle Paul emphasizes: But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. Ultimately, what we should concentrate upon is love – the moral and spiritual quality of being. If we concentrate on knowledge, even if we have full knowledge of things, it will not truly benefit us. What benefits us must be knowledge that is associated with love: knowledge that can build up love, knowledge that arises from love.

However much we may develop, whatever we may seek to know, there is always a degree of knowledge, and its limitations. We are finite beings, we are not omniscient... we do not know all things.

Even in the things of this world, we know that our knowledge is limited. From my recollection, a physics teacher once made this statement: “With the advance of science, with the many things that we have come to study, and to know, we now know more and more of less and less... until we know everything about nothing.”

We specialize, we learn, we study, we have in-depth knowledge, we know more and more, but, of less and less...in the end, we may “know everything about nothing”. That is the power of our abilities in knowledge.

In olden days, doctors used to be very familiar with diseases in general, and they could basically treat almost any condition – of course, with certain limitations. However, with the advance of medical knowledge, doctors specialize, and they can specialize such that they know more and more of less and less.

Doctors who specialize to become surgeons may forget how to treat medical conditions. They concentrate on operations. They consider: “To cut or not to cut?” To treat diabetes, they may refer to a physician.

Sometimes, there are those who are more able, but those who concentrate primarily on surgery, they may lose their knowledge of many medical conditions, which others would be able to treat...so too, with many other specialists and experts. They may know much in that field, but not so much in others.

So when we need that kind of surgery, we look for that kind of surgeon. We look for that kind of expert to help us in those areas. And very often, many different experts and specialists may treat one person simultaneously, and each one not quite knowing what the others are doing – and this at times can pose great danger to the patient.

While there is value in knowing in depth, it is also important to remember the fundamentals, the major... the primary. So too, in our development, it is in order for us to acquire knowledge, but we need to be careful to concentrate on the primary, the fundamental, the most important, even as we learn to grow in our knowledge of things.

Worthless knowledge

Bear in mind there is also a kind of knowledge that is called worthless knowledge, and if we are not careful, we can also acquire worthless knowledge.

Titus 3: 3-9

- 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.
- 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared,
- 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,
- 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
- 7 that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.
- 8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.
- 9 But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless.

The apostle Paul started by speaking of what is precious: what God has done for us - the kindness of God our Savior... *His* love for mankind – and he instructed Timothy to concentrate on those things that are of true value, of true worth. He said: This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds – good deeds arising from a meaningful walk with God, from a genuine, proper relationship with God. “This is a trustworthy statement”: important, meaningful... worthwhile.

Then he says: But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. We may sometimes know too much. We may know things that we think are valuable, and we may argue with others, strive with them, to prove that we are right. We may be very concerned about many details that we have come to know.

Here, the apostle Paul talks about strife and disputes about the Law. We can also argue and dispute about the Bible, and various teachings of the Bible. We can enter into a situation where we debate and we argue and we dispute with regard to various issues that are revealed in the Scriptures in a manner that is unprofitable and worthless.

The main reason for this is the attitude behind it – we argue because we want to express the knowledge we have; we argue because we want to show how much we know, or that we are right.

Proper place to dispute

That does not mean that there is no place to dispute... there is no place to argue. The apostle Paul did so. He took a strong stand when he argued with others who were leading people astray.

We must know what we ought to know, and we must know it well. We must be able to take our stand to argue, and to stand by what God has revealed, but let us make sure that we are concentrating on issues that are profitable for men – good and profitable for men.

What is good and profitable? That which helps us to draw nearer to God, that which helps us to improve in the quality of our character, that which helps us to identify with what is in the heart of God, that which helps us to learn to love others more deeply – these are the things that are important. And we should take our stand on issues that may lead us astray from such a path: wrong understanding of God that can hinder our worship of Him, wrong understanding of man that hinders our development in Christ. But, let us not be entangled in things that are unprofitable and worthless.

There are things that can be helpful to our lives, but even such things can become worthless if our spirit is not right.

1 Corinthians 13: 1-2

- 1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
- 2 And if I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

Here the apostle Paul says: if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And he categorizes this together with: if I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge. These are aspects which are valuable in the right context. God does give us the gift of faith; God does give us knowledge; God does give us the gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues... for service. There is a value in these things.

But, the apostle Paul says, if I have all these, but I do not have love, I am nothing. There is no value in these things in themselves – if they are not associated with true, divine, love.

He says: we may know all mysteries and all knowledge – even if we do know that – it is still of no value to us. We have seen earlier, that while on earth, we do not know all mysteries... we do not have all knowledge. God does not reveal everything to us. But, he says, even if we have all that, it is still of no value unless there is true love in our hearts.

Useful knowledge

So, first, we need to beware of knowledge that is not useful to us – knowledge that can be worthless. What then is useful knowledge? Useful knowledge brings spiritual life. Useful knowledge is valuable, and we must learn to pursue that kind of knowledge. We must learn to pursue that kind of knowledge that will bring spiritual life to us. This kind of knowledge is associated with the right attitude.

Hosea 4: 1-3

- 1 Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land.
- 2 There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing, and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.
- 3 Therefore the land mourns, And everyone who lives in it languishes Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky; And also the fish of the sea disappear.

God says: there is no faithfulness or kindness or knowledge of God in the land. These are related: faithfulness, kindness... knowledge of God. When there is true knowledge of God, there will be faithfulness, and kindness. This is not knowledge of awareness of things. This is knowledge of relationship, knowledge that arises in a context where we want to know God, and His ways, in order to obey Him, to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Such knowledge will bring life to us. **Hosea 4: 6** tells us:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

God says: My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. So, we see that knowledge is important. Knowledge is useful. God says: Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you... If we do not want knowledge of the right kind, then God will reject us. God says: Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

We have seen earlier that disputes about the Law can be worthless knowledge. But here God says that we must not forget the law of our God. This is different. This is seeking to know the law in order to live by it, not to know the law in order to argue about it, to know the law to display our knowledge.

We must learn to appreciate the Scriptures. We must seek to understand what God has revealed in order that we may obey Him, appreciate Him, and be identified with Him. So there is an important place to acquire knowledge of the right kind. **Hosea 6: 6**, God says:

For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

So, in **Hosea chapter 6**, God tells us that loyalty is more important than sacrifice, the knowledge of God is more important than burnt offerings. Many Christians want to serve God. They concentrate on sacrifice, service, burnt offerings offered up to God. That is good... only if in the first place there is true loyalty in our hearts toward God... there is a genuine and meaningful knowledge in our hearts. If this is absent, then our sacrifice and burnt offerings will become worthless.

God does want us to serve, but that service must arise from an accurate and meaningful knowledge of God, associated with true loyalty to Him, not seeking our own desires, our own glory, our own accomplishments, but, because we love God, and we love others.

The young boy who asked his father which country produced the most cane sugar in the world was advised by his father: “Concentrate on the things of greater value, the things that will help you in your life, to live well.” So too, we can learn about many things, and acquire knowledge, but let us concentrate on acquiring knowledge of a true knowledge of God, to know Him well, and to know Him deeply, that we may be loyal to Him whatever may take place in our lives.

Some people think, “I cannot know God very well because there are many things I don’t understand - my intelligence level is poor... my educational level is low.” However, the Scriptures show to us that all can know God. Whatever your level of intelligence, whatever your level of education, you can know God, and you can know Him deeply.

Knowledge of God is available to all. It is not dependent upon our level of intelligence. In fact, the more intelligent we are, the more we need to be careful... we may actually draw further away from God.

Focus and concentration

Knowledge that is useful, that brings spiritual life can be ours, but it does not come about easily. It needs focus. We need to focus on knowledge that is of true worth. We need to concentrate on that which has ultimate value. The apostle Paul learnt this in his life, and he came to appreciate how important it was to have the right kind of knowledge.

He was very capable, intelligent... knowledgeable in the things of the Law. He could be regarded as a leader of his time. But the apostle Paul came to realize that all that he had, all that he had known, in the past, did not really bring true value to his life, until he came to a point of deep repentance and submission to God, and humbled himself before God to follow Him.

And so he said this in **1 Corinthians 2: 1-5**

- 1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.
- 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.
- 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.
- 4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
- 5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

There was focus in the heart of the apostle Paul. He said: I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Many of us find this hard to understand. Why would the apostle Paul, who knew so much, want to concentrate on just one thing?

The apostle Paul had become wise. He had come to realize that this is the kind of knowledge that is truly valuable: I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

That is because it is in the context of knowing Jesus Christ and Him crucified in the right way that we will begin to understand things correctly, that we will begin to appreciate things as they ought to be.

Many of us are so affected by the values of the world. We compete for knowledge. We want to know more than other people. We feel inferior when we know so little. Whether it be in our educational level, or in our knowledge of work, we are very disturbed if we do not know as much as other people.

The apostle Paul knew a lot of things in his time. He concentrated instead on knowing the Lord Jesus and Him crucified. He gave up his self-confidence in order to be confident in the Lord. And in that state, he was not afraid of what others might think of him... he was able to take his stand against those who contradicted him. He knew what he believed.

If we want to develop deep knowledge that is of worth, we must also know our priorities – what to concentrate upon... what to pursue.

Otherwise, we may acquire a lot of knowledge that may seem to be valuable to us, but do not truly help us to know God really deeply. There is much knowledge that can actually hinder us from a true quality in our walk with God.

Knowledge that can bring death

We need to beware of knowledge that can bring spiritual death. Not all knowledge will bring life. There is knowledge that can bring spiritual death.

For example, knowledge that is associated with the wrong attitude brings spiritual death to us.

1 Corinthians 8: 1-3

- 1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.
- 2 If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know;
- 3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

The apostle Paul was concentrating on the subject of love – the right attitude towards other people, and he warned the Corinthians that in the midst of their much knowledge, they may be destroying their own lives. The Corinthians took pride in the things that they knew, and their spirit was not right.

So the apostle Paul says: Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Here he is not saying that every single person has this knowledge. What he means is that such knowledge is not difficult to acquire – it is easy for all of us to have such knowledge.

But he warns: Knowledge makes arrogant. Here again, the apostle Paul does not mean to say that knowledge will always make us arrogant, that knowledge will always make us proud, but he says: Beware! Knowledge can easily lead to pride. In the midst of our much knowledge, we can easily become arrogant: we think we know.

But he says: Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. If our spirit is wrong, then we may think that we know, but we have not truly known: If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know.

“Ought to know” is a reference to the kind of knowledge that is associated with the right spirit. When we love God, it is the right kind of knowledge. When we truly love God, and we love others, then our knowledge becomes edifying. It becomes helpful. We can encourage others, and help others in the right direction, when we acquire this kind of knowledge.

The wrong kind of knowledge can bring about corruption of our being – it can destroy us. Knowledge can actually bring about spiritual death. We need to be careful about seeking for knowledge that may bring about death in our spirit.

Genesis 2: 15-17

- 15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.
- 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;
- 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die. "

God specifically mentioned the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were not to eat from this tree. And He said: in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a test for Adam and Eve: Would they abide by God’s instructions, or would they go their own way?

Would they seek to acquire knowledge that is appropriate for them at the right time, as God taught them, or would they seek for knowledge that was not God's intention for them at that point of time?

Not all knowledge will do us good. If we seek for knowledge that is not suitable for us, it can destroy us.

The knowledge of good and evil is not in itself bad. God has such a knowledge of good and evil. But when we acquire that knowledge in the wrong way, when we acquire the knowledge with the wrong spirit, when we acquire the knowledge that is not consistent with fellowship with God, then it brings about spiritual death in our lives.

Beware of being eager to know what is not suitable for us. When God created Adam and Eve, they knew sufficient for them to live well. They knew what was right and wrong. They knew the meaning of obeying God, and finding life. The knowledge of good and evil was not essential for them in that context.

They understood what was right and wrong – the meaning of following God, and His ways, or going their own way. But, partaking from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil gave them a certain kind of knowledge, which was not suitable for them at that point of time.

A well-known story has this famous saying: "A little knowledge can be a deadly thing." "A little knowledge can be a deadly thing": the story of "The man who knew too much". This man came to know of a secret that a dying man told him: he told him about a plan to assassinate someone important.

As a result of this knowledge, his life was in danger; his whole family was in danger. His child was kidnapped, so that he would not reveal to others what he had known.

In this instance, this man did not deliberately seek for that knowledge – the dying man came to him, and whispered in his ear to tell him. But this brought him into very grave danger for his life.

Well, that is a story, but in life situations, we often want to know many things. We are curious... we are interested to know many things that are not suitable for us to know. And that little knowledge that we acquire can bring death to us – if our spirit is not right, and we are not contented to walk with God, to be led by Him, and to walk with Him. So, we need to beware of knowledge that can bring spiritual death.

Knowledge of experience

Let us also learn to distinguish between knowledge of experience, and knowledge of being and substance. Knowledge of experience is not the same as knowledge of being and substance. What is the main difference?

Exodus 20: 1-2

- 1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,
- 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

God spoke to the people of Israel. He manifested His presence in that context, and He spoke to the people of Israel. They experienced God's presence. They saw the manifestation of God's presence, and they experienced God speaking to them.

Exodus 20: 18-21

- 18 And all the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance.
- 19 Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die."
- 20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."
- 21 So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God *was*.

The people experienced the presence of God. They had knowledge of experience, but they did not have a meaningful personal knowledge of God.

They could recognize that for Moses it was different. Moses could come near to God. Moses could relate with God meaningfully – speak to God, listen to Him, and communicate on His behalf.

But the people were fearful. They perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking... they trembled and stood at a distance. They did not have the freedom to come near to God. They were afraid of Him. They said: "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die."

Why would they die if God were to speak to them? It is because they recognized that God was holy, but they were not. They were afraid of God, but they knew that Moses could come near to God. They could see that God appreciated Moses, that Moses had found favour before God.

Knowledge of being and substance

But why did Moses find favour before God? Was it because he was intelligent, or was it because God simply chose him for no specific reason?

It is clear from the Scriptures that Moses found favour before God because of the quality of his heart. Moses loved God, and Moses loved the people.

God could trust Moses because He saw in Moses a man of worth. He was humble; he was willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of others. He cared, and he cared deeply, for the people. And he cared very deeply for the honour of God. He wanted God's purposes to be accomplished.

And so the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was. Moses could approach because his knowledge of God was not just a knowledge of experience.

Yes, he did experience God, but he had come also to develop the knowledge of being and substance. There was a transformation in his being, in his character... in his life. There was a development of a relationship with God of quality. There was moral and spiritual substance developed in his heart... in his life.

We can see this also manifested in the life of the apostle Paul.

2 Timothy 1: 8-12

- 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,
- 9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,
- 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,
- 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.
- 12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

The apostle Paul said: For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed. The apostle Paul had now come to know God, personally and deeply. There was knowledge of being and substance. It was not just of experience; it was not just awareness of things.

Prior to this, he had knowledge of God: he knew the God of the Bible; he was a Pharisee; he knew the Law; he knew what God had said in the Old Testament. He was quite knowledgeable – as a Pharisee.

But he did not truly know God in this way. In fact, he was persecuting the Lord Jesus. He was going against the purposes of God.

He was supposed to have a zeal for God, but in reality, he was fighting against what God was seeking to accomplish.

The apostle Paul had some knowledge – he had awareness of what God had done for the nation of Israel... he had awareness of the laws of God. But, he did not have a personal knowledge of God arising from a genuine and deep repentance, and trust in God, and commitment to Him to walk in His ways, in humility and in love.

But now it was different. Now, he was able to teach Timothy. He says: do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner. He was now a prisoner for the Lord Jesus' sake, and he was not ashamed, and he was telling Timothy not to be ashamed.

But he says: join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God. The apostle Paul appreciated the meaningfulness of suffering for the gospel according to the power of God. He did not shrink from it; he did not run away from it, but he was prepared to go through it because it was meaningful.

And he then elaborated and explained what God had done: He has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

He had come to appreciate this; he had come to know this in his life, in his heart, and he gave his life to transmit this message. He says: for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things. The apostle Paul had come to know God personally, and deeply, and because of that he was prepared to give himself to suffer for these things.

He was not ashamed, for he said: for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. It is worth it. It is worth it to give up his life for God. It is worth it because he knew that God was trustworthy, that God was good... he knew that he could always depend on Him.

So if we want to pursue knowledge, let us learn from the apostle Paul, let us learn from Moses, to develop knowledge that is built into our being... that becomes part of us.

There are many people who say, "I have heard so many sermons, I have read so many things, how can I remember them all? When I hear one, I forget the rest. And there are so many to listen to... I cannot remember them."

Remembering by living

If we live our lives just trying to remember all the things that we have heard, this indeed will be a big problem. As time passes by, the more you hear, the more difficult it will be. We need an encyclopaedia to contain all these things, to remember the things that we have heard.

But this is not the way that God wants us to learn. It is not this kind of acquiring of knowledge. God wants us to acquire knowledge that becomes part of our being. When that knowledge becomes part of your being, you do not forget. It is part of you... it is part of your being.

When love has been formed in your heart, you do not need to keep on telling yourself, "I must remember to love." When your heart is filled with love, you will love. When your heart is one with God, you do not need to keep reminding yourself, "I must listen to what God has to say." You are constantly seeking him, constantly wanting to hear what He has to say. Your heart is with Him.

Why do we need to keep on reminding ourselves, “God exists; I must be conscious of Him”? That is because we have not yet developed that kind of substance in our being: that kind of knowledge of Him where Christ is formed in us, where the fruit of the Spirit has been abundantly developed in us. We have not sufficiently learnt to be partakers of *the* divine nature.

When we do that, the more we do that, the more we will understand that the things we know become part of our being, and we express them in the way we live our lives each day. We find that we do not think as the people of the world. We find that we are not interested in the things that people of the world pursue, because there is a transformation in our heart. Our values have changed within us.

Otherwise, we have to keep reminding ourselves, “This way is wrong; that way is right.” Well, it is true that this approach is helpful and is important at the earlier stages of our development. There are many things that we need to keep reminding ourselves not to forget.

But the more we develop in our oneness with God, the more we will find that we do not need to keep reminding ourselves, because our heart is already constantly with God. We want to follow God because we love Him. We want to know His ways because they are so valuable to us. We do not need people to urge us, to push us, to warn us, before we will seek God. We love Him... we keep close to Him... we will follow Him.

What do I know? We need to evaluate our lives, and consider: “What do we know in our lives?” What is it that is important to us that we are pursuing, that we are seeking to know? Does it really help us to be more deeply one with God? Does it truly help us in the transformation of our being? If it does, it is good. If it does not, let us not pursue the wrong things.

Our time on earth is short. We do not have time to learn everything. We cannot pursue everything. We cannot acquire all knowledge. We need to concentrate. We need to focus on that which has ultimate and true worth.

The Lord willing, we will consider further: "What do I know?" We will look to the Lord to consider further aspects that can help us to evaluate our lives, and to appreciate the right approach in this area.

Let us, as we come before Him, ask Him to help us to understand the different kinds of knowledge: What is valuable, and what is not; what will bring life, and what may bring death; what we should concentrate upon... what we should pursue.

Let us ask the Lord to show us what is important in His heart. And let us thank Him that not only does He want us to know Him, but He has also made every provision for us so that we can know Him – not just at a distance, but know Him personally and deeply. God wants us to have deep freedom to come to Him, to relate with Him... to love Him. He will help us, if we are willing to learn.