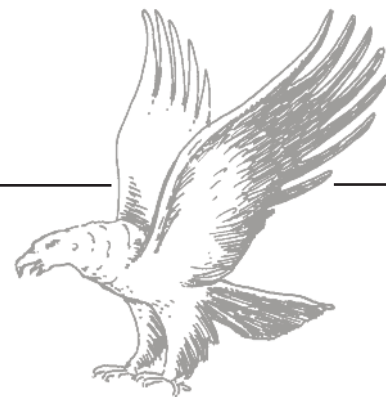


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



September 13, 2015

How Can We Know?

The Bible teaches that we can know that we are saved. But how can we have that knowledge without deceiving ourselves into embracing a false assurance?

“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him” (1 Jn. 2:3-5).



The epistle of First John was written “that you may know that you have eternal life” (5:13). The verb “know” (Grk. *ginosko*) is used some twenty times in this epistle. John was countering the influence of Gnostic teachers who peddled a corrupted version of Christianity that emphasized intellectual insight over practical conduct. John’s purpose in this little letter is to bring such pretentious speculation back down to earth, to re-establish the simplicity of discipleship for the common man. “Knowing God” is not achieved by embracing a system of esoteric philosophy.

The first thing that strikes us about John’s language is the idea that it is possible to know that we have a right relationship with God. Too many Christians

go through life with a gloomy uncertainty about their salvation (“I’m not sure if I’m saved or not”). God did not go to all that trouble to save us, only to leave us dangling over a dark ocean of doubt. We can *know* that we know God.

But *how* can we know? John says it is not by merely claiming it. If we say “I know Him” yet make little effort to do what the Lord commands, our boast is empty and we’re lying to ourselves. We are rank hypocrites, and deep down in our hearts we know it—we are “warped and sinning, being self-condemned” (Tit. 3:11).

Our knowledge of God is measured, then, not by what we believe or what we affirm, but by what we *do*. To know God means to live out His instructions in our daily lives. This impacts our speech, our actions, our relationships, our priorities—all the million things that comprise our life in this world. We *know* Him because we *obey* Him.

But this raises a troubling question. If knowing God is linked to our performance, then isn’t that the same as saying we can work our way into heav-

en? That we can earn our salvation by being good?

Not at all. John cautioned against that idea only a few verses earlier: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1:8). So we deceive ourselves if we fail to keep God’s commandments, and we deceive ourselves if we claim to keep them perfectly.

So how can we resolve this conundrum? What John is promoting here is *a tender heart that is sensitive to God’s guidance*. This person loves God with all his heart, and has dedicated his life to pleasing Him. As his knowledge of God’s truth grows, his obedience grows accordingly. He is never complacent about God’s instructions. So when in the course of his growth he encounters a new element of truth that requires a change on his part, he will not balk or protest; he will change his life to conform to God’s will.

How can we know that we know God? We must examine the deepest motivations of our heart. If “serve God” is not the foundation, we’re in trouble.

– David King