

KNOWING GOD PT. II

[1 John 4:1-21]

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome everyone. Introduce myself
- B. Last week finished chapter 3, this week taking on all of chapter 4!
 - 1. Last week was focused on more practical stuff, this week is a bit more theological
 - 2. Moving between love and knowledge
 - a) **"We cannot love what we do not know" - St. Thomas Aquinas**
 - b) If we want to grow in our love for God, we must pursue knowing Him
 - c) Knowing God is not knowing a subject or topic or propositional facts, but a personal Being
 - (1) Example of getting to know one's spouse

C. Big Idea: Knowing God transforms my love

- D. Read, declare, thank, pray

II. Knowing God's Voice [vs. 1-6]

- A. First way we know God is by listening to Him, to *His* message, not that of the world
 - 1. **[1 John 4:6] "We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."**
 - 2. What is the message? The message of the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ
 - a) **[Hebrews 1:1-2] "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world."**
 - 3. Lots of messages in the world, how do I know which one is true?
 - a) **[1 John 4:2] "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God"**
 - b) Confessing and affirming the Incarnation: unseen God becomes visible in the person of Jesus
 - c) This is how we discern that which is true from that which is false.
 - (1) False teachers/prophets seeking to strip away the humanity from Jesus, or in today's culture, seek to strip away the divinity and Lordship of Jesus...
 - (2) Compound word in the Greek
 - d) **[1 John 4:4] "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"**
 - (1) The way that we know God is by hearing His Word and believing in Jesus as He has been revealed. By holding fast to this message we are overcomers.
 - (2) **[John 10:27] "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."**
 - (a) Listening leads to knowledge which leads to following with my life
 - 4. Words are important because they capture and form our imagination. Our imagination is not just a cognitive experience, but resides much deeper in our souls. It pulls us toward a life that we want to live. Words give us an image of the best kind of life to live which pulls us and also shows us where our ultimate love is.
 - a) **Our ultimate love moves and motivates us because we are lured by this picture of human flourishing. Rather than being pushed by beliefs, we are pulled by a telos that we desire. It's not so much that we're intellectually convinced and then muster the willpower to pursue what we ought; rather, at a precognitive level, we are attracted to a vision of the good life that has been painted for us in stories and myths, images and icons. It is not primarily our minds that are captivated but rather our imaginations that are captured, and when our imagination is hooked, we're hooked (and sometimes our imaginations can be hooked by very different visions than what we're feeding into our minds)" - James K. A. Smith**

- B. Thus, listening to God's Word and message about His Son Jesus Christ leads me to knowing Him and in knowing Him I learn to love Him and be pulled by the best kind of life that He images for me!

1. Listening leads to imagining which leads to loving

III. Knowing God's Love [vs. 7-12]

- A. John is imagining for us what the best kind of life is; Love for God and love for others.

1. Reiteration of [3:11]

- B. The next way that we know God is by knowing His love

1. **[1 John 4:8] "...God is love"**

a) **God's love is not a cut on the diamond, but the entirety of it!**

b) All that God is, says, and does is motivated, bounded, and filtered through His love

(1) However, because I live in a fallen world full of corruption of the body, full of sin that I commit, full of sin and injustice against me and others....In light of this I can naturally question the love of God and His justice....

c) **"It is true that the words God is love mean not only that loving is only one of God's many activities, but rather that all His activity is loving activity and that, therefore, if He judges He judges in love. Yet, if His judging is in love, His loving is also in justice. He who is love is light and fire as well. Far from condoning sin, His love has found a way to expose it (because He is light) and to consume it (because He is fire) without destroying the sinner, but rather saving him." - John Stott**

- C. How do we see God manifesting this kind of just love?

1. **[1 John 4:9-10] "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. 'n this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."**

2. Here we are getting into the implications of the importance to affirm the Incarnation

a) **[Romans 3:23-26] "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."**

b) Jesus is representing humanity in its sin, selfishness and injustices. At the cross God fully demonstrates His hatred for sin and injustice. We see the fullness of justice at the cross. We also see the beauty of forgiveness.

3. Propitiation is about **substitution** and **suffering**

a) Jesus suffered the full anger and judgement of God against all the sin and injustices of the world instead of us

b) Jesus' life of perfect love, trust and obedience is given to us as a gift, received by faith that we might know the true justice and love of God!

c) If Jesus was not a man He could not have been our substitute, thus the confession of the Incarnation is vital to the gospel

4. **Preemptive love and pleasure toward His people**

a) This will change, not only the way that I view God, but myself as well

b) God does not love us because we are lovely, but we are lovely because He loves us

(1) **"And when God saw them He was like a new dad. 'You look like Me', He said, 'You're the most beautiful thing I've ever made!'" God loved them with all of His heart. And they were lovely because He loved them." - Sally Lloyd Jones**

c) Knowing this kind of love will transform me so that I respond by loving God, but also by learning to love myself

(1) Story of my Black Hearts Club silliness in college and why this verse is so important for me in learning to love myself as God has loved me

(2) Bernard of Clariveux's four stages of love

- (a) loving oneself for self's sake
- (b) loving God for self's sake (salvation)
- (c) loving God for God's sake (delight in God)
- (d) loving self for God's sake (accepting God's love for me)
- d) Learning to love myself as God has loved me will expand my capacity and ability to love others with His love

IV. Knowing God's Life [vs. 13-21]

A. "Knowing God means living in the power of the Spirit"

1. The Spirit of God reveals Christ to me and causes me to glorify Jesus and live out His life of love.

2. **[John 16:14] "He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you."**

B. **[1 John 4:16-17] "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is so also are we in this world."**

C. How is Jesus?

1. Sent (focus on this world NOT being our home)

a) **[John 17:3] "And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."**

b) Knowing the sent Son is life, we are also sent out to bring life to others

c) **[John 17:18] "As you sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."**

2. Sanctuary [vs. 16b] (focus on holiness in my life)

a) **"God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."**

b) When we abide in the love of God in the Son, He abides in us; He makes our souls His sanctuary

(1) [1 Corinthians 3:16] "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"

c) Just as Jesus has made His home in us, so we seek to dwell among the people. We bring with us the presence of God

3. Secure [vs. 18]

a) **"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love."**

b) I am secure in the pleasure of the Father. He has cast out all reason to fear Him since His Son bore the punishment for my sins!

(1) The difference between the salvific vs. relational sense

(2) "Too often we forget that discipline really means to teach, not to punish. A disciple is a student, not a recipient of behavioral consequences" - Dr. Dan Siegel

c) We want to be a people who do not judge others, but seek to live our lives as they are meant to be. We want to be the calm, secure presence of God to those around us

(1) Family/Church/World

4. Sacrificial [vs. 19-21]

a) **"We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."**

b) We prove that we have the love of God in Christ by how we love our fellow Christians.

D. "If someone says 'I love God'....; "Whoever says 'I know Him'..."

1. Once again the connection between love and knowledge.

V. Conclusion

- A. Knowing God enables me to grow in intimacy and love for Him.
 1. I grow in knowing God through His word
 2. I grow in knowing God by looking at the cross
 3. I grow in knowing God through His Spirit
 4. Love always works it's way out in my actions, thus my actions speak about where my love is at
 5. Where is your love at today?

VI. Response

- A. **Confession:** *"Lord, we confess that we have listened to and believed the message of the world instead of the message of your Son. We need you to help us know and believe the Word of the Savior Jesus Christ."*
- B. **Assurance:** *"Thank you, Father, that we can know You in truth through Your Son whom you have sent. In His name we have salvation and true life. He is eternal life and we know You as we know Him."*
- C. **Lord's Supper**
 1. At the table we are reminded of how Jesus paid the price for our sin that we might be close to God. This is a visceral reminder of the kind of love the Father has for us and the kind of desire that He has to be near us and with us. Let us eat and drink knowing His death has given us life!