

Love God, Known of God

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[0 : 00] 2 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians, chapter 8, we read at verse 3, but if any man love God, the same is known of him. If any man love God, the same is known of him.

Now the context of this chapter here, and of this particular verse, is the question of eating meats offered to idols. And some people of course regarded the idol as something that was basically a devil, a demon, you shouldn't have anything to do with it. Something which of course Paul later on in 1 Corinthians pretty much acknowledges what the Gentiles offer up. They offer to devils, they offer to demons. And there is that side of it.

But there is also a sense in which these false gods are simply the imagination of men's minds. They are not real. They are inventions. And although the devil sort of seeks to invade these things and make profit out of them and sort of utilise them to enslave souls of men, they are effectively in and of themselves nothing.

So meat that is sacrificed to nothing. It's sacrificed to nothing. It's still perfectly good meat. You might as well eat it, or you can leave it if you prefer. It's very much a take it or leave it scenario Paul is depicting here.

In other words, don't get hung up on the strength or otherwise of these supposed idols. They don't have any strength. You shouldn't worry unduly about them, but nor should you be enslaved by them, nor should you seek to cause others to stumble.

[1 : 38] The key thing here at verse 3 is that if any man love God, that is the true God, capital G, the living God, if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Now we might think, okay, well God knows everything. So of course he knows each of us. He knows every single one of us. So of course he's known of God. That's a superfluous statement. But the sense here obviously is that in the context of all these other gods, you know, concerning offered of things, eating things offered in sacrifice to idols.

We know on idols, nothing in the world, but there is none other God but one. For though there be there are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many and lords many, many worldly or earthly masters that rule over us, and many things that people worship that they call gods, small g.

If any man love God, the true God, the same is known of him, the true living God. Now, obviously, to be known of somebody then, it doesn't just mean to have knowledge in the sense that you're aware of their existence.

Clearly there is nothing hidden from God. But as we've mentioned many times in the past, to know somebody is to recognise and to give a sort of a, to authenticate their presence.

[3 : 01] If somebody is known of God, it means they're acknowledged as his. And we've often cited, you know, the opposite of this with Pharaoh in chapter 5, verse 2 of Exodus.

Pharaoh said, who is the Lord? Then I should obey his voice to let Israel go. I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go. I do not recognise as authentic. I do not acknowledge the reality of the God of the Hebrews.

He doesn't mean, I've never heard of him, because obviously Moses and Aaron are coming to him. The God of the Hebrews has said, let my people go. So it's not that he's never heard of him, it's that he doesn't acknowledge him.

And this sense of being known of God is in the sense of being acknowledged, recognised. The opposite of that would be a rather chilling passage we have in Matthew chapter 7.

We read from verse 21, Now, again, we have to emphasise, the Lord is not saying, I don't know who you are. I have absolutely no knowledge of any reality of you at all.

[4 : 28] Rather, what he means is, I do not acknowledge you as mine. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you. You never belonged to me. You were never one of mine.

If you're going to be mine, Jesus says, not simply those who say, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.

Now, how do we do the will of the Father, which is in heaven? Well, of course, as we know, people ask Jesus that very thing. In John chapter 6, verses 28 and 29, Then said the young to him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. Now, again, believing is not simply believing in the existence of.

Plenty of people would define whether or not they believe in God by whether or not they believe in his existence. If they believe, yeah, okay, I believe there's a God, I believe he controls things, I believe he's in charge of things, up to an extent, but, you know, I don't worship him, I don't want to go to church, I don't want to read his Bible, or anything like that, but, yeah, okay, I believe he exists.

[5 : 43] And they would count themselves as those who believe, yeah, in God. But that's not the kind of belief Jesus is talking about, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

You know, as James tells us, chapter 2, verse 19, that thou believest there is one God, thou doest well, the devils also believe and tremble. It's not enough to believe in his existence.

It's not enough to know about the reality of God, but rather it's the sense of to know him is to love him. If we love the Lord, that is something the devils cannot do.

They may believe in the existence of God, but they do not love him. They cannot love him. To love the Lord, especially to love the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, is the defining characteristic of one who follows the Lord Jesus Christ.

To love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We can say, oh yes, well we believe and we try to obey and so on. Or rather we might say, we try to do as much as we can to obey the commandments of God so that he'll think that we love him.

[6 : 55] So that we can prove, yes, well I must love God because I do this and I do that and I do the next thing. The commandments are not intended to try and sort of pull the wool over God's eyes and they can tell, oh well that person must love him.

Look at all the things they do. Look at all the strength they have. Look at all the wonderful things they do. Remember in Matthew 7 when it said, look Lord, at all the things we've done for you. We've cast out demons in your name and look at all the things we've done and how we've proclaimed your name in the streets and so on.

We are truly servants of God. Look at all the things we've done. Surely this proves how much we belong to you. In the high name we've done this, we've done that, we've done the next thing.

This is what they say. We have not prophesied in thy name. We've cast out devils. We've done many wonderful works but that doesn't convince God.

What he wants to know is what is in the heart. If we love the Lord then we are known of him, acknowledged of him. If any man love God, the same is known of him.

[8 : 02] 2 Timothy puts it this way, chapter 2, verse 19, Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his and that everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

The Lord knoweth them that are his. Now this gives us the sense then that it's almost to be enabled to love him, we have to be his in the first place.

The Lord knows who are his and he already loves those who are his. And why do we love him? Well, we read in God's word, you know, in 1 John, chapter 4, verse 10, here in his love, not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

And in verse 19, we love him because he first loved us. If any man loved God, the same is known of him. Now, the way it's put here in verse 3, you could almost think and believe it, well, if we love him enough that we make him acknowledge us, if we love him, well then, quid pro quo, he's got to acknowledge us, he's got to know us, he's got to acknowledge us as his, so it's really in my hands, if I love God enough, he will own me, he will acknowledge me, he will know me as being his, but the only reason we love him at all is because he first loved us.

Matthew 25, of course, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and those who run short of oil while they went to buy, the bridegroom came and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage and the door was shut.

[9 : 47] Afterward came also the other virgins saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, that he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you're not, you're not mine, in other words, why would they not be his any more than any more than the other bridesmaids, any more than the other virgins who had or kept oil in their lamps, so we would have to sort of peel back the layers a little further and conclude that those who had the oil or kept the oil or made sure they had enough oil, it was important enough to them to make sure that whatever happened, they were there and ready to go into the bridegroom because the bridegroom mattered to them because what is love except the person that matters most to you, the thing that matters most to you, the highest priority in your life is that which you love, that of which you give the highest priority of all is that which is your God.

And this is how we see what it is we make gods out of. It's not necessarily the idols that the Greeks or the Romans or the Egyptians worshipped. It is the thing to which we gave the highest priority.

That is the thing that we love most. That is the thing that has become our small g God. So we are all susceptible to idolatry in that sense if we allow anything to come between us and the Lord whether it be the love of increasing our bank account or the delight in our careers or our jobs or family members or husbands or wives or whatever it may be we put anything before the Lord then that becomes our small g God.

That becomes our idol because we love it most. So when it says if any man love God it means if any man love him more than anything else.

if any man love God the same is known of them. You see this is the sense in which the Lord speaks to Moses in Exodus 33 when he says show me thy glory and the Lord said unto Moses I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken for thou hast found grace in my sight and I know thee by name.

[12 : 07] It doesn't just mean I know your name as Moses but rather I know you I know you personally I know that you are mine and I know that you love me. It is for love of the Lord that Moses does what he does he leaves his comparatively peaceful existence out in the desert there minding his father-in-law's flocks and herds and his happy married life there and he leaves all that behind and comes to leave the children of Israel out of Egypt.

You might think oh but that's the crowning moment of his life of his career of course he wants to do that he doesn't know it's going to be that he just knows it's going to be hassle it's going to be trouble it's going to be confrontation with the world's greatest superpower of the age with Pharaoh with the Egyptian court with which he is all too familiar he doesn't fancy his chances or he wouldn't if God was not with him he leaves everything that he knows and loves behind for the sake of the thing and the person he loves most which is the Lord but for the Lord to know us that also carries with it certain responsibilities certain responsibilities to love him as we ought to serve him as we ought and that's the bit where it gets a bit scary for us of course because we all know that none of us loves the Lord as we ought and in the book of Amos of course the Lord says hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you oh children of Israel against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt saying you only have I known of all the families of the earth therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities can two walk together except they be agreed the sense of that there is having agreed beforehand to meet up and walk together can they walk together if we haven't entered into this covenant could we be walking together could we be going together as a God and his people will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey will a young lion cry out of his den if he hath taken nothing can a bird fall on a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him shall one take up a snare from the earth and have taken nothing at all shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid shall there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets you see whatsoever God does he makes it known he makes it known through the course of the Old Testament scriptures to the prophets and through the law and so on and the psalms and the writings he has prepared his people for the coming of the Messiah and when the Messiah comes he causes all the knowledge and all the actions of the Messiah to be written down all that we have need of for our knowledge to be written down and declared through his prophets to his apostles and written down for our benefit the Lord doesn't do anything in secret and then try to catch us and say ah you didn't know that I've done this now you're going to be judged because you didn't act on something that I did in secret that I didn't tell you about

God is not trying to fool us God makes himself known he makes himself known through the prophets makes himself known through his word makes himself known through his spirit and through his written word so that what we will be what will be required of us will be how we have responded to what the Lord has revealed of himself now when he says through Amos you only have I known of all the nations of the world he means I've chosen you out I've revealed myself to you I've declared everything that I've done how could you possibly think these things happened without me how could you possibly think you were delivered without me how could you possibly imagine that you've been able to continue this far without my help these things don't happen unless I'm involved in that and life is not preserved safety is not upheld hearts are not healed lives are not changed without the Lord's direct involvement this is a

God who is worthy of our ultimate love if any man love God the same is known of him this love of course requires to be put into action God knowing recognizing us as his children means that he acknowledges us it means that he loves us first and enables us to love him in return because we wouldn't love him at all as John tells us unless he had first put his love into our hearts but there is one final sense in which there is this knowing and without wanting to be indelicate about it of course you'll be aware that in the authorised version the word knowing is used of that which happens between a husband and a wife particularly in the procreation of children now Jesus tells us that in heaven there won't be any marrying or giving in marriage and what he means is in the sense of there will be no need for any procreation there there won't be any need for that physicality of which which was a significant part of marriage on earth of course there won't be any of that because the number of

God's children will be complete everybody will be there that needs to be there there's no need for these more fleshly sides of things there will be a deeper love and a deeper union and a deeper knowing than anything this world has to offer and we think oh but that's there I won't have my husband there I won't have a wife there you will have them there but the relationship will be different but the relationship will be better it will be infinitely greater it will be infinitely deeper because the love that we will have and know what the Lord there is the sense of a love which just as a husband and wife have this unity which is intended to be unique to them that intimacy that oneness without going into anatomical detail we all know what we're talking about here this unity this oneness from which life then may be brought forth the Lord envelopes his people in this ultimate intimacy which without getting fleshly about it or biological or carnal about it this greatest intimacy of all this greatest enveloping protection and a love of such depth that the world simply cannot replicate it at all when the

[18 : 52] Lord wants his people to understand the nature of the relationship between God and his people between Christ and his church he uses the illustration of marriage but it's not well here's marriage if you want to think we're like well God it's a bit like this God's a bit like sort of marriage you know what marriage is like well think of that as a parable of what God is like no God is the reality marriage is the pale earthly reflection of that reality between God and his people just like the human fatherhood in any family is a pale reflection of the ultimate and true fatherhood of God for his people therefore if we are enabled to love the Lord it is only because the Lord has first loved us and has put that love into our hearts the desire to be his and to be his at all costs and at any price and if that be the case then we are indeed known of him acknowledged of him accepted of him and enveloped within that deepest intimacy of all the same is known of him idols just fade into insignificance what you do or don't do with regard to their meat or the things offered up to them doesn't matter but if any man love

God the same is known of him because to know him is to love him but it's right