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#79

“Knowing God” John 14:7-15

Introduction

This last week I was having a discussion with several students about the subject of assurance of salvation. Assurance of salvation is one of the great gifts and graces that the Lord gives us as a fruit of our salvation. To know that we know God; to know that we belong to Him; to have a sense of certainly that we are secure in Him is of immeasurable comfort to God's children. Of course it is also true that sometimes our deepest struggles with sin; our greatest challenges in life; our mightiest times of uncertainty can also challenge our confidence and assurance of God's presence with us.

So it was that on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion and departure from the disciples that these 11 men began to struggle with doubts and questions and uncertainties. Jesus had just told them clearly that He was the way and the truth and the life. To that statement they began to ask *how do we know the way? How do we know the Father? Can you show us the Father?* But in response to these questions Jesus doesn't give them any commands. He doesn't say *here are some things you need to do to have assurance that you belong to me.* Assurance of salvation doesn't come from within. Rather, Jesus wisely points them to Himself. He shows them the signs that are present in their life already – signs that indicate that they have faith, that they know Him and therefore that they know and have already seen the Father. The truth is, assurance of salvation

comes to us when we more clearly see Jesus Christ and the gospel.

[John 14:7-15]

The beautiful thing about this passage is that Jesus deals very directly with something of great concern to man – how can we know God? And how can we be sure that we know Him. From a doctrinal standpoint we could break down this passage and look at the intricacies of the theology - the unity of the Godhead, the doctrine of the trinity, the revelation of God through Jesus, the works of Christ, the oneness of the Father and Son's purposes, etc. But Jesus' great concern here is that His disciples would know God and would have a confidence in their relationship with Him as He is about to depart from them and they are about to be tested in ways they'd never known.

There are several words that Jesus emphasizes in this passage to develop this assurance. He uses three words multiple times. Each of these words *know*, *see* and *believe* are used to help them understand that by their faith they already know God and have seen Him in Christ.

Maybe the most challenging question in this passage is not a question the disciples asked, but rather a question that Jesus asked. *Philip, have I been with you so long and yet you have not come to know Me?* Here is a man who has walked with Jesus for 3 years. Here is a man who has left everything to follow Christ. And yet here is man who didn't know Jesus Christ to the depth or to the extent that he should. I've tried to imagine how that question might have pierced Philip's heart. But Philip is not alone in that position. How appropriate would it be for Jesus to ask you that question this

morning? *Joe, have I been with you so long and yet you really don't know Me? Jane, have I been with you so long and yet you hardly know Me?* What if you put your own name in the blank? What if Jesus asked you *how long have I been with you and yet you don't know Me?* Do you know Jesus as well as you should know Him by this time in your relationship with Him? You can only know God through Jesus Christ. You can only see Him as you learn to look with eyes of faith at the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So what does it mean to know God? And how do you know if you know Him? And how can you get to know Him better and better? To answer those questions consider what Jesus said to His disciples.

I. You get to know God and you grow in your assurance of knowing Him **if you hear His Words.**

Look at verse 10. *Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.* Listen; let's not make this more complicated than it is. When Christ speaks, God is speaking. There is no other way to know God than to hear His voice. And understand that His voice is heard in His Word – in the Bible. Not through something mystical; it's not a feeling; not an opinion. We hear His Words as we mediate on the Scriptures.

In the disciple's greatest hour of doubt, which was a few short hours away when He would be arrested, what anchor does He give them? What life vest, what rope, does He throw them to keep them from drowning? He tells them to believe in the words that He has spoken. *Believe My promises. Believe the gospel. Remember My teachings and My truth. "The words that I say to you I do not speak*

on My own initiative, but he Father abiding In Me.

The Bible is God's direct word to you. If you are struggling to know God better; if you are questioning the nearness or presence of God in your life – there is nothing you need more than the Word of God.

God doesn't want you riding a roller coaster of doubt and uncertainty. He wants you to grow strong in faith – but that cannot happen apart from hearing and listening to His words.

II. You get to know God and you grow in your assurance of knowing Him **if you see His works.**

If you are struggling to believe the promises of God's Word, what do you do? Jesus answers that question in verse 11. *Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.* If you are questioning Christ's nearness to you, Jesus says, *look at what I've done.*

What are the works of Jesus? What are the things we should see?

1. The attesting miracles of Jesus.
2. The perfect life and obedience of Jesus
3. The atonement – His work on the cross.

To look at these means to look at them with understanding and comprehension. When you look at the miracles of Jesus you need to see His power. There is nothing Jesus is unable to do for you. There is nothing outside of His ability.

When you look at His perfect life you see His character. You are reminded of His goodness and His faithfulness and His love. Jesus did everything for you. He lived a life free of sin. He lived a life of perfect holiness so that He could give it to you by faith.

When you look at the cross you see His mercy. Jesus suffered. Jesus was separated from

God. Jesus experience agony of the soul as His Father turned away from Him in darkness and silence.

There is something powerful about looking at the works of Christ when you are doubting and confused and hurting. But you must look with eyes of faith. You can look and not see. You can remember but keep an arms length. When Jesus tells you to *look* in verse 11, the purpose is so that your faith will be deepened and strengthened.

As I was struggling with some circumstances in my own life recently, I spent some time in my quiet time just reviewing the powerful acts of God in the Bible. I remembered His power demonstrated to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. I thought about all the mighty acts of God through Moses and Elijah and Elisha. I recounted the ways He delivered the kings from their enemies in supernatural ways. I considered the way Jesus showed His power over nature and in healing so many people. And how the apostles were given power to validate the gospel in new places. And my heart was so challenged and encouraged because I know that God has not changed. And His presence is not less real now than it was then.

Seeing the works of God deepens our faith and confidence in Him. It builds our assurance.

III. You get to know God and you grow in your assurance of knowing Him **if you do His works.**

Look at verse 12. *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.* This is a rather astonishing verse. We will do greater works than Jesus?

First, we need to understand that this verse is not a proof text for the use of charismatic gifts. Some want to justify their desire to heal others and do many miracles by thinking that Jesus is teaching that we will out do Him in powerful works.

Think again about the works that Jesus has done. Miracles, perfect obedience, an atoning death. These are His works. What are these works? They are His works of redemption. They are the necessary ingredients for the reconciliation of the lost and the elect to God. It is silly to think that we need to make atonement for our sins – or that we will never sin. Yet these were the works of Jesus.

So if we are going to do greater works than these, what are we going to do? The answer is found when we understand that our *works will not be the same in type but the same in purpose*. Jesus left His earthly ministry with only a handful of committed faithful followers. He'd never traveled the world. The gospel had not yet impacted any city or nation or empire.

But soon it would. Soon whole cities would be turned upside down. Soon the Gentiles would be brought in. Soon the gospel would go places where the name of Christ and the one true God had never been heard of. Soon kings and rulers and nations and kingdoms would bow their knee to Jesus Christ. Soon the followers of Christ would not be numbered by the dozens, but by the thousands and the millions. *Greater works than these will you do because I go to the Father.*

But it is still His work. *Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do*. Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the Father actively executing the will of God. This work is something that every believer is called to. Your faith, your confidence in God's presence

with you, your assurance of salvation will all grow stronger and stronger as you give yourself to the work of God.

When Christians become self absorbed and focused on their own pursuits without reference to the work of God, there is an understandable distance that grows between him and God.

Look. Imagine someone loved you so much that they risked their very life to save your life from some horrible fate. If that happened, you might rightly decide to dedicate your entire life to serving that person. If your commitment was to do for them whatever they wanted and needed, that commitment would force you into a close relationship with them. To fulfill your commitment you would have to be in daily contact with that person. You would have to be tuned in to that person's needs and desires. You would have to constantly be asking him if there was anything you could do for him. Your connectedness to that person would be so close that you would never doubt the reality His existence or His love for you or your friendship with him. Serving him would only strengthen your relationship.

In the same way, your faith in Christ, your love for Him, your nearness to Him and assurance and understanding of His love and kindness for you will only grow as you do His will and His work. But if you only occasionally remember that He gave up His life to save your life; if you only occasionally ask Him is there is anything you could do to serve Him; if you're only available once in awhile - you might rightly expect your relationship to be somewhat cold and distant. You might even grow to have doubts and questions about what He thinks of you and how secure that relationship truly is.

Jesus said, *if you love Me you will keep My commandments.* The more you are committed to

doing the work of Christ; the more you are bent on keeping His commandments – the more your love for Him will be expressed – the dearer He will be to you – the more you will experience a growing and abiding faith in Him.

It's in the gospel that we find Christ. It's in Christ that we find our hope and our assurance of salvation. You can know you are in Christ if you are

. . .

- Listening to His Words. Thirst for them. Seek them. Meditate on them
- Looking at His Works. When you see what He has done, you will know what He can do. You will see His character and you will love Him and trust Him more.
- Doing His Works. Your dedication to serve Him, your commitment to obey Him will keep you close to Him.

In these things, you will find a growing, abiding secure faith. May you find that kind of peace with God.