

Understanding and Knowing God

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Can a person actually know God? Atheists say that there is no God. Agnostics say that there may be a God, but He is not knowable – at least not for them at the moment. Many say that they know God, but in reality, they only know about God – and what they know may not be true. Some make God to be the universe, or nature, or something within each one of us. Others have theories that God is an all-powerful and all-knowing being who is detached from involvement with His creation. Others think of God as an angry controlling monarch, or a very soft-hearted grandfather figure, or one who swings between those two descriptions. Some don't think He is completely all-powerful and all-knowing – but He is trying hard to help us through life. Some believe in multiple gods and/or higher beings. We could fine tune this into thousands of ideas and opinions about God or gods.

You can have a god who is the product of human imagination. Or, you can have the God of the Bible. It is not just that Scripture reveals the true God – as a doctrine, but that the true God must reveal Himself to us personally, or He will not be known. He primarily does this through Scripture. There is evidence of God that can be found in His creation, but that evidence must bring us back to what the Bible is declaring to those who will believe it. See Psalm 19:1-14; 119:130; Romans 1:16-20; I Corinthians 1:18-24; Matthew 11:25-30; Hebrews 11:1-3,6 cp. Romans 10:13-17; I Peter 1:15-25.

So, it is most important that we do not merely know about God, but actually know God, as a real being, and have an active relationship with Him. As our opening text would tell us, knowing and understanding God is glorious! See Jeremiah 9:23-24 cp. I Corinthians 1:26-31.

But men naturally tend to glory in other things. To “glory” is to have confidence in something or someone, to love and to celebrate something or someone, to have joy, peace, and satisfaction in something or someone. Jeremiah 9:23 tells us that man tends to glory in three basic interconnected things:

1) **His (man's) Wisdom**, 2) **His (man's) Might**, 3) **His (man's) Wealth**.

Contrast this with what Paul said in Philippians 3:1-11. We should rejoice in the Lord and not put our confidence in the flesh. The religious things that Paul previously gloried in, later he learned to count but dung / rubbish, compared to His relationship with Christ. Paul's glorying in the Lord lead him to desire three interconnected things:

1) **His (Christ's) Resurrection**, 2) **His (Christ's) Sufferings**, 3) **His (Christ's) Death**.

Basically, man naturally puts stock in the world's version of power. **Let's look at the fallacy of putting our heart and soul into glorying in the Jeremiah 9:23 list:**

The Wisdom of Man – This can be intellectual / educational, strategical, and creative / technological power. It has use in life, but without God's involvement and blessing, it will not deliver man from his greatest problems. See Psalm 1:1-3; 19:7-11; Proverbs 1:1-7; 2:1-11; 14:12; 19:27; 21:30; Romans 1:18-32; 11:33 – 12:2; I Corinthians 1:18-24; 2:1-16; 3:18-23; I Timothy 6:20-21; II Timothy 3:15-17; II Peter 1:16-21; 3:18

The Might of Man – This can be physical strength and skill. It can be weaponry / military power. It can be forms of political / social power. These things all have a proper use in life, but man tends to abuse them – even destroy himself with them. See Psalm 9:15-20; 20:7; 60:11; 118:8-9; Proverbs 16:5; Jeremiah 17:5-8; II Corinthians 12:7-10. Consider some thoughts on God and government – Romans 13:1-7; Proverbs 21:1; Luke 20:25 cp. Isaiah 40:12-31; Psalm 2:1-12; 82:1-8 [“gods” = judges / rulers / mighty ones]; Isaiah 2:1-4; Revelation 11:15-18.

The Riches of Man – This can be resources and financial power. Again, there is a proper place and use for these things, but without God, all these riches do not profit us. See Proverbs 23:4-5; Haggai 1:5-6; Matthew 6:19-20,24-33; 16:24-27; Luke 12:15; John 6:27,35 [cp. 4:34]; Philippians 1:21; I Timothy 6:3-11,17-19; Hebrews 13:5-6; Revelation 2:9; 3:17; 22:12 cp. Isaiah 55:1-6.

Now let's look at a truly glorious view of life in Philippians 3:10. Remember, it is not the kind of glory that man naturally seeks (Romans 1:21-23; 2:4-10; 3:23; 5:1-5; 8:18; 11:33-36).

The Resurrection power of Christ – Power always sounds great, but resurrection power implies that something had to die first. And if it had to die, it had to suffer. Naturally, man is not attracted to this. But it is vitally important to know that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead resides in every believer. It is the only way that you can live the Christian life. See Romans 6:1-13; 8:5-15; Ephesians 1:15-20; I Peter 1:3-9.

We cannot manufacture this power. It is **the power of “His” resurrection**. Likewise, it must be **the fellowship of “His” sufferings** (Matthew 5:10-12; II Timothy 2:8-13; I Peter 4:12-16). And so, it is only through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we can die to self. We are called to be **conformed to “His” death** (Matthew 16:21-27; Romans 6:6-7; Galatians 2:20; 6:14; Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 3:1-4).

Glory in the Lord – I Corinthians 1:26-31 tells us that our faith and hope is all because of what the Lord has done for us – no merit of our own. Alluding to Jeremiah 9:23-24, we see the Spirit of the Lord called us through the gospel. The Father did not choose us because of our wisdom, might, or wealth. By sheer grace He established His Son to be our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:1-10; II Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5-7; I Peter 2:9-10).