

The Importance of Knowing the Lord

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Psalms

139:23 Examine me, God, and know my mind, test me, and know my thoughts.
139:24 See if there is any offensive tendency in me, and lead me in the eternal way.
[International Standard Version]

Malachi

3:10 "Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. So put me to the test in this right now," says the Lord of the Heavenly Armies, "and see if I won't throw open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you blessing without measure."

Philippians

3:8 What is more, I continue to consider all these things to be a loss for the sake of what is far more valuable, knowing the Messiah Jesus, my Lord. It is because of him that I have experienced the loss of all those things. Indeed, I consider them rubbish in order to gain the Messiah

These verses we just read tell us the "importance, necessity and possibility of knowing the Lord Jesus." What is most important for us is to know the Lord Jesus. How can we understand Jesus better? Two things are necessary.

Firstly, it is done when we are examined by the Lord. Secondly, it is done when we examine the Lord.

Both of these tasks are necessary. The Bible describes in great detail two kinds of sins; the sin of negligence and the sin of desire.

Repentance for sins is meaningless unless it is sincere. Our sins were committed one at a time, so they need to be exposed and repented one at a time as well. When we were illuminated by the light of the Lord, we experienced the wonderful grace of the Lord. The disciple James once wrote;

James

4:17 Therefore, anyone who knows what is right but fails to do it is guilty of sin.

That is to say, the lack of gratitude, lack of love for the Lord, negligence, not reading the Bible with an open heart, unfaithfulness, leading a life with none or very little prayer, being loveless toward perishing

souls including your relatives, family, friends, not being attentive to other brothers and sisters, refusal or self-denial in the obedience to the Lord—these are all sins.

The second kind of sin is called the sin of desire. Then what does this sin of desire point to?

Firstly, it sets our minds on worldly things. It is a sin to be preoccupied with worldly things.

Philippians

3:19 Their minds are set on worldly things.

Paul referred to believers, not to non-believers when he wrote, "Their minds are set on worldly things." Do we sincerely seek the things from above? Or, are our minds set on worldly ones? For us who belong to the Lord, it is wrong to refuse to follow the plan the Lord has for us, instead believing that we can accomplish everything according to our own plan.

We were redeemed by the precious price and we belong to the Lord. All the money we possess belongs to the Lord too. In the time of the Old Testament, people were only supposed to devote one tenth (of their earnings). But, the Lord desires to receive everything we have. Our time also belongs to the Lord. Wasting time in empty conversations or dreamy ideas will cause the Lord a lot of grief. All worldly thoughts are considered sins.

Secondly, arrogance. Arrogance is a sin too. We are more or less arrogant without exception. We spend more time in keeping up our appearance than in purifying our mind, don't we? We care so much about how others view our appearance but do not care much about how the Lord thinks of us, don't we? After all, this indicates that we seek praise from people more than we seek the glory of the Lord. A wonderful confession of Paul can be found in 1:10 of the Galatians;

Galatians

1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of people or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be the Messiah's servant.

Although some people are saved, they are not used as vessels of the Lord. James summarized very well what the whole Bible wants to tell us in this verse;

James

4:6 But he gives all the more grace. And so he says, "God opposes the arrogant but gives grace to the humble."

It is necessary for us to receive 'all the more grace' to understand Jesus better. Those who don't receive all the more grace are being opposed by the Lord.

God opposes the arrogant but gives grace to the humble.

Thirdly, jealousy. Being jealous is also considered a sin. We feel envious when others are more advanced than us, when someone receives much attention or when we see someone living a luxurious life. It is the nature of all men to take pleasure in talking about the misfortunes or drawbacks of others rather than talking about their excellence. I must say that this is a sin and it is what Satan wants for us. Shouldn't we admit that we all have this nature and confess it as sin?

Fourthly, having a spirit of judgment. It is also a sin to have a spirit of judgment. Very often we judge others without truly knowing them. Do we have the love to take everything in goodwill?

Fifthly, speaking ill of others is also a sin. It includes repeating secret phone calls. Even though believers rely on the Holy Spirit and spend so many years developing true love for each other, it can be torn away by a single word of reproach.

Sixthly, lie. Lying is another kind of sin. To lie is to deceive someone knowingly. It is a falsehood to act against our own intentions. Aren't our words, our eyes and our deeds deceitful sometimes? Don't we act against our inclinations?

Seventhly, hypocrisy is a sin too. Believers can possibly be hypocritical even in their prayers. Sometimes, they ask the Lord what they actually do not care for, or they do not even remember what they prayed about a little while back. Even though their sins are confessed, they do not actually want to be separated from them but somewhere in their hearts, they feel like walking in their sin. We need to be exactly the way we are. Unless we are absolutely honest with each other, we will never be able to understand the Lord better. If we refuse to walk in the light, it will bring victory to the devil.

The eighth sin is being insincere. It certainly is a sin. Insincere believers show a totally different attitude when they are in churches and when they are at home. They look so serious in churches but when they get home, they live the way they feel like and sometimes it may cause others to stumble.

Ninth, being shallow is a sin. Some believers, while they take a serious attitude to their business acquaintances, behave insincerely and even exchange jokes during the communion with the Lord. Shouldn't we keep walking with fear in the presence of the Lord?

Tenth, it is a sin to make others stumble. If there was a way of seeing how many times we have made others stumble in our life, we would be shocked by that number.

So far, we have discussed various kinds of sins. We all should confess our sins to the Lord and ask for his mercy. It is promised in the First Epistle of John, 1:9;

1 John

1:9 If we make it our habit to confess our sins, in his faithful righteousness he forgives us for those sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Solomon also wrote;

Proverbs

28:13 Whoever hides his transgressions will not succeed, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy.

We all should accomplish true repentance in front of the light of the Lord. Then a shower of blessings and the spirit of the Lord will fall upon us.

How can we understand Jesus better? It must begin by being examined by the Lord. We seriously should desire to be examined by the Lord. What do we need to do to know Jesus better than we do now? As we have been discussing, it is done when we are examined by the Lord.

The second answer (to the question about how we can know Jesus better) is that it is done when we examine the Lord. We need to reflect on the Lord. The Lord is waiting until we put him to the test. He is waiting so patiently. Let us read again this verse.

Malachi

3:10 "Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. So put me to the test in this right now," says the Lord of the Heavenly Armies, "and see if I won't throw open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you blessing without measure.

The expression 'test me' appears twice in this verse ('test' and 'see').

I know some people separated from their parents who were of loose morals. I sympathize with those children who could not be raised by their parents and thus grew up without knowing the love of a parent. They keep cursing their fate—had they had financial aid for education, they would have had a chance to get a better job. Similarly, I know a man who grieves about not having had an opportunity to exert his strength.

It is a man who can't find a chance to reveal his strength to the saved ones through the saved ones—he is the Lord himself. Although Jesus desires to give us abundant blessings, he can't find an

opportunity to do so. The Lord tells us to “put him to the test.”

The Lord is ready to pour a shower of blessings upon us. But, he can't bless us until we believers examine him. The Lord is in grief because we do not meet his conditions before he can give us rich blessings. When do we receive abundant blessings? I guess there are three answers.

Firstly, when the hearts of believers are filled with a burning passion to glorify the Lord alone, they will be given a chance to understand the Lord better and be blessed abundantly.

Secondly, by the work of the cross of the Lord, when we are ready to realize how miserable our hearts are, we will understand the Lord better and will receive rich blessings from him.

Thirdly, it is important that brothers and sisters in the assembly be in agreement, again to receive abundant blessings.

What is more important than anything else? It is to let the glory of Jesus be revealed, as I mentioned today. When Jesus came down to this world, a window in the heavens opened up and a voice of God said, “This is my Son, whom I love. I am pleased with him!”

Even today, no one other than Jesus can please the Father God. A window in the heavens opened up and the Spirit of God descended on Jesus like a dove. When we think of the glory of the Lord and all glory is given to the Lord, we will receive abundant blessings. Can we say that our only desire is for Jesus' name to be worshiped? Are we prepared to give all glory to the Lord through everything we do in our life? No matter how much we are despised and misunderstood, will we still walk the way to give all glory to the Lord?

Or are we reaching out for attention from people? When our hearts are filled with the passion to give all glory to the Lord alone, we will be able to understand him better and each one of us will experience abundant blessings.

Secondly, the work of the cross is necessary. Without the help of the cross, it is not possible to give glory to the Lord alone. What does it mean for us to understand Jesus better? It is for the life of Jesus, the presence of Jesus and the glory of Jesus to be revealed through us.

However, unless our ego is broken down, the life of the Lord, presence of the Lord and the glory of the Lord cannot be seen externally. Paul confessed, “I no longer live, but the Messiah lives in me.” This experience of Paul must be our experience too. “I am

nothing. Jesus is everything.” This is the secret to understand Jesus better.

It is requested that our arrogant ego be broken down into pieces. Our ego needs to be totally destroyed by the work of the cross. Furthermore, we have to thoroughly rely on the Lord.

Thirdly, agreement in the entire assembly is the secret toward abundant blessings. When people got together and prayed on the day of Pentecost, they were filled with blessings.

They prayed as one heart. What we need to realize is that Jesus does not want to open the hearts of some specific kinds of believers, but instead desires to wake up all people, that is to say, the entire assembly.

Why does the Lord desire to do so? We need to understand Jesus better in order to become his bride 'without a spot, or wrinkle or anything of the kind.' If you seek a blessing just for yourself, your prayer will never be heard. When we pray for all brothers and sisters wholeheartedly, the Lord will answer.

“Put me to the test in this right now—says the Lord of the Heavenly Armies—and see if I won't throw open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you blessing without measure.” How can we put the Lord to the test? Those who seek to glorify Jesus with burning hearts are the ones to put the Lord to the test. Those who entrust themselves entirely to the Lord on the Cross are the ones who test the Lord. And those who desperately wish the church of the Lord to be built will receive rich blessings.

Has Jesus examined us and have we showed ourselves to the Lord just as we are? Did it make us realize that we have nothing to rely on in ourselves? Did it make us feel shameful and feel like hiding away from the eyes of the Lord? Have we already been tested thoroughly by the Lord Almighty?

Have we given the Lord a chance to bless us abundantly? Some people may say in answer to this question, “We don't have to. The Lord is the God Almighty. He can make such opportunities by himself.”

However, Jesus always wishes to perform his miracles as the answer to our prayers. When we live as we are, confess our sins to the Lord without hiding anything and have our souls broken, we are giving a chance to the Lord.

Revelation

3:20 Look! I am standing at the door and knocking. If anyone listens to my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he will eat with me.

This verse was not meant for non-believers, but for believers. The Lord is standing outside the door of our hearts and knocking. The Lord desires to come inside. He is trying to come into the center and he wants to come first in every aspect of our lives.

Why doesn't the Lord break down the door and come inside? Jesus never forces himself to enter. It is always the responsibility of each one of us to open the door of our hearts and surrender control to the Lord. If we open the door of our hearts and surrender the control of our whole life to Jesus, he will bless us abundantly.

For example, the chrysanthemum flower is beautiful and pleasing to our eyes. Even if we have a seedling of chrysanthemum, it is useless if we do not plant it in soil and give it a chance to bear flowers. Aren't we like a chrysanthemum that was not planted in soil? We lack its brilliance, strength and holiness.

It is important for us to be blessed abundantly. Jesus desires to give us the blessings. But, we need to give the Lord a chance to do so, otherwise we will have to die a lonely death in dark and cold soil.

Peter used to be a nameless fisherman. Furthermore, he was a disciple who denied the Lord three times. However, when Peter understood the Lord and totally relied on him, he gave the Lord a chance to work on him. Then, an amazing blessing was revealed through Peter and thousands of people were led and saved by Peter.

We all know the parable of the prodigal son. But, just around the same time, there might be a number of other prodigal sons who did not have the courage to return to their father. Fathers of the prodigal sons who did not come home were not given a chance to give out their wonderful wealth.

Are we prepared to pray sincerely and seek faithfully just like David did, when he said, "Examine me, Lord, and inspect me! Test my heart and mind?" It is not until we pray this way and come close to the Lord, that he can give out his wealth to us and bless us abundantly.

How can we give the Lord a chance to work? We need to have him look into the bottom of our hearts and expose everything to the light. Let us show ourselves to the Lord just like patients suffering from severe pain. Patients rely on their doctor. When they trust their doctor and have him examine their problems, the doctor will cure them.

When patients are put to sleep under anesthesia and go through an operation, they entrust themselves to the doctor. When we travel far on a weekend, we check the timetable and choose the train to take. If

we don't believe the words of the station staff, we would never get to our destination. The Lord desires to give us his strength. He tells us to "put him to test." He tells us to "give him a chance."

"Lord, please break me down. For your glory to be revealed, for the salvation of all the lost souls, for the recreation and spiritual growth of the brothers and sisters, please break me down." If we obey the Lord sincerely, the Lord will work on us. How could the ten lepers be healed by Jesus? It was because they obeyed his words even in hopeless circumstances. The Bible says that "while they were going, they were made clean."

Had they been disobedient to his words, they would never have been healed and they would have to continue their miserable lives. "Look! I am standing at the door and knocking. If anyone listens to my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he will eat with me," so the lord is telling us.

After all, "put me to the test in this right now and see if I won't throw open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you blessing without measure," says the Lord of the Heavenly Armies.

End