

# The Glory of Knowing God – *John 17:1-5*

**Introduction** – John writes in his prologue, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (1:14). The seven signs in Chapters 2-11, this “book of signs,” were written so that the reader would know that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and that through faith one would receive life (20:31), for that would bring glory to the Son Who would glorify the Father.

It is good to pursue glory. The perfect Man did. Our problem is that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), and so we pursue all the wrong kinds of glory. But Christ has made a way, the glorious way of the cross, by which we can pursue that which we were made for – the glory of knowing God.

**The Hour of His Glory** (vv1-2) – Several times in this gospel, Jesus told His listeners that His hour had not yet come (2:4, 7:6, 8, 30, 8:20). But from 12:20, when some Greeks tried to see Him, the hour has come (12:27-28, 13:1, 31). We have seen before that the glory Jesus is referring to is His final ascension to the throne of God, but an ascension that is preceded by a glorious crucifixion (John 13:31-32). Christ on the cross is glorious because there (and only there) His atoning death paid for all the sins of His chosen ones; it is the central moment in all of history. There is a mutual glorification between the Father and the Son in this great act (13:32). It shines at the cross and then it shines through the resurrection (Rom 1:4). And so, we are to see that the cross is not just a path TO glory, but also a path OF glory. In addition, this path of glory was a good and proper pursuit because it glorified the Father.

Three gifts from the Father are given to the Son in this act of glory. First, Christ is given authority over all flesh. Jesus came as the ruler of the destinies of all men and women; there will be a final sifting of the wheat the tares, the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31ff). That first gift is universal; the second is particular. Out of the great multitude of humanity, particular persons were given to Christ to receive salvation. Here the doctrine of election and definite atonement are again made clear. For these chosen ones, Christ would provide the atonement for their salvation which would glorify Christ and in turn bring glory to the Father (Eph 1:3-7). And that is the third gift as well: eternal life for Jesus to give to His own.

**Eternal Life: Knowing God** (vv3) – Eternal life is not simply unending existence. Unending existence is for those sent to hell too. The distinction is not *eternal* life verses *non-eternal* life. It is the distinction of *eternal life* verses *eternal death* (John 3:36). Jesus tells us, “*this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.*” This knowledge is not accessible to anyone unless God gives it to them (1 John 5:20). This knowledge of God is tied to eternal life throughout the prophecies of the Old Testament. This knowledge is more important than human wisdom, riches, or strength (Jer 9:23f). Jeremiah promised that in the New Covenant, all would know God personally, without an intermediary (Jer 31:34, Heb 8:11). When God brought His salvation, Isaiah promised that “*the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*” (Isaiah 11:9), and Habakkuk echoed that it would be a “*knowledge of the glory of the Lord*” (Hab 2:14). The knowledge of God is better than burnt offerings (Hos 6:6), and we are to “*acknowledge Him*” (lit. “*know Him*”) in all our ways and He will direct our paths (Prov 3:6).

Jesus Christ is the only Way to true knowledge of the only true God (John 14:6-7). And the elect are not only those who know God, but are first known by God (Gal 4:8-9a). In 1 John 4:19 it says, “*we love Him because He first loved us*” and it could also be said that we know God because He first knew us. And this helps us peer into the idea of what this knowledge is.

Knowing God is eternal life. In Amos 3:2, speaking of His election of Israel, God says “*You only have I known of all the families of the earth.*” Jesus “*knows*” His sheep, and to those who are not His sheep He says, knowing them full well, “*I never knew you,*” (Matt 7:23). So, knowing God is not first or primarily intellectual understanding. Adam knew Eve and she conceived. This knowledge refers to a covenantal union which bears forth fruit. Knowing God is being bound in a solemn bond, sovereignly administered, initiated by the Father, based on the finished work of Jesus, and mediated to us by the Spirit. This is the knowledge Paul prayed for us to grow deeper and deeper in (Eph 3:19).

“*Knowing God is more than knowing about Him; it is a matter of dealing with Him as He opens up to you, and being dealt with by Him as He takes knowledge of you*” – J.I. Packer, “*Knowing God.*”

**Obedience, Knowledge of God, Glorifying God, and Overflowing Glory** (vv4-5) – Jesus says that He had glorified the Father by finishing the work the Father gave Him to do (v4). Jesus knew His saving mission (3:16) and said that He “*must work the works of Him who sent Me*” (9:4). This work had included His humble incarnation (Phil 2:7), His perfect lifelong obedience and His faithful rebuff of Satan’s attempt to dissuade Him during His temptations in the wilderness. Now, His great work of glory was before Him (v5), and while it is all to be accomplished according to God’s sovereignty, this does not dissuade Christ from praying to the Father; rather it functions as an incentive to pray.

His obedience brought His sheep eternal life, the knowledge of God, and this all is to the praise of His gracious glory (Father and Son – v5). We know that glory is magnified beyond the grave and now is radiant in heaven (Rev 1:13-18) and His glorious work is now sung in heaven (Rev 5:9-12), “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.*”

This glory overflows to the Christian and the church and so we participate in bringing the knowledge of God to our children and to the world, which continues the work of glorifying God. The church is salt and light in this world, and our good works (our obedience) will be seen by men “*that they may...glorify Your Father in heaven*” (Matt 5:13-16).

You were created for glory and so it is right and proper to pursue glory. The glory you are to pursue is the glory of eternal life which is knowing God, beholding His glory and reflecting that glory in your glad obedience. None of us is Jesus, but in a cross-bearing life as His disciples, we can pray as He did, “*Father, glorify me, your servant and child, so that I might glorify You.*” You are being transformed from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18), and, Christian, you have the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6).

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