

The Difference Between Life and Death

There is a fundamental and quintessential difference between these two mentalities: **to know about Christ** and **to know Christ**. The devil knows more about Christ than we will ever know in this temporal life. Our only hope is to know Christ – that is what makes all the difference – it is literally the difference between life and death. We should never mistake the knowledge of Christ for the fullness of knowing him personally and intimately. It's our **relationship with Christ** not our **intellectual knowledge of Christ** that is the basis for our **eternal hope in Christ**. Paul states it as follows:

Philippians 3:7-11 (Emphasis Mine)

⁷*But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of **knowing** Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰I want to **know** Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

You can have the intellectual knowledge of Christ and His existence; you can have the intellectual knowledge of His birth, you can have the intellectual knowledge of His life, you can have the intellectual knowledge of His miraculous works, you can have the intellectual knowledge of His raising Lazarus from the dead, you can have the intellectual knowledge of His death on the cross for the sins of the world, you can have the intellectual knowledge of His resurrection from the dead, you can have the intellectual knowledge of His ascension into heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father, and you can have the intellectual knowledge of His coming again to judge the living and the dead and accept all this as historical fact – and when you die you will go to hell if you have not made the commitment to come to know Him personally and intimately. Judas had the intellectual knowledge of Christ and first-hand experienced His presence and miraculous power and Judas went to hell. The devil has the knowledge of Christ and knows more about Christ than we will ever know in this temporal life, and hell was created for him and his followers.

Jesus himself clearly warns us of the danger of trying to associate ourselves with Him on the Day of Judgment when we never took the time to get to know Him and thereby do the will of His Father:

Matthew 7:21-23 (Emphasis Mine)

²¹*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only he who does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!**'"*

So how do you know that you know Christ

- 1) If you have to ask the question, then you don't know Him. A relationship with Christ changes *everything* – we are new creation if we know Christ – and it leaves no doubt of a transformed life. After all, a life in Christ means we must have first died in order to live again in Him.

Romans 6:3-14 (Emphasis Mine)

³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 8:9-11 (Emphasis Mine)

⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (Emphasis Mine)

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

- 2) You cannot know what you know and fully believe it and not have an uncontrollable desire to share it with others. If you know Christ and have a personal relationship with Him, you will have a passion to seek and save the lost. The famous Reformed Baptist Preacher, Charles Spurgeon, put it like this:

If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.

Do we really believe that sinners will be damned forever? Do we think about their fate very often, if ever? Or do we busy ourselves in the work of the Lord, and never bother to implore them to come to the Savior? In general, the modern pulpit is deathly silent when it comes to the

horrors of Hell. When do we hear preaching about the reality of the Lake of Fire or of the terrible wrath of God? Such themes aren't popular with modern preachers. They never have been. They are not popular with me. Other topics are more attractive, but preachers must not ignore the fate of the lost, because if we do, we run the risk of it also being ignored in the pews.

How we fall short of having the passion we should. How would we react if we saw a huge line of blind men walking towards a thousand foot cliff, and one by one falling headlong onto jagged rocks below? Wouldn't we put ourselves between them and the cliff? Wouldn't we implore them and scream at them to turn around? Yet we don't warn or plead with those whose fate is infinitely worse than that of those who would fall onto jagged rocks. Our passive preaching, and careful not to offend vocabulary betray our apathy and our unbelief. If we don't implore the world to turn from sin it's because we don't truly believe God's Word. We mustn't. We cannot be so deathly cold, so evil-hearted as to not care. We haven't let the reality of Hell sink into our minds and soften beyond words, and then it should be reflected in our prayers and in our preaching.

The bold and audacious evangelist went on to conclude that if you haven't got a passion or feel an intense burden to see the lost saved, you can be sure that you are not saved yourself.

Bottom line, it is impossible to have the knowledge of what you have been saved from (the vileness of eternal damnation in hell) through your relationship with Christ and not desire to have others come to experience the same life-saving eternity-transforming reality. Since it is impossible to be saved yourself and not express the desire to warn others, the desire to evangelize is a legitimate litmus test of a transformed life through a personal relationship with Christ.

- 3) Does He know you? This is the real test of authenticity of a relationship; it is one thing to claim to know someone, but the real test of a legitimate relationship is if the other party would also acknowledge that they know you. For example, if I were to ask you if you know Billy Graham, you would likely answer, of course, everyone knows Billy Graham, he is one of the best known modern day evangelists. But I did not ask you if you knew who Billy Graham *was*, I asked you if you *know him*. If I questioned whether or not you really knew him, the best way to find out conclusively would be to ask Billy Graham if he knows you. If he acknowledges that he knows you than I can be certain that you did indeed know him. In the same way, the best test of the legitimacy of your relationship with Christ is to ask Him if He knows you – which is the question that is implied in the Matthew 7 passage referenced earlier – how will Christ respond to you on the Day of Judgment – will He know you or will he say, “*I never **knew** you. Away from me you evildoers*”.

The Intimacy of Knowing Christ

To **know** Christ suggests a much more intimate relationship that we use the word in the common English language to mean. Take for example how the same word, the word “knew”, is used other places in scripture:

Genesis 4 (King James Version) (Emphasis Mine)

¹**And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived**, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

²And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

³And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

⁴And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

⁵But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

⁶And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

⁷If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

⁸And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

⁹And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

¹⁰And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

¹¹And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

¹²When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

¹³And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

¹⁴Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

¹⁵And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

¹⁶And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

¹⁷**And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch**: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.

¹⁸And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech.

¹⁹And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.

²⁰And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle.

²¹And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.

²²And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubalcain was Naamah.

²³And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.

²⁴If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

²⁵**And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son**, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

²⁶And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.

In all these instances, the word “knew” (past tense of the word “know”) is used to describe sexual intimacy between a man and a woman. Now because of our extremely adulterated view of sexuality in today’s culture it is difficult to even apply this comparison to our relationship with Christ without many questioning the appropriateness of the comparison; none-the-less, the comparison is the best we can humanly come up with; and after all, the Bible uses the same word to describe both sexual intimacy between a man and a woman and our relationship with Christ – consequently, I find no shame in using the comparison. Our relationship with Christ should be the most intimate of relations. It is a relationship, after all, that changes us completely and eternally. It is the impetus for *palingenesia* to begin in our life. There is no more intimate relation or relationship in the temporal world and the only relationship more intimate in the spiritual world is that between the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit – the relationship of the Trinity.

So, it is in the context of all this that I implore you to seek an intimate relationship with the Savior of the cosmos. For in the absence of an intimate relationship with Him, Christ will say to you on that day, “***I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!***” It is literally the difference between eternal life and eternal death.