

What do I know? (2)

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Headings:

<u>Clarifications and elaboration</u>	Page 1
<u>Knowledge and humility</u>	Page 6
<u>Knowledge and commitment</u>	Page 10
<u>Different levels of knowledge</u>	Page 11
<u>Example of Job</u>	Page 12
<u>Example of the apostle Paul</u>	Page 18
<u>What is important to us?</u>	Page 20

In our considering the issue of true worth, we have sought to ponder over the subject “What do I know?”

Clarifications and elaboration

Arising from what was considered in the last message, some issues were raised with me, and I will clarify some of these aspects as they can help us to appreciate this subject more fully.

In the last message, I referred to **1 Corinthians 13: 8-13**, and in that context, **verse 12** tells us: 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.

The question was raised: “What is the meaning – I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known? Does it mean that in future, we will know all things... we will have all knowledge of everything?”

The meaning in this passage does not have that implication. The apostle Paul is comparing two different situations. He says that in our present context, there are many things that we do not know... we do not understand. And so, he says: we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

There are many things that God has not revealed to us yet, but in the future, He will show to us. So, it is basically a reference to a clearer understanding of some areas that we do not yet know now.

For example, the Scriptures tell us something about the spiritual body: in heaven, we will have a different body from what we have now. But what is that spiritual body? How does it function? It is not so easy for us to appreciate that now, and God has not revealed to us very much about that. But in the future, when we are in heaven, we will have a better understanding of what this means. There are many things that we will come to know. Many questions will be answered.

Likewise, we do not know very much about what will be in heaven: What exactly will we be doing? What will be happening? What will be present there? But in the future, this will be revealed to us – we will know – but it does not refer to our knowing everything.

In the last message, I also referred to what a physics teacher said many years ago. From my recollection, I quoted basically the meaning of what he was trying to say. He said, “We now know more and more of less and less... until we know everything about nothing.” The question is asked: “How can we know everything about nothing?”

Well, at the heart of it, it was basically a joke – he was trying to present it in a humorous way, and he was doing so by mathematical reasoning. If now we learn to know more and more, then, by mathematical reasoning, the final outcome of “more and more” is “everything”. And the final outcome of “less and less” is “nothing”. Therefore the final outcome would be: if we keep on learning to know more and more of less and less... we will end up knowing everything about nothing.

Of course, that does not actually exist. It is merely to indicate the limitations of human knowledge of things, in spite of the advance of science. We may seem to know a lot more, but in fact, our scope of knowledge may be diminishing.

In terms of being aware of things, there are many things that we do not know, and we therefore need to be selective as to what we concentrate upon: What do we want to know? How do we want to spend our time? What is more valuable to us? We have to be selective.

Another issue that was raised is that in the passage in **Titus 3: 9**, the apostle Paul said: But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. In relation to this passage, I referred to worthless knowledge.

It was brought to my attention that this verse refers to foolish controversies as unprofitable and worthless. That is true – foolish controversies are unprofitable and worthless.

What I was referring to is to bring our attention to the kind of knowledge that is associated with foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law. Knowledge that is acquired with such an attitude and such a direction in view is worthless knowledge.

If we acquire knowledge in the context of, or in the spirit of, seeking to show our knowledge, to argue, to have disputes and strife, this kind of knowledge that we acquire will be worthless knowledge.

We need to be very careful in terms of the way in which we seek for knowledge. The spirit with which we seek for knowledge will affect the kind of knowledge that we acquire. So, this kind of knowledge includes knowledge of genealogies and the Law – even what God has said in the Scriptures can become worthless knowledge to us if we acquire it in the wrong spirit, and we use it in the wrong way.

We see the same direction mentioned in **1 Timothy 1: 3-7**.

1 Timothy 1: 3-7

- 3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,
- 4 nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.
- 5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
- 6 For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,
- 7 wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

The apostle Paul warns against those who teach strange doctrines, who pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. If we acquire this kind of knowledge, then it will lead to speculation, and it will lead to an opposition to the direction of what God is seeking to do in our lives.

What God is concerned about – the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith – this is what we should concentrate upon. We should pursue knowledge that will lead to the development of love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. This is the kind of knowledge that we should seek.

If, instead, we pursue fruitless discussion, we want to be teachers of the Law, then we will move in the direction of acquiring worthless knowledge. We may seem to understand many things, but in fact we do not understand even what we are saying, and what we are so confident about.

Wrong spirit leads to acquiring worthless knowledge, which leads to worthless service. So, there is a need to be careful in what we seek to know.

Another aspect that was raised is the knowledge of good and evil: "Is not the knowledge of good and evil something negative? Is it not a form of evil knowledge?"

This is not so. The knowledge of good and evil in itself is not evil knowledge. It is dependent on how we acquire that knowledge: in what context, in what direction within our heart.

In **Genesis 3: 22-24**, the Scriptures help us to understand this aspect of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3: 22-24

- 22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"--
- 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.
- 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.

We see therefore, that God has knowledge of good and evil. He said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil..." We see then, that this knowledge of good and evil is not evil knowledge in itself, but it was harmful to Adam and Eve because of their disobedience, because of their going their own way, because they wanted to know what was not intended for them at that point of time.

God instructed them not to eat the fruit from that tree, but they disobeyed God. They went their own way, and in that spirit, and in that context, the knowledge that they acquired became negative knowledge to them. It became harmful to them.

They acquired knowledge not in accordance with God's will and guidance, but on their own, to satisfy their own desires, to become wise, but not in the way of God's teaching.

So, this can also apply to all those who want to know various things that are not meant for them. This can include what can be termed as "secrets" or "special knowledge". People pursue such things – they want to know what others do not know; they want to know "secrets" or "special knowledge". This knowledge refers to an awareness of things.

Some are inquisitive... curious... some want to have a sense of knowledge and power. Such knowledge can be very damaging to us – it can destroy our lives as well as others who are affected by us.

However, a knowledge of such things can at times be helpful when it is in the context of God's guidance and teaching.

Many things going on in this world often are not suitable for us to know, but in certain situations, such knowledge can help us to understand the world that we live in... can help us to learn how best to serve God, and to help others. But this has to be acquired in the right spirit, in the context of God's guidance and teaching.

Knowledge and humility

I now want to go on to consider with you the relationship between knowledge and humility.

1 Corinthians 1: 18-31

- 18 For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
- 19 For it is written,
"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside."
- 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?
Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?
- 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.
- 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom;
23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness,
24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
- 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
- 26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;
27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,
28 and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are,
29 that no man should boast before God.
- 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,
31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Why did the apostle Paul write at length about the subject of foolishness and wisdom? At the heart of it, we see what he wrote in **verse 29**: that no man should boast before God.

If we want to acquire meaningful and useful knowledge, we must be conscious of this principle: God will not allow any man to boast before Him.

Pride will hinder us... will prevent us from a true knowledge of God. If we think that we know so much, if we are self-confident in our fleshly knowledge, then God will show us that we are indeed foolish – we do not know as we ought to know.

The word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Those who are perishing regard the message of the cross as foolishness. They are wise in their own eyes. They are confident in their own knowledge.

But God says: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." There are many people who think they know, and they may even teach others: "There is no God. If God were present, I would have seen Him."

I remember when the astronaut first went to space, he said, "There is no God! I went up to space, and I didn't see Him." And so, he was quite confident, it seems, that there is no God, because he went so far away from earth, and he still did not see God.

There are many people in their own wisdom who declare what they "know" about God. This applies to non-Christians. It also applies to Christians. We need to be careful in terms of the spirit with which we learn, otherwise we may seem to know many things when in reality we do not know.

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. There are non-Christians who believe in God. There are people who believe that there is a Creator, but this is not a personal knowledge of God.

A personal knowledge of God requires a repentant spirit. There needs to be a humble spirit before we can truly appreciate who God is, and submit to Him in the right way. Without that, we will not truly know Him. We may know about Him, we may reason many things in the philosophical realm, and think that we understand many things, but at the end of it, it is still foolishness.

So, for the Jews it was a stumbling block, to the Gentiles, it was foolishness. The message of the Cross was not appealing to them. The Jews were preoccupied with their knowledge of the Law; they wanted signs to demonstrate the power of God. The Gentiles sought for wisdom, especially among the Greeks.

They pride themselves in their knowledge of things. And therefore, the message of the cross was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles, foolishness. "How can the Lord Jesus dying on the cross save mankind from their sins? That is not possible!"

Human natural reasoning will not bring us to an appreciation of who God is, in a true knowledge of Him.

The apostle Paul says: consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble... It does not mean that those who are wise in this world, who have knowledge of things, who understand things in this world, cannot respond to God.

Paul says: "not many wise..." He did not say "not one..." "Not many..." because when we are wise in the things of this world, when we know many things, when we are knowledgeable in the things of the world, it is easy for us to become proud, easy for us to boast, easy for us to become self-confident in our own natural knowledge.

Some people who are not very knowledgeable, who are not so intelligent, may feel inferior because of their lack of knowledge and wisdom, or their lowly status, in the things of this world.

In reality, we should not regard ourselves as inferior because of such lack of knowledge and wisdom. What is primary is the spirit of humility, and the responsiveness to what God has to say to us.

If we place too much weight on knowledge and wisdom that we acquire in this world, it will hinder us from truly knowing God: no man should boast before God. But if we learn first to humble ourselves before God, if we first take our proper place, then the things that we learn in this world can become useful in service to God.

When we learn in a spirit of dependence on God, then the things that we know can be used to contribute to our service in God's kingdom. When we are not humble, we can easily acquire worthless knowledge that is harmful to ourselves, and to others who follow us.

We should be conscious that the most precious knowledge is to know God personally and deeply, and to know all that He sees fit to reveal to those who love Him. This is the most precious and most important knowledge. If we do not have this, then all the rest will not be of value to us. If we concentrate on this, we will also learn how to approach other areas of knowledge in the right way... in the right spirit.

God is prepared, willing, and glad, to reveal Himself to us, to teach us, and to show us... the problem is that very often, we are not in the state to receive. This is primary because ultimately, meaningful knowledge has to do with love from a pure heart. It has to do with moral and spiritual character within us. Therefore, God requires that we must first be humble before He will teach us deeply.

Knowledge and commitment

I want to go on to the relationship between knowledge and commitment. We may want to know God... we may long to know Him... we have a desire to understand God's ways... but will this necessarily lead to a deep knowledge of God? The answer is: No, it will not necessarily lead to that. A desire in our hearts to know God, a longing to know Him, by itself, will not necessarily mean that we will come to know God deeply.

A deep knowledge of God can only come about when there is not only longing, not only desire, but a commitment – a commitment to walk in His ways, a commitment to do His will. It is only with that spirit that God will show us many things, which He otherwise would not teach us.

John 7: 16-17

- 16 Jesus therefore answered them, and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.
17 "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or *whether* I speak from Myself.

The Lord Jesus said: If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching... "Willing to do His will..." in this context is not a reference to just a desire... a longing. It can also be translated as "If any man wills to do His will", "If any man chooses to do His will". It is clear from the teaching of the Lord Jesus: He tells us the importance of building upon the rock.

We must live by what God says, and not just be keen to hear what He has to say. If we will to do His will, if we choose to do His will, if we are committed to do His will, then God will teach us. He will show to us – we will know of the teaching.

The word "know", in this context, is a reference to accurate knowledge and understanding. We will know what is accurate, what God wants to show to us, if we are committed to do His will... we are prepared to persevere, to seek, to work hard, to learn, to grow... to obey.

When we do that, we will grow in knowledge – a meaningful knowledge of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Different levels of knowledge

I want now to go on to another aspect that is important for us if we desire to grow well, and that is: to understand that there are different levels of knowledge.

There are different levels of knowledge: we may know something, but we may not know as we should know; even if we know as we should know at this stage of our development, there are still higher levels of knowledge that God wants to teach us.

Many years ago, I took the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations. There were eight subjects. One of the subjects was the Chinese Language. I studied for it. I sat for the exam. After the examination, I thought that I knew how to answer the questions. I thought that I had done reasonably well.

However, when the results were out, and I received my Examination Certificate, I noticed that only seven subjects were recorded – Chinese was not one of them. I had failed the examination... so only seven subjects were recorded!

I failed although I thought I had done reasonably well, but obviously that level of knowledge was not of that level required by the examiners. They required a higher level of knowledge for me to pass.

In life, we may also think that we know, and we may not realize that there are many more things we do not know. We may be quite confident at the level of our knowledge, and we may not realize that there is so much more that we do not know, that we need to learn humbly before God.

Example of Job

We all know that Job is a man appreciated by God. He had developed a very significant level of quality in his life. God highlighted his life in front of Satan: God indicated his appreciation of Job. Therefore, Job must have developed at least a certain degree of knowledge of God.

There was meaningful knowledge in his heart. Job understood many things. At the heart of it, he knew that God was morally perfect – he knew that it was important to stay away from sin, and to live a righteous, holy life. Job understood this, and he sought to live that way, and he sought also to teach his children to walk in that path.

However, the Scriptures show to us that Job was rebuked by God, and, specifically, Job was rebuked by God for speaking without knowledge. How can it be – God rebuked Job for speaking without knowledge?

Job 38: 1-7

- 1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,
- 2 "Who is this that darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?
- 3 "Now gird up your loins like a man,
And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!
- 4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell Me, if you have understanding,
- 5 Who set its measurements, since you know?
Or who stretched the line on it?
- 6 "On what were its bases sunk?
Or who laid its cornerstone,
- 7 When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

God answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" What He was saying basically was that Job was speaking foolishly – he was speaking words without knowledge.

We know that in reality, Job was not totally without knowledge. Job had some knowledge: he knew that God was omnipotent... he knew that God was omniscient... he also knew that God was morally good and perfect. But, he spoke beyond the level of his knowledge because of a wrong spirit, in the midst of his personal difficulties.

In the midst of his suffering and pain and difficulties, Job spoke beyond his level of knowledge. There were things that he did not know, things that he did not understand, but he spoke strongly, and with confidence.

Job 9: 1-24 – it is a long passage, but it is worthwhile for us to read this passage to appreciate the context: Job's knowledge of God, and Job's failure in applying what knowledge he had.

Job 9: 1-24 (NASB Updated Edition)

- 1 Then Job answered,
- 2 "In truth I know that this is so;
But how can a man be in the right before God?
- 3 "If one wished to dispute with Him,
He could not answer Him once in a thousand *times*.
- 4 "Wise in heart and mighty in strength,
Who has defied Him without harm?
- 5 "*It is God* who removes the mountains, they know not *how*,
When He overturns them in His anger;
- 6 Who shakes the earth out of its place,
And its pillars tremble;
- 7 Who commands the sun not to shine,
And sets a seal upon the stars;
- 8 Who alone stretches out the heavens
And tramples down the waves of the sea;
- 9 Who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades,
And the chambers of the south;
- 10 Who does great things, unfathomable,
And wondrous works without number.
- 11 "Were He to pass by me, I would not see Him;
Were He to move past *me*, I would not perceive Him.
- 12 "Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him?
Who could say to Him, "What are You doing?"
- 13 "God will not turn back His anger;
Beneath Him crouch the helpers of Rahab.
- 14 "How then can I answer Him,
And choose my words before Him?
- 15 "For though I were right, I could not answer;
I would have to implore the mercy of my judge.
- 16 "If I called and He answered me,
I could not believe that He was listening to my voice.
- 17 "For He bruises me with a tempest
And multiplies my wounds without cause.
- 18 "He will not allow me to get my breath,
But saturates me with bitterness.
- 19 "If *it is a matter* of power, behold, *He is* the strong one!
And if *it is a matter* of justice, who can summon Him?
- 20 "Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me;
Though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty.
- 21 "I am guiltless;
I do not take notice of myself;
I despise my life.
- 22 "It is *all* one; therefore I say,
'He destroys the guiltless and the wicked.'

- 23 "If the scourge kills suddenly,
He mocks the despair of the innocent.
- 24 "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked;
He covers the faces of its judges.
If *it is* not *He*, then who is it?

So we see that Job knew God. He understood God was omnipotent, omniscient... he realized that God could do many things that we may not be able to fathom: wondrous works without number.

And yet, in the midst of his difficulties, he did not humbly submit to God. He interpreted events on the basis of his own context, and he said: though I were right, I could not answer; I would have to implore the mercy of my judge. If God were good, why should he have to implore mercy if he were right?

He says: He bruises me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause. He made such a strong declaration, but it was without knowledge. God was not like that. God would not bruise him, and multiply his wounds without cause. God always has a good reason for whatever He does. And in this context, it was Satan who was bruising him, and multiplying his wounds.

If *it is a matter of power*, behold, *He is* the strong one! And if *it is a matter of justice*, who can summon Him? Job was misapplying that issue of God's omnipotence. God does not, because He is all-powerful, do whatever He pleases without regard to what is right. Job said: Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me; though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty. That is impossible – God will never do that!

But Job says: I am guiltless. He says: The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He covers the faces of its judges. If *it is* not *He*, then who is it? In his limited knowledge, he declared – on the basis of natural, human reasoning, in the context of his lack of understanding of things.

We need to beware, and to learn from how God taught Job, and how Job responded. God revealed to Job his lack of knowledge.

Job 38: 19-21

- 19 "Where is the way to the dwelling of light?
And darkness, where is its place,
20 That you may take it to its territory,
And that you may discern the paths to its home?
21 "You know, for you were born then,
And the number of your days is great!"

God asked Job: "Where is the way to the dwelling of light? Do you know this?" Obviously, Job did not know. But God said: "You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great!" This is meaningful, and appropriate, sarcasm – sarcasm and humour, from God!

We know that when people are sarcastic, it is usually damaging, and negative. People speak with sarcasm to humiliate others, to display their knowledge... but God spoke with humour and sarcasm to help Job, to teach him, to help him to learn... to help him to see the issues clearly.

He said, "You know, for you were born then (Were you?), and the number of your days is great! (Is it?)" I have added in those words to help bring out the meaning. God was telling Job: "You do not know! The number of your days is not great, but you speak as if you know... as if you were there all the time... and you know all these things!"

Job 39: 1-2

- 1 "Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth?
Do you observe the calving of the deer?
2 "Can you count the months they fulfill,
Or do you know the time they give birth?"

God was raising to Job that there are many, many things in this world – just things in this world – that he did not know. Even if he knew some things, there were still many, many other things that he did not know.

How much more in the spiritual realm – how God works, what are His ways, what is happening in the spiritual realm – there are many things that Job would not have known yet!

God would have to teach him, but if he were too confident, he might not learn. So, God had to rebuke him, to show to him, that in the context of his wrong spirit, he thought he knew what he did not know.

And we see the beauty of Job's response – in humble confession, and repentance.

Job 42: 1-6 *(NASB Updated Edition)*

- 1 Then Job answered the LORD and said,
- 2 "I know that You can do all things,
And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.
- 3 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
"Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."
- 4 'Hear, now, and I will speak;
I will ask You, and You instruct me.'
- 5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;
But now my eye sees You;
- 6 Therefore I retract,
And I repent in dust and ashes."

We see that Job responded appropriately – when he was rebuked, he humbled himself; he acknowledged where he had failed. He said, “Yes, I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” He recognized that he had spoken beyond his depth. He had not taken his proper place according to the level of his development. He had spoken when it was not appropriate to do so.

But Job understood when God taught him. And instead, he now came before God, and asked God to teach him: I will ask You, and You instruct me... I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes. It was because of this kind of spirit of humility that Job could grow from there, and God indicated at the end of the **book of Job**, that He appreciated Job – in spite of his failures.

God knew that deep in his heart, Job loved God, and he still loved God – in spite of all his sufferings and pain, he still loved God. He spoke rashly, but he learnt, and God appreciated the sincerity in his heart.

God is prepared to help us even when we fail and falter, but we must be willing to learn... to submit to Him.

Example of the apostle Paul

The apostle Paul learnt to humble himself too. He was at one time very confident in his knowledge of the things of the world, and his knowledge of religious matters. He was a Pharisee, a teacher of the Law – well-versed in the Law. He was confident in what he thought he knew.

But the apostle Paul came to recognize that his previous knowledge and attainments were of no value because of the wrong spirit and direction associated with that – the flesh, and its self-confidence. Although he knew so much, in reality, he realized that he did not personally know God in a meaningful way.

Philippians 3: 7-11

- 7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.
- 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,
- 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,
- 10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;
- 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The apostle Paul gave up all things in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord: this was knowledge that surpasses all knowledge – the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For this he was prepared to suffer the loss of all things, to count them but rubbish, so that he could gain Christ.

And having done so, he looked forward to this path as described in **verses 10 and 11**: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. He gave his life... that I may know Him... that he might know the Lord Jesus, and all that the Lord Jesus would teach him, bring him through, and help him to develop.

In the **next three verses**, the apostle Paul helps us to appreciate that although he had come to know God deeply, there were higher and higher levels to attain.

Philippians 3: 12-14

- 12 Not that I have already obtained *it*, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead,
- 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul realized that there were higher and higher levels of personal knowledge of the Lord that he could increasingly attain, and he continued to strive, and to grow, towards perfection. That I may know Him could be learnt at different levels, and Paul would progressively, at higher and higher levels, learn to know the Lord Jesus, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

He said: I press on... He was not complacent; he was not self-satisfied and self-confident. He knew there was more to learn... much more to develop. He said: I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*...

There was focus, concentration... giving of himself for that which was most important. He said: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

What is important to us?

Are we also pressing on toward the goal? God is calling us to a very meaningful goal. There is a very valuable prize awaiting us – the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. God has so much in store for us that is meaningful – not just for now, but for eternity. Will we, like Paul, give everything we have to pursue that? Or are we more interested in accumulating much knowledge that we can have a sense of security, of ability, of awareness of things... that we know more than others... that we can teach other people?

Unless we have this right direction settled first, then acquiring knowledge will not help us. This is the most important knowledge – to know the Lord Jesus as our Lord, to follow Him as He calls us, to be prepared to live as He teaches us, wherever this may lead us, whatever it will cost us. If this part is not properly settled within us, then our acquiring of knowledge can at times cause much damage to our lives.

Let us therefore, as we ponder about our own lives, “What do I know?” ask God to help us evaluate, and consider: What have we come to know? Is our knowledge meaningful? Is it preparing us for eternity? Will we be satisfied, be at peace, and glad when we meet God, that we can say we know Him personally... deeply, and that He is pleased with us... He is glad to know us in that way?

Let us therefore, as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us to ponder over our lives humbly before Him, and let us ask Him to search our hearts, and to teach us the right and the good way. Let us ask the Lord to help us to learn that which is truly precious for eternity.

Let us seek His guidance, that we will not be distracted by the many things that may seem so interesting to know. But let us concentrate on knowing the things that will help us to develop love from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and a sincere faith.