

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

Volume 32, Number 45

November 8, 2015



## Two-Way Growth: ...and Knowledge

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18, KJV 1900)*

Scripture encourages, at times commands, active and intelligent thinking and study of God and of things related to Him and revealed in Scripture. Our study passage instructs growth in both grace and in knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Ponder the passage below and how it harmonizes with Peter's admonition.

*Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him. As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. (1 Corinthians 8:1-7)*

If knowledge per se puffs one up, should we not strive to avoid it, not pursue it? Knowledge is a trait like many others taught in Scripture that requires definition and application. Consider as one such example the Bible's use of "Save" or "Salvation." A brief examination of the many Bible passages where this word appears will make the point quite clearly that the word is not always used in the same way. At times the word is used to refer to something that God does exclusively all in, by, and of Himself. At other times the word appears in passages that just as clearly indicate that salvation is accomplished by our actively engaging in certain actions or behaviors that God commands and supplies His grace to enable our doing them. Grace supplied is not robotic in this setting, and these passages make that point with clarity and emphasis. If we ignore context and try to muddle the two types of passages together, we will confuse both the Scriptures and our minds regarding Scripture's teachings on the subject. When we

read the word in Scripture, we need to ask questions of the passage. Let the passage answer the questions. Do not force your ideas or definitions onto the passage. Saved from what? Saved how? What are the implications of the saving set forth in the passage? Are the implications of the saving in the passage eternal or temporal? Whenever you read this word in Scripture, ask such questions and look for answers in the context of the word. The context of the word's appearance will answer these and related questions. And as you assess the answers provided in the various contexts where the word appears, you will learn that Scripture uses the word at times to refer to God's exclusive saving of His people from the damning consequences of their sins, a saving that has eternal consequences. In other passages, the saving refers to our present discipleship, a saving in which Scripture commands us to implement the prescribed attitudes and behaviors so as to act out our love for, faith in, and obedience to our God and Savior, our active discipleship. The consequences of discipleship "Saving" are significant, never in Scripture belittled or diminished as if it has little importance or value, but Scripture consistently teaches that the consequences of this discipleship saving are temporal. They relate to God's blessings or chastening of His children during their lives, in time, not in eternity. Thus, it is logical and right to refer to the saving of the first passages as "Eternal salvation" and the saving of the second passages as "Time" or "Timely" or "Temporal salvation." Folks who fail to make this distinction inevitably over time will confuse their understanding of Scripture's teaching and fall either into a passive, fatalistic error, thinking that God does all the saving in both our eternal salvation and in our discipleship salvation, or they will fall into the opposite error and think that we must contribute to both our discipleship and our eternal salvation.

In the case of knowledge, when we read passages relating to knowledge, we should probe the context? "Knowledge of what?" Asking this and related questions of Peter's passage will direct us to knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Notice that Peter gives us a "Long form" of identity for Jesus. He is our "Lord," He is our "Savior." His name is "Jesus," a word that in ancient Hebrew language meant "Jehovah is salvation."

Consistently throughout the Old Testament the King James translators show this word by all capital letters in the English KJV text, "LORD." Notice that the King James translators capitalized the first appearance of the word "Jesus" in Matthew 1:21, "...*thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*" Given the consistency with which the King James translators always present the English translation of the Hebrew word that we refer to as "Jehovah" throughout the Old Testament, "LORD," the appearance of "JESUS" in this verse in the New Testament directly links the name of God Incarnate, the "Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" with the "LORD," "JEHOVAH" of the Old Testament. Finally, Peter refers to Him as "Christ." In the language in which the New Testament was first written, common first century or "Koine" Greek, "Christ" is a title, not a name. It defines the person to whom it is applied as being "Anointed." God anointed Jesus, His only Son, to be the Savior of sinners. He never anointed any other person to that assignment.

Never does Scripture discourage our study of the Person of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ or question the impact it has on us, as a "Puffing up" kind of knowledge. Never! So what is it that Paul intends when he warns that the knowledge of 1 Corinthians 8 is a bad thing because it puffs up the person who gains it? Obviously Paul is referring to knowledge of an idol to which non-Christian people in the first century offered meat offerings.

The object of knowledge shapes one's reaction to it. If a person studies a false deity, any idol, whatever its originators thought of it or taught about it is fairly limited and can be eventually mastered. You may study the history of this idol sufficiently to know as much about it as its creator imagined when he created it. And surely if you know so much about something that people think of as being a god, you are someone really special, highly intelligent, perhaps even elite in your knowledge. Such a sense of mastery breeds pride, arrogance that always puffs up the person who deceives himself with this prideful knowledge. This is the point that Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 8.

If a believer rightly studies Scripture to learn what it teaches us about God, about our "Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," we shall never arrive at the point of knowing even a small portion of what Scripture contains and potentially teaches the believer about our God and Savior. Instead of becoming so well informed about Him, the more we know the more we realize how much we do not know, resulting in our increasing humility, not in prideful arrogance that puffs up. I dearly love the confession of Sir Isaac Newton.

I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the

great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.

Few men who ever lived in the world of science had greater reason to boast or to be "Puffed up" because of their profound knowledge and discover of scientific principles previously unknown to humanity. But Newton understood what far too many professing Christians do not know. When we consider what very little we rightly know about God, however intelligent we may think ourselves to be or however much we may have read or studied our Bibles, if we truly learn Scripture's truth, we will be overwhelmed by the realization of what we do not know about God. Rather than becoming puffed up with pride and arrogance at what we know, we shall surely be humbled by what we do not know.

Newton also wrote, "In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God's existence." Newton obviously had a strong belief in God, so much so that, had he lived in our time, his belief in God would have made him a laughingstock among tiny-brained pseudo-scientists of our day who think they know so much that they know that God doesn't exist at all. While Newton considered something so small as the human thumb to be an abundant proof of God's existence, these men ignore a whole universe that shouts His existence to truly knowledgeable men such as Sir Isaac Newton.

When a professed believer manifests pride or arrogance, he/she gives unquestionable evidence of not having knowledge of the God of Scripture. Despite sanctifying his/her vocabulary and using "God" lingo and Bible terms, such a person's "Puffed up" attitude shouts that they have little or no awareness of the true God of the Bible, "our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Consider Paul, John, or Peter, the three apostles whom the Holy Spirit used to write most of the New Testament. These men wrote with humbled grace, never with exalted, self-inflated pride or arrogance. An arrogant attitude is a "Dead-give-away" of ignorance of the truth about God, the one and only true God of Scripture.

Peter's exhortation to grow "...*in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" underscores this point. If we are commanded to grow in this knowledge, we must begin with the humbling acknowledgement that we know so little, and we need to know so much more.

Scripture is self-described as providing the man of God with a thorough supply of truth "...*unto every good work.*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Scripture does not, however, ever suggest that any believer possesses an infallible mind, intellect, or personal grasp of Scripture's revealed truth. If that were the case, we'd eventually arrive at the point of no growth. Attitude is so very revealing of a person's internal personal state. The faithful and studied believer will live in a constant reminder of his personal frailty and of his personal need to grow, so much so that he longs for fellowship and knowledge

from other believers who have lived longer in the faith or who have been blessed with special insight into various Biblical truths. If a professing believer shows evidence of a “Puffed up” mind, he reveals that he is closer to the meat-offered-to-idols Corinthians than to Biblical truth. The Lord appointed a few men in the first century to be His instruments in the writing of New Testament Scriptures. He gave them knowledge beyond what any living believer since then possesses. And He guided them powerfully in their writing of New Testament Scriptures. We do not have such men today. Our task as believers is to sit at the feet of those men by reading and studying Scripture to learn from them, and to sit at the feet of other believers who demonstrate wisdom in the faith, learning their wise insights into Scripture as well. However much time you spend with them in Scripture, you never arrive at the point that you know so much that you may puff yourself up and ignore other believers who can teach each of us far more than we presently know.

Imagine. If Apollos had adopted the “Puffed up” mindset of the Corinthians and of similar professing believers of our time, instead of learning the way of the Lord more perfectly from Aquila and Priscilla, he would have spurned them and likely accused them of ignorance. Thank the Lord he learned from them and gave us a godly example to follow. (Acts 18:26)

A thorough study of two words in Proverbs will teach us richly regarding our need to learn and not think we have grown beyond that need.

*When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge. (Proverbs 21:11)*

No man living ever reaches the age at which he can afford to ignore his brothers and sisters in the faith, for they are the fountain of wisdom and knowledge to the Biblically wise believer. The verb “receiveth” underscores the point. You “receive” knowledge from other believers, or you choose the path of the scorner, a path that takes you to chastening punishment from the Lord. Solomon wrote Proverbs to his young son, hoping to impart his wisdom to his son. The arrogant, “Puffed up” mindset chooses to ignore any input from other believers. Why not? The puffed up person believes that she knows more than anyone else, so bothering to humbly seek knowledge from others or endure listening to their thoughts is to such a person an utter waste of time. A careful study of both knowledge and the fool in Proverbs should shock people with such a mindset into repentance, but it seldom does so. And thus they doom themselves to perpetuate their ungodly arrogance in spiritual ignorance, even as God’s humbling wisdom knocks on their door and pleads for admission. Interesting, “Arrogance” and “Ignorance” go hand in hand.

Peter’s inspired admonition faces us all with its sobering truth. What shall we do with his instruction? Will we drop to our knees and pray the Lord for forgiveness and repentance? Or will we hide smugly in our self-created web of deceit, above all, our deceit of ourselves? Shall we bow in humble submission to the Lord and to our godly brothers and sisters where we may learn, where we may “...grow in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”? Or shall we doom ourselves to the lonely isolation of our own puffed up hearts.

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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor