

The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life (9)
Eternal Life is to know the Only True God and Jesus Christ
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Recapitulation

Brothers, sisters and friends, last time we studied eternal life in the kingdom of God; if you want to have eternal life, you have to be in the kingdom of God, which means that you submit to the kingship of God, you obey God's commandments. Apostle John defines eternal life as the life in Jesus Christ. If you live in Jesus Christ in the present age, you will have eternal life in heaven in the age to come; but if you don't live in Jesus Christ in the present age, you won't have eternal life in heaven in the age to come. Life in Jesus Christ in the present age leads to the eternal life in heaven. That's what we studied last time, today we are going to study deeper about the life in Jesus Christ.

Eternal Life is to know the only true God and Jesus Christ

^{NAU} **John 17:3** This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

This verse is in the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ before he was arrested and then crucified on the cross. Here the Lord says that eternal life is to know the Father the only true God and Jesus Christ whom the Father has sent.

Are you surprised at this statement of the Lord Jesus? If you know the only true God and Jesus Christ, you will have eternal life, it sounds so easy! Today we are going to study this verse to see what it means to know the only true God and Jesus Christ!

The meaning of "know"

The only true God is Yahweh (for more information, you can read the book "The Only True God" by Eric Chang on the Christian Disciples Church website www.christiandc.org). What does it mean to know the only true God and Jesus Christ? This is another important definition of eternal life, and if people don't understand the meaning of this verse, they would say, "I know God and I know Jesus Christ, so I have eternal life! It is so easy!"

The meaning of the word "know" here does not mean knowledge in our minds. To know the only true God and Jesus Christ does not simply mean that you know that God's name is Yahweh

and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he died on the cross to atone for our sins. All these things are true and wonderful, but these are merely knowledge in our minds; knowing all these things doesn't mean that you know the Only true God and Jesus Christ according to the biblical definition.

The original Greek word for "know" is "γινώσκω" (*ginōskō*). According to the Greek-English dictionary, to know someone means to make acquaintance with him; it means to know him in a personal way. And according to this verse, eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ in a personal way.

What does it mean to know God and Jesus Christ in a personal way?

But what does it mean to know someone in a personal way? Now let's study a Bible passage to understand what it means to know someone in a personal way.

^{RSV} **Matthew 1:25** but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

This verse is talking about Joseph and Mary, the mother of Jesus; the word "she" refers to Mary, the word "he" refers to Joseph, the husband of Mary. The original Greek word for the word "knew" here is *ginōskō*; it is translated as "knew her (Mary)"; but we see from the context that this verse is saying that Joseph did not have an intimate relationship with Mary.

So to know someone in a personal way means to have a close relationship with him. But how to know God and Jesus Christ in a personal way?

How to know Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal way?

What must we do to know God and Jesus Christ in a personal way?

^{NAU} **John 8:55** and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.

These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "Him" refers to Yahweh God; The Lord Jesus said that he knows God and keeps His word; here knowing God is parallel to keeping His word. If we know God we will keep His word.

^{NAU} **1 John 2:3 – 4** By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

The word “Him” refers to the Lord Jesus Christ; “to know Him” is to know the Lord Jesus Christ; and “to know Him” is parallel to “keep His commandments”; if we truly know the Lord Jesus Christ, we would keep his commandments.

^{NAU} **1 John 4:7 – 8** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

This passage says that everyone who loves is born of God and knows God, but the one who does not love does not know God. When someone truly knows God in a personal way, he would have love for people, because God is love.

From all these passages Matthew 1:25, John 8:55, 1 John 2:3 – 4, 1 John 4:7 – 8 we see that:

- To know God and the Lord Jesus Christ means to know them in a personal way, that is to have a close relationship with them;
- If we want to have a close relationship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ we have to keep their commandments.

What does it mean to have a close relationship with God and Jesus Christ?

Usually when we think of believing in God and the Lord Jesus Christ and obeying the Lord’s teaching, we think that God is high up in heaven with the Lord Jesus at His right hand, whereas we are down below on earth. So we cannot imagine how we can have a close relationship with them. So now let’s study more passages to understand this close relationship with Yahweh God and Jesus Christ.

1. Relationship between father and children

^{RSV} **John 1:12** But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God;

The words “him” and “he” refer to Yahweh God; “receive” is parallel to “believe”. It says that when we receive Yahweh God, it means we believe in His name. He will give us the power to become children of God. To become His children we need to obey His commandments, that's why we need power to become His children. The relationship we have with Yahweh God is one between father and children.

^{NAU} **Matthew 6:31 – 33** Do not worry then, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear for clothing?” ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Our Father in heaven takes care of all our needs, we don't have to worry about food and clothing, our Father will provide all these for us, we only need to seek His kingdom and His righteousness.

My relationship with God is even closer than my relationship with my parents. My parents loved me very much, but they did not understand me as deeply as God understands me. Whenever I was sad, my parents would encourage me, but they could not understand the reason why I was sad, yet Yahweh God understands and He can go deep into my heart to encourage me. When I encounter a situation I don't know how to handle, I would always come before Him to ask Him to help me; When I am weak, Yahweh God would grant me power; when I make a mistake, other people may laugh at me and insult me, but Yahweh God points out my mistake and leads me back to the right path. You can read my testimony “Goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life” on the Christian Disciples Church website.

That's the first point: Our relationship with Yahweh God is like the relationship between father and children.

2. We are brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ

If Yahweh God is our Father, then we are the brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ.

^{RSV} **Hebrews 2:11 – 12** For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying, “I will proclaim thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee.”

The term “he who sanctifies” refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, and “those who are sanctified” refers to us. It says here that we and the Lord Jesus are from the same origin, because we have the same Father, therefore the Lord is not ashamed to call us his brethren. Because the Lord is our brother, all true Christians are our brothers and sisters. Do you want to live in this big family?

3. We are friends of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus even says we are his friends if we do what he commands us.

^{NAU} **John 15:13 – 15** ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you slaves, for the

slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

The Lord Jesus lays down his life for his friends, and he says we are his friends. To be the friend of the Lord Jesus is a great honor and great privilege! Many years ago when I read this passage for the first time, I cried. The Lord redeemed me with his own blood, I am very happy to be his slave, but he said he did not call me a slave, he called me his friend! And he even made known to me everything he has heard from his Father Yahweh God.

Do you want the Lord Jesus to tell you everything he has heard from his Father? You may think that these things only happen in the Bible, but not in real life! Let me tell you, these things still happen today, the Lord Jesus still tells his friends many things directly!

Before Pastor Bentley and I went to preach the gospel of God, we both were working and we attended a church in Toronto, Canada. Every year our church would organize a summer camp, and during the summer camp there would be a meeting for question and answer. At the summer camp in the year 1987, before the question and answer meeting, the pastor asked me to give a sharing from my own experience. There was no time to prepare, and I was afraid that I don't know the Bible well enough to give a meaningful sharing, but I didn't dare say "no" to the pastor. I looked to Yahweh God and asked Him to help me. When the time came, the pastor asked me to speak, suddenly the words just came to my mind and came out of my mouth, those words were not from me, they were beyond my understanding, I couldn't stop them; I didn't know what was happening to me, I was very afraid. But when I looked at the pastor's face, he was very happy, then I felt better, I knew I didn't say anything wrong. Yet I still didn't know what was happening to me, I kept thinking about this incident, and I remembered what I had said in the meeting. Two years later after Pastor Bentley and I joined the full time training program, one day I was studying the full time training material and I discovered that it was exactly like what I had said two years earlier in that meeting. But at that time I had not studied the full time training material, then how could I know? I would say that the knowledge came directly from the Lord Jesus Christ just as what he said here in John 15:15, he had made known to me everything he had heard from the Father.

Do you want to have the same experience? Yahweh God doesn't show favoritism, everyone can experience Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ if you do what the Lord commands you. What does the Lord command us?

^{NAU} **John 15:12 – 13** This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Here the Lord Jesus says we should love one another just as he has loved us. The Lord offered up his life to save us; if we truly love one another, we should do the same, sacrificing our lives for one another.

4. We become one with Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ

We can also become one with Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

^{ESV} **John 14:23** Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

Here the Lord Jesus says if we love him, we should keep his word; then the Father will love us, and both the Father and the Lord Jesus will come to live in us.

^{ESV} **John 14:20** In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

This passage says that the Lord Jesus is in the Father, we are in the Lord, and the Lord is also in us. This means that the Father, and the Lord Jesus, and we all become one, we have unity with the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Now let's sum up everything. Do you want to experience all these things described in the Bible? Yahweh God is very near to those who seek Him. When you experience God's loving kindness and righteousness, you will see that to know God and the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal way is very precious! The money and status in the world cannot compare with the life in Yahweh God and in Jesus Christ. Even though we will encounter difficulty and poverty, yet Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ will live in us and help us, we don't have to be afraid. Then the life on earth would be like eternal life in heaven. Indeed the life in Jesus Christ in the present age is a foretaste of the eternal life in heaven in the age to come.