

## ***THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST***

### **Colossians 2:1-3**

**By Andy Manning**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

1. The most important knowledge you can have is spiritual knowledge.
  - i. What you believe about God is the most important thing about you.
    1. **A.W. Tozer** “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”
    2. Why?
  - ii. Your spiritual knowledge is the foundation of your worldview. Your worldview is how you explain your existence, the universe, and your world. It is the way you look at life; the way you see things. It is the lens through which you look at the world. It determines everything about you.
    1. Where did we come from?
    2. Why are we here?
    3. What is wrong with the world?
    4. What is the solution?
    5. What happens when we die?
  - iii. Your worldview determines your behavior.
    1. **James N. Anderson** wrote, “Worldviews... largely determine people’s opinions on matters of ethics and politics. What you think about abortion, euthanasia, same-sex relationships, public education, economic policy, foreign aid, the use of military force, environmentalism, animal rights, genetic enhancement, and almost any other major issue of the day depends on your underlying worldview more than anything else (What’s Your Worldview, 123).”
2. The most important spiritual knowledge you can have is knowledge of Christ.
  - i. Paul said that everything is worthless compared to knowing Christ.
    1. Philippians 3:8 “More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”
  - ii. Paul’s ultimate goal was to know Christ.
    1. Philippians 3:10 “My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death”
3. Why?
  - i. In our text today, we are going to see why the knowledge of Christ is so important, as well as how to grow in your knowledge of Christ.

#### **II. TEXT**

1. **Colossians 2:1-3** “For I want you to know how greatly I am struggling for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person. 2 I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery—Christ. 3 In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

2. These three verses make up one of Paul's prayers for the Colossian believers. This is what he means by "struggling" for them. He was praying constantly for them while he was under house arrest, chained to a Roman guard around the clock.
3. Paul's prayer was they would be encouraged and united, so that they could come to complete understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery – Christ. Remember, the word "mystery" means a spiritual truth that was hidden from the OT prophets but revealed to us through the NT apostles.
4. Why did Paul want the Colossians to have the knowledge of Christ?

### **III. WHY KNOWING CHRIST IS SO IMPORTANT**

1. Colossians 2:3 "In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."
2. What does it mean that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?

#### **i. True spiritual knowledge can only be found in Christ.**

1. Christ is the key to unlock all of the spiritual mysteries of the universe. If you want to know God, then Christ is the key.
2. To know Christ is to know God. John 8:19 "If you knew me, you would also know my Father."
3. To believe in Christ is to believe in God. John 12:44 Jesus cried out, "The one who believes in me believes not in me, but in him who sent me."
4. To welcome Christ is to welcome God. Mark 9:37 "And whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but him who sent me."
5. Christ is the only way to God. John 14:6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
6. Anyone who wants spiritual knowledge must know Christ.

#### **ii. All other knowledge is worthless without the knowledge of Christ.**

1. You can know everything there is to know about economics, history, religion, philosophy, literature, medicine, engineering, but all of your knowledge is worthless without Christ. Why? Because you can know all of those things and be lost and go to hell if you don't know Christ.

#### **iii. If all you know is Christ, you have a wealth of wisdom and knowledge.**

1. A man may be very uneducated, but if he knows Christ, he knows the most important thing.
2. A man may not know who Shakespeare is; he may not know Bach and Beethoven; he may not know the story of Western civilization; he may not know biology, and chemistry, and physics; he may not know how to read; he may struggle with basic math; but if he knows Christ, then he has more true wisdom and knowledge than the smartest professor at Harvard.

#### **iv. Only the knowledge of Christ makes sense of the world.**

1. The knowledge of Christ answers life's deepest questions: Where do we come from? Why are we here? What's wrong with the world? What is the solution? What happens when we die?

2. Only the knowledge of Christ can make sense of economics, politics, philosophy, ethics, metaphysics, anthropology, psychology, biology, medicine, crime, sociology, history. The fullest understanding of our universe is only available through the knowledge of Christ.
  3. Proverbs 9:10 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”
  4. **Nancy Pearcy** said, “We must begin by being utterly convince that there is a biblical perspective on everything – not just on spiritual matters. The Old Testament repeatedly tells us that ‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom’ (Ps. 111:10; Pr 1:7; 9:10; 15:33). Similarly, the New Testament teaches that in Christ are ‘all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ (Col 2:3).”
  5. **Roy Clouser** wrote, “Most people have a tendency to read these passage [about the fear of the Lord being the beginning of wisdom] as though they say that the fear of the Lord is the foundation of religious knowledge. But the fact is that they make a very radical claim – the claim that somehow all knowledge depends upon religious truth.”
  6. **Nancy Pearcy** adds, “Of course, nonbelievers still function in God’s world, bear God’s image, and are upheld by common grace, which means they are capable of uncovering isolated segments of genuine knowledge. And Christians should welcome these insights. All truth is God’s truth, as the church fathers used to say; and they urged Christians to ‘plunder the Egyptians’ by appropriating the best of secular scholarship, showing how it actually fits best within a biblical worldview. There may even be occasions when Christians are mistaken on some point while nonbelievers get it right. Nevertheless, the overall systems of thought constructed by nonbelievers will be false – for if the system is not built on biblical truth, then it will be built on some other ultimate principle.”
- v. If anything contradicts the knowledge of Christ, it is wrong.**
1. Colossians 2:8 “Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ.”
  2. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 “We demolish arguments 5 and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.”
- vi. We must go to Christ when we need wisdom.**
1. James 1:5 “Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.”
- vii. We are wise when we follow Christ’s teachings.**
1. Matthew 7:24-25 “24 “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and

pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock."

**viii. Knowing Christ is the only way to eternal life.**

1. John 17:3 "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ."
3. This is what Paul meant by "the surpassing value of knowing Christ" (Phil 3:8).
4. This is why Paul made it his ultimate goal to know Christ.

**IV. 2 WAYS TO KNOW CHRIST MORE**

How can we know Christ more? Colossians 2:1-3 gives us two ways to grow in the knowledge of Christ.

**1. Stay encouraged.**

- i. **Colossians 2:2** "I want their hearts to be encouraged."
- ii. Interestingly, Paul says that one of the keys to knowing Christ more is to stay encouraged.
- iii. What is the opposite of encouragement? Fear, worry, depression. These are the enemies of the knowledge of Christ. You can't go deeper if you are discouraged. You can't go deeper if you are fearful. You can't go deeper if you are worried.
- iv. Why? When you are discouraged, your focus is on yourself rather than Christ. Your focus is your comfort rather than Christ. Your concern is your personal safety rather than Christ. Your goal is to solve your problems rather than to seek Christ. Discourage distracts us from delving deeper into the knowledge of Christ.
- v. How to stay encouraged. Twelve Truths to Lift Your Spirit:
  1. It could be worse. I could be lost -- without Christ, without hope!
  2. I deserve much worse. The last thing I want is for God to give me what I deserve -- eternal torment!
  3. Others who are more godly than me have it much worse than me. Don't forget what Paul had to endure (2 Cor 11:24-27)!
  4. I have much to be thankful for; more blessings than I can count (1 Thess 5:18).
  5. This situation is God's will for me. He has placed me here (Jn 3:27).
  6. This situation is what's best for me -- God loves me and will use this for my good (Rm 8:28)
  7. This will pass, either in this life, or in the afterlife.
  8. Paradise with God awaits (1 Cor 2:9)!
  9. God is all I need to live a full and meaningful life (Ps 23:1).
  10. Cast my cares upon the Lord (Phil 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7)!
  11. Don't carry this burden alone; ask others for help (Gal 6:2).
  12. I don't have time to feel sorry for myself. I have kingdom work to do (Gal 6:9)!

**2. Seek unity in the church.**

- i. **Colossians 2:2** "I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love"

- ii. NIV: “My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love”
- iii. This is a surprise. Paul says that one of the ways to grow closer to Christ is to seek unity in the church.
- iv. What does unity have to do with growing closer to Christ?
  - 1. Strife and division separate us from God.
    - a. Your relationship with God is affected by your relationship with others.
    - b. Matthew 5:23-24 “23 So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”
    - c. Matthew 6:14-15 “14 “For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. 15 But if you don’t forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses.”
    - d. You can’t grow closer to Christ if you are fighting against each other.
  - 2. This is an indicator that Christ reveals Himself in deeper ways when the church is truly unified in Him.
- v. What is unity? 3 Ingredients.
  - 1. Getting along. The absence of strife. Loving each other.
  - 2. Agreeing on the goal. The Great Commission.
  - 3. Working together.
    - a. Everyone is tithing.
    - b. Everyone is attending.
    - c. Everyone is praying.
    - d. Everyone is inviting.
    - e. Everyone is volunteering.
- vi. Most churches get along with each other; they avoid fighting. A smaller percent get along and agree on the goal – the Great Commission. And even a smaller number have all three ingredients.

3. As we stay encouraged, and seek unity, we can know Christ more.

## V. WHAT IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST?

- 1. The most important knowledge is spiritual knowledge. And the most important spiritual knowledge is knowing of Christ.
- 2. What is the knowledge of Christ? There are three levels of knowing Christ.
  - i. **Level 1: Facts. An accurate knowledge of Christ.**
    - 1. This is absolutely essential, and it requires the study of God’s word. Knowing who He is, what He did, why He did it, how to please Him, and how to serve Him.
  - ii. **Level 2: Faith. A saving knowledge of Christ.**
    - 1. John 17:3 “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ.”

2. This is the decision to hand over the steering wheel of your life to Jesus and trust in Him as Your Lord and savior.

**iii. Level 3: Friendship. A relational knowledge of Christ.**

1. A growing relationship with Jesus.
2. Sometimes the Scriptures calls it walking with God.
3. Genesis 5:22 “Enoch walked with God.”
4. Micah 6:8 “Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God.”
5. This involves learning to converse with Jesus; learning to talk to Him, and to hear His voice. It involves watching Him move through You as you minister to others in His name. It involves experiencing His power, His joy, His comfort, His encouragement, His peace, as you go through life.
6. There is a difference between knowing about someone (Level 1), and knowing someone (Level 3). I know all about President Trump, but I don’t know him. But I know my wife. That’s Level 3 knowledge.
7. **JC Ryle** “It is possible to have union with Christ, and yet to have little if any communion with Him.”
8. **Jl Packer** “A little knowledge of God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge about Him.”

**VI. HOW MAY WE KNOW THAT WE KNOW CHRIST DEEPLY? 4 Propositions (Jl Packer, Knowing God, Chapter 2):**

1. Those who know Christ have great energy for Christ. They serve the Lord with great effort.
  - i. Colossians 1:29 “I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me.”
2. Those who know Christ have great thoughts of Christ. They see Christ as omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, without sin, all-loving, the only Savior, worthy of all affection and allegiance.
  - i. Colossians 1:15-16 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through him and for him.”
3. Those who know Christ show great boldness for Christ. They take great risks for Christ and are willing to endure great sacrifices for Christ.
  - i. Acts 20:24 “But I consider my life of no value to myself; my purpose is to finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God’s grace.”
4. Those who know Christ have great contentment in Christ.
  - i. Philippians 4:12-13 “In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content –whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.”

- ii. **Jl Packer** "There is no peace like the peace of those whose minds are possessed with full assurance that they have known God, and God has known them, and that this relationship guarantees God's favor to them in life, through death, and on forever."

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

1. In this passage Paul's ultimate prayer for the believers in Colossae was that they might know Christ. He prayed for their encouragement, and their unity, so that they might have complete understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery Christ.
2. This should be your ultimate goal in life – to know Christ more. To go as deep with Christ as you can possibly go.
3. **JC Ryle** "We must not be content with a general orthodox knowledge that Christ is the Mediator between God and man, and that justification is by faith and not by works, and that we put our trust in Christ. We must go further than this. We must seek to have personal intimacy with the Lord Jesus, and to deal with Him as a man deals with a loving friend. We must realize what it is . . .
  - to turn to Him first in every need,
  - to talk to Him about every difficulty,
  - to consult Him about every step,
  - to spread before Him all our sorrows,
  - to get Him to share in all our joys,
  - to do all as in His sight, and
  - to go through every day leaning on and looking to Him!
  - This is the way that Paul lived: "The life which I now live in the flesh — I live by faith in the Son of God." "To me to live is Christ" (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21)."
4. You can start by staying encouraged. Don't let the devil get you down. And by seeking unity. Get along with your church family and get involved; start contributing. And Christ will reveal Himself to you in new, deeper ways.