

Knowing God – The Sufficiency of Scripture

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At the beginning of history there was a garden called Eden where everything was perfect. The first human couple, Adam and Eve, could ask for no more. A loving, benevolent Creator had orchestrated an idyllic domain for the only creatures created in His own image in order for them to simply be and to live a life full of meaning, love, joy and peace.¹ All of creation was clothed in beauty, imbued with splendour. It was an invitation for all of the human senses to partake thereof. Fluttering butterflies and flowers competed in vibrancy of colour. At night a black velvety sky was adorned with millions of bright shining stars of such magnificence and brilliance that man could only gaze in speechless



wonder. Majestic trees were laden with fruit of various shapes and colours, providing an infinite diversity of delicious tastes and flavours. A gentle breeze in the trees, birdsong and bubbling springs – all contributed to a symphony of sounds. Smells from flowers, fruit and plants, earth and water intermingled to provide an invigorating fragrance of life and beauty. Every creature was friendly and smiling, inviting human touch and caress – not only dolphins and cuddly little creatures, but also lions, elephants, rhinos and animals of all kinds.² There was no pain, disease or death, no tornados, floods, earthquakes or tsunamis, no dark things, like depression, anxiety or cancer, and no evil. Everything was created to perfection. The whole of creation radiated life, vibrancy, contentment and the glory of the One who created everything. But most blissful of all was Adam and Eve's personal

relationship with God, their Creator. As His image-bearers this relationship was indeed more perfect than anything else the whole of creation had to offer. In addition they were also entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of the rest of creation which to them was a most fulfilling experience.

Alas, this state of contentment and beauty did not last for long. After a relatively short time Adam and Eve became discontented with what they had. It may sound strange, but it meant that they were actually striving for the impossible, more perfection in a universe where everything was already perfect to the utmost degree. Sadly, they did not aspire for more perfection in the most precious asset they had, namely their relationship with God.

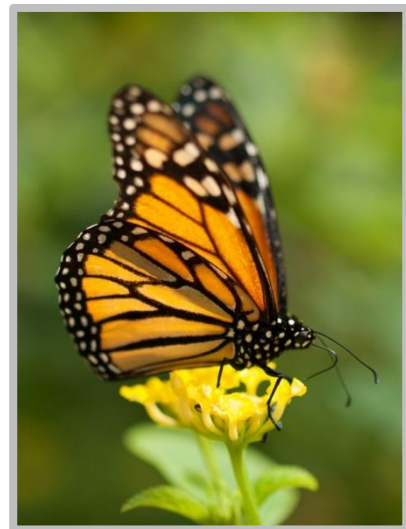


¹ At the end of each creation day God stated with regard to what was created for that day "that it was good." At the end of creation after he had created man He said "that it was very good."

² We do not know what the various creatures looked like and what they were called by Adam. However, we do know that they were created according to various kinds (Genesis 1:21, 24). For instance an *elephant-kind*, *bear-kind* and *cat-kind*, from which various species developed at a later stage.

That would have been understandable, but instead they became self-absorbed. Focusing on their own role and position the first human pair yearned to become more perfect themselves. Beguiled by Satan, in the form of a snake, they were no longer satisfied with being *mere* image-bearers and caretakers. They wanted to become equal to God. The creature wanted to become the creator by acquiring more knowledge and insight. This meant open rebellion against God by challenging His authority and position. As a result sin, death, disease, pain and natural disasters entered the world. Evil became a reality. Since man was creation's caretaker he took the rest of creation with him when he fell. For man death not only implied physical death, but also spiritual death and the demise of a perfect relationship with God – the most precious possession Adam and Eve had, a possession of immeasurable value. Other relationships were also damaged – man's relationship with his fellow human beings and with the rest of creation.

Although the universe has become imperfect it still reflects God's glory and it is still upheld by Him.³ There is still beauty to behold in fluttering butterflies, birdsong and majestic mountains. The rushing roar of a waterfall spilling over the cliff's edge or even the barren beauty of silent desert sands is still pronouncing the majesty of the One who created everything out of nothing without flaw or blemish. The agility and sheer power with which a humpback whale lifts itself out of the water remains an exhilarating, breath-taking experience while the migratory patterns of birds and butterflies⁴ remain a mystery which defies all human understanding. By God's grace man also kept his role as caretaker of creation⁵ although it now meant an imperfect caretaker of an imperfect creation.



Since our mental abilities and vocabulary became rather limited after the Fall it is not possible to imagine what it was really like in Paradise and how great the loss was that we suffered as a result of the Fall. For now it will not be possible to assess these things in a concrete manner. It will only be revealed to us after the existing universe has been replaced with a new heaven and a new earth.⁶ For the time being we can only know in an abstract way that what we have lost is something of immense value, something beyond description, especially our relationship with God.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known⁷.

Although we have been separated from God since the Fall, He has not forsaken us. By His grace he has left a longing in man's heart – a longing which can only be fulfilled by God Himself.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He also has planted eternity in men's hearts and minds [a divinely implanted sense of a purpose working through the ages which nothing under the sun but God alone can satisfy]...⁸

³ Hebrews 1:3

⁴ Monarch butterfly.

⁵ Psalm 8:6-8

⁶ 2 Peter 3:10-13

⁷ 1 Corinthians 13:12 ESV

Saint Augustine expressed the human soul's longing for God in the following manner: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee.' Even the entrenched British atheist and philosopher Bertrand Russell admitted, "The centre of me is always and eternally ... searching for something beyond what the world contains."⁹



But there is more than a hunger of heart. God has also provided a way to fulfil this hunger. He allowed His Son to die on a cross as perfect substitutionary sacrifice for mankind's sins. Everyone accepting this gift by confessing his/her sins and acknowledging Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour receives life everlasting. Not only this but he/she also receives a new nature by being spiritually reborn and indwelt by the Holy Spirit thereby enabling man to fulfil his inherent sense of purpose and to restore his relationship with God.

By believing in and looking forward to Christ's ultimate sacrifice King David described his longing for such a restoration as follow:

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek, inquire for, and [insistently] require: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [in His presence] all the days of my life, to behold and gaze upon the beauty [the sweet attractiveness and the delightful loveliness] of the Lord and to meditate, consider, and inquire in His temple.¹⁰

While the apostle Paul articulated his resolve in this regard in the following manner:

[For my determined purpose is] that I may know him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His person more strongly and more clearly]...¹¹

In His mercy and loving-kindness God actually longs for each and every believer to commit himself/herself to such a restoration.

You have said, Seek My face [inquire for and require My presence as your vital need]. My heart says to You, Your face (Your presence), Lord, will I seek, inquire for, and require [of necessity and on the authority of Your Word].¹²

In this life one's relationship with God can only be restored partly. Full restoration will only be achieved after Christ's return when the universe will be re-established to its pre-Fall state of perfection. And what a restoration it will be! Together with a multitude of angels billions of believers

⁸ Ecclesiastes 3:11 (Amp)

⁹ Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography*, George Allen & Unwin, p.303 as cited in John Blanchard, *Dealing with Dawkins*, EP Books, p.82.

¹⁰ Psalm 27:4 (Amp)

¹¹ Philippians 3:10 (Amp 1987)

¹² Psalm 27:8 (Amp)

will constantly praise and worship God. A symphony of ecstatic, spontaneous praise, emanating from each and every believer's whole being, will go up before the heavenly throne continuously.

But for now God has provided us with His Word, the Bible, in order to have a personal relationship with Him. The Bible should not be seen as a mere written manuscript to be interpreted by means of human endeavour and understanding. Such an approach can only bring about an impersonal relationship with God instead of something more intimate and personal. As the spoken Word of God, the Bible is alive, active and powerful¹³ enabling an intimate and living relationship between Creator and believer even in an imperfect, fallen world. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Word provides us with a revelation of God's character. Through the Bible we come to know God as a loving Father, Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. We come to know His loving-kindness, grace and mercy. But we also come to know Him as a holy and awesome God worthy of our respect, adoration and praise. The only way to be in His presence is by reading His Word, meditating on His Word, memorising His Word and praying His Word. The Bible is sufficient for knowing God for who He is and for having a personal relationship with Him. No extra-Biblical source, revelation, method or technique is needed. An intimate relationship with God cannot be achieved by means of mystical experiences, signs and wonders, visions, dreams or prophecies. Unfortunately, the post-modern society of today, which has become addicted to electronic stimulation, now also needs stimulation on a higher level through relativistic spiritual experiences. There is a great danger in experiences such as contemplative prayer, *lectio divina*, visualisation, slain in the Spirit or holy laughter. Such experiences will lead to great deception and may result in demonic entities revealing themselves while masquerading as Christ. The devil which is the father of lies¹⁴ and a master deceiver¹⁵ has not overlooked the believer's most precious gift, his/her personal relationship with God. For this very reason he is constantly trying his utmost best to mislead the followers of Christ by means of counterfeit experiences and relationships. In order to achieve this, the church has been flooded with a multitude of false teachings, practices and experiences. Some of them are so close to the truth that it is difficult to discern between truth and falsehood. Meditation, especially, has become a matter of great concern. Eastern meditation, in the guise of so-called "Christian" contemplative prayer, has already become a common practice in many churches. The believer of today should tread very softly when it comes to contemplation and meditation. All meditation should be on the Word of God alone and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit alone. The mind should never be emptied in order to achieve a trance-like state by using "Christian" mantras, breath exercises or similar practices.

Let us not be misled by and long for that which is of no value, by empty clouds which provide no relief to parched earth, but rather leads to spiritual harm.

Sola Scriptura, "by Scripture alone!" Let us return to the Word of God. Let us hunger for it, study it and meditate on it in order that we *may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His person more strongly and more clearly.*

For more information:

Contemplative prayer

<http://www.lighthouse Trails Research.com/blog/?p=10780>

¹³ Hebrews 4:12a (Amp)

¹⁴ John 8:44

¹⁵ Revelation 12:9

'Eastern Orthodoxy, the mystical trap'

<http://www.bereanbeacon.org/orthodox-articles/2015/6/19/eastern-orthodoxy-the-mystical-trap>

Holy laughter

<http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=16760>

Lectio Divina:

<http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=8368>

Roman Catholicism and mysticism

<http://www.bereanbeacon.org/new-blog/2015/10/17/catholic-mysticism-and-the-emerging-church>

<http://www.bereanbeacon.org/new-blog/2015/10/17/catholic-mysticism-infused-into-society>

Slain in the spirit

<http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=17658>

The inadequacy of experience

<http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=16393>

Visualisation

<http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=15272>

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