

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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The Importance of True-Knowledge

by Dan Trygg

“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with true-knowledge.” Romans 10:2

“I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the true-knowledge of Him.”

Ephesians 1:17

“...we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the true-knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,”

Colossians 1:9

“and [you] have been clothed with the new person the one being renewed unto true-knowledge according to the image of the one who created it.”

Colossians 3:10

“I pray that your participation in the faith may become effective in the true-knowledge of every good thing that is in us for Christ's sake.”

Philemon 1:6

In last week's study, we looked at a brief survey of some of the different words for knowledge in the NT. **The Greek language differentiates between ignorance, unawareness, knowledge-about things, knowledge that is the result of our observations, knowledge that is the result of personal experiences, and an experiential-flash-of-insight-perception-of-reality that is the result of revelation and recognition.** This last kind of knowledge is often translated as “true knowledge” in the NASB version of the Bible. As you can see, this list moves from the lowest levels of knowledge and awareness to the highest. **The word translated as “true-knowledge” is presented as critically important. There is a danger for us to “know-about” things without knowing them in a manner that will promote radical transformation in our lives.**

I don't want to portray this true-knowledge (*epiginōskō*) as though it was some spooky, hyper-spiritual thing, reserved only for super-dedicated disciples. No. It is not some weird experience, discovered only through visions, dreams and religious encounters. Not at all. It is a common enough manner of knowing that we all experience at different times in our lives about a wide variety of things, events and situations. What is important is to see that it is different than just knowing facts. It is also different than simply the conclusion of some rational process. There is another Greek word for that. *Epiginōskō* is experiential, in that it is personal and immediate, but it describes more the mental recognition of reality than a sensory experience. It is descriptive of when you suddenly “get it”, or when you finally grasp something that was somewhat obscure or out of reach before. That flash of recognition, or sudden insight into reality, becomes part of your larger understanding of life, and you can more easily and clearly see how things are, how things work, and how to approach things. In some ways, it is like a paradigm shift, an experience where you had been seeing things one way, but suddenly you recognize an entirely different perspective that seems to explain things much more clearly.

How is this word strategically used in the NT?

It is used of recognizing the truth that leads to salvation. Paul writes that God “wants all people to be saved and come to a true-knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). To the Colossians, he described how they heard the gospel and “truly-understood the grace of God in truth” (Col. 1:6). This is significant, because it is possible to have facts *about* God, and even a zeal *for* God, but not have a true-recognition of God's plan for salvation, or of the righteousness provided by God as a gift. “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation. For I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but not according to true-knowledge. For being ignorant of (or disregarding) the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not order themselves under the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:1-3).

It describes a growing true-recognition of who God is, and who Jesus is for us, a knowledge that we are to pursue. “I pray that God ...may give you a spirit of wisdom (skill) and revelation (uncovering) in the true-knowledge of Him” (Eph. 1:17). The work of Christ's Body is not complete “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the true-knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature person, to a stature measured by Christ's fullness. (Eph 4:13).

There is also a need for a true-recognition of God's will for our lives. “Why is that?” you might ask. “I thought His will for us is pretty well laid out for us in the scriptures.” It is true that His general moral will is revealed already. He will not contradict those moral and spiritual teachings and principles. There is more to our walk in Christ than attempting to live up to the teachings of the law. First, and foremost, this is the wrong focus. **We are to looking for the life and leading of the Holy Spirit within us,** not attempting to conform ourselves to an external code of ethics. Beyond that, however, the Spirit would desire to lead us in ways that are *specific* and *personal* to us and our lives. “For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the true-recognition of His will in all wisdom (skill) and spiritual understanding (to “send together” the

facts or clues), so that you may walk worthily of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the true-knowledge of God” (Col. 1:9,10). **Note here that this recognition of God (vs. 10) is preceded by a true recognition of God’s will, and a walk of obedience. Deeper spiritual insight is given to those who faithfully respond to the truth they already know.** Those who disregard God, or choose to ignore the revelation of truth that they understand, will become spiritually dull and insensitive. Those who are eager and responsive to the truth of God will be granted more spiritual receptivity and insight. Further recognition of God’s activity in our lives will come as we are more responsive to the insights He grants us. If we do not take risk to respond to a “God prompting” in our lives, we will never discover if it was Him, or not, ...nor will we know where that particular leading may have led. The flash-of-recognition of God’s will must be followed up by a testing-out-by-trial (*dokimazō*) to verify and to expand our understanding of His leading. A prime example of this is found in Philippians 1:9,10, “I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real-knowledge and all discernment, so that you may test-and-approve the things that are excellent...”

In order to learn to walk in the power of the Spirit, we need true-knowledge of who we now are as new creatures in Christ, and insights into how that works. “...you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in true-knowledge according to the image of your Creator” (Col 3:9,10). Paul saw this as what his ministry was all about, “Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to build up the faith of God’s elect and the true-recognition of the truth that leads to godliness...” (Tit. 1:1). We catch a glimpse of his approach in his greeting to Philemon, “I pray that your participation in the faith might come to be operational by true-knowledge of every good thing that is in us for Christ’s sake. (Philem. 1:6). Peter emphasized how this true-knowledge is the key to everything we need that pertains to life and godliness, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the true-knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; according as His divine power has given to us all things required for life and godliness, by means of the true-knowledge of Him who has called us to His own glory and virtue” (II Peter 1:2,3). **The key to this is to become partakers of the divine nature** by faith in the promises God has revealed. In the following verses, Peter gives some practical instruction for discovering and applying these promises in practical living. He summed up by saying, “For if these things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective (idle) and unfruitful in the true-recognition of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Peter 1:8).

When dealing with people who disagree with us, we do not need to quarrel, but prayerfully recognize that they need God to intervene to bring them true-knowledge. “The Lord’s slave must not quarrel, but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, and patiently-enduring-difficulties-without-anger-or-resentment, instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the true-knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will (II Tim. 2:24-26). **Note that freedom from the devil’s snare comes as a result of true-recognition breaking through the confusion of their minds.** In the following chapter, Paul writes about people who are weighed down with sins and led along by various lusts, people who are continually attempting to learn-by-instruction, but who never are able to come to a true-recognition of the truth (II Tim.3:6,7). Apparently, they are so deep into their darkness, confusion and impulsivity that they cannot grasp a clear picture of reality. **The true-recognition of reality is not the by-product of study alone, if one’s heart is not inclined toward wanting God’s will. A stubborn heart will not be open to God’s revelations.**

It is possible to resist the true-knowledge revelation, or to wander away from it. There will be false teachers, who reject the true knowledge and go back to serve sensual lusts (II Pet. 2:1-22). Peter writes, “For if, having escaped the world’s impurity through the true-knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in these things and defeated, the last state is worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them not to have truly-recognized the way of righteousness than, after truly-recognizing it, to turn back from the holy command delivered to them” (II Pet. 2:20,21). “For if we deliberately go on sinning after receiving the true-knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire about to consume the ones opposing God” (Heb 10:26,27). “And just as they did not see fit to hold God in true-recognition any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper...” (Rom 1:28). “Although truly-recognizing God’s just sentence-- that those who practice such things deserve to die-- they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them” (Rom 1:32). **It is clear from these passages that even the clearest recognition of the truth does not compel the human heart to obedience. Sin is not simply a matter of ignorance; it is caused by pride and selfishness.** Even as born again Christians, we can momentarily choose to resist what we know as God’s will. These passages warn us that God is not mocked. Those who disregard the truth to serve the flesh will reap corruption, heartache and pain. If we are truly His children, He Himself will discipline us to turn us back from the error of our ways (Heb. 12:5-13). If we continue to resist, we only heap greater consequences upon ourselves, and often on those around us, as well (I Cor. 11:30-32; Ex. 34:6,7; I Cor. 5:6-8).