

How We Can Know God In A Deeper Dimension

'Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be tried and refined, but the wicked will continue to do wickedly and none of the wicked shall understand, but the teachers (of the Word) and those who are wise shall understand' (Daniel 12:10).

'Those whom I love, I tell their faults, convict, reprove and chasten them' (Revelation 3:19).

'My son (child) do not despise the chastening and discipline of the Lord; neither become weary or impatient with His reproof, for whom the Lord loves, He corrects, even as a father corrects the child in whom he delights' (Proverbs 3:11 & 12).

'Whoever loves instruction and correction loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid' (Proverbs 12:1).

'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 7:14).

'You should be exceedingly glad, though for a little while you may be distressed by trials so that the genuineness of your faith may be tested, which is more precious than gold which is purified by fire' (1 Peter 1:6 & 7).

'Behold; I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried and chosen you in the furnace of affliction' (Isaiah 48:10).

'Many evils (trials, afflictions, tribulations) confront the righteous, but the Lord delivers the righteous out of them all' (Psalm 34:19).

The chastening of the Lord is not a popular topic because many Christians believe they will have a 'happy clappy' life until God takes them home to glory. That concept of Christianity is far from scriptural, and we only need to read in the New Testament about how much Christians are disciplined in the form of suffering to realise this. Sometimes God chastens us severely, but that is to refine us and prepare us for eternity with a holy and righteous God. He is making us holy and more righteous so we can know Him in a deeper dimension. It is sin that separates us from God, so He deals with the sin in our lives, and the less sin we have as a barrier, the closer God is to us. Remember that He chastens those whom He loves and if He doesn't chasten us, then we are not His children (Hebrews 12:3 to 13). It gets worse; we are not to resent the chastening of the Lord, because if we do, God calls us stupid (Proverbs 12:1).

Many who are reading this text today are being chastened by the Lord. How we respond to His chastening may determine whether we grow up in God, or shrink away from Him. If we give up and don't see God's refining process through to the end, then we will be unchanged and may have to endure the same circumstances a second time. God repeatedly calls us to endure His chastening and not become weary. If we allow God's chastening to correct and change us, we will be able to declare His works, and we will receive a better reward in heaven when we get there. This is not a superficial matter, it is literally a matter of our life on earth, or spiritual death to those we are not witnessing to if we give up.

The enemy can occasionally give people a hard time, but God has provided a response that we can give. 'Obey the voice of the Lord Who speaks to you, then it will be well with

you and your soul shall live' (Jeremiah 38:20); that is, we shall live forever. We need to learn to obey His voice. There are about 600 different verses that declare God's holiness and it is His desire is for us to become holy, and He says that in both the Old and the New Testaments. "For I am the Lord your God so consecrate yourselves and be holy for I am holy; neither defile yourselves with any manner of thing ... therefore you shall be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44 & 45). "You shall be holy to Me for I, the Lord am holy" (Leviticus 20:26). "But as the One Who called you is holy, you yourselves also be holy in all your conduct, for it is written 'You shall be holy for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15 & 16). 'For God has not called us to impurity but to consecration. Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, Whose very Spirit He gives to you is holy (He is, after all, the Holy Spirit) (1 Thessalonians 4:7 & 8).

There is nothing that the Charismatic movement needs more at this time, than a full awareness of the holiness of God and His desire that we follow in His footsteps, and be holy too. None of us can be as holy as God is, but He gives us the strength to forsake that which causes us to sin. At this time, there is a terrible lack of holiness amongst Spirit-filled Christians. The theme around the throne of God is holiness. There are two scriptures that emphasise the unique holiness of God; 'I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim; each had six wings, with two he covered his own face, and with two he covered his feet and with two he flew, and one cried to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory"' (Isaiah 6:1 to 3); then in Revelation 4:8 we read how the four living creatures never stop saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, Who was and Who is and Who is to come."

Holiness is the unique characteristic of God. There are many other characteristics of God, like love, righteousness, kindness, goodness, strength, beauty and anger, but holiness is the most unique. We can look at people who don't know God, and we can see they have a tiny portion of these characteristics. They can show a measure of love, kindness or anger. Other aspects of God are: God is light (1 John 1:5), God is love (1 John 4:8 & 16), God is gracious, righteous and merciful (Psalm 116:5), God is beautiful (Psalm 27:4), He is a God of justice (Deuteronomy 32:4), but holiness is not possible without God's righteousness and there is no other source of holiness. People who do not know God do not know holiness. Holiness depends on receiving a revelation of God. It can't be explained but it is there and if we earnestly seek God, He will reveal His holiness to us.

How can we communicate the real fact of God's holiness? There is a total difference between righteousness and holiness. Many Christians are righteous, but how many understand the concept of the holiness of God? Job was always righteous, and was the most righteous man on earth at that time in history, and God Himself acknowledges that, (Job 1:1; 1:8; 2:3; 27:6; 29:14; Ezekiel 14:14 & 20) but after Job had a revelation of God's holiness, it completely changed him (Job 42:5). Twice, the Lord revealed Himself to Job in a whirlwind (Job 38:1 then 40:6) and we don't know exactly what happened, but it is clear Job had a direct, personal encounter with the Lord and as a result, was a changed man. After the whirlwinds, Job had no more questions and no more complaints.

We need to understand that Job was righteous and his suffering was not because of sin. The Lord Himself said it was without cause (Job 2:3). Many Christians have situations that take place, that are impossible to understand. Most of us ask the big question, "Why?" Well, the Lord didn't answer one of Job's questions so He may not answer ours either; not directly, anyway. We do have something that Job didn't have though – we have the Word of God to answer our questions. The only answers we can see in the Word of God is this:

When we go through deep trials, it is to purify us and prepare us for eternity; it is to bring us closer to God; it is to show us He can deliver us; it is to reveal Himself to us; it is to show us just how trustworthy and faithful He is; it is to bring us to the level of holiness that He expects of His people and it is to bring us into a deeper dimension of our relationship with Him. There may be other reasons, but these are the reasons we can find in the scriptures.

What we really need is a direct, personal encounter and revelation of the Lord. That is the only thing that will release our anxiety and quiet our questioning. We need to learn to trust Him. If we study what Job's friends said, they sounded good and they were very religious; but they had the same incorrect doctrine we hear preached in churches today – trouble never happens to the righteous and if you have trouble then you must have sinned. That is doctrine is so wrong and it is from an evil spirit! (Job 26:4) Trouble happens to the righteous. The only way into the Kingdom of God is through many trials (Acts 14:22). However, we must never lose our confidence in God. So what did God say to Job's friends because they accused Job of sin? God said, "My wrath is aroused against you and against your friends because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has" (Job 42:7).

How many of us have been accused of sin by people in the church after we have suffered a catastrophe in our lives? They just may be wrong about our suffering. If they are correct, we will need to repent but if they are wrong, it is they who need to repent. Job challenged his friends with this question: "With whose assistance have you uttered these words? And whose spirit came forth from you?" (Job 26:4). Just as Job's friends did, we can speak good religious words, but in the wrong spirit. Their accusations were not from God, they were from an evil spirit! God is not impressed by religion. What we need to do is draw closer to God and allow Him to reveal Himself to us.

We need to understand that God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8 & 9). Consider this one amazing fact. We need to look at how many people, animals and things God sacrificed to get His way with just one man; Job. And what is also amazing, that in Job 42:11, it says that the Lord brought all these calamities on Job just to get Job's attention. God sacrificed 11,000 animals and a very great body of servants, Job's ten adult children, his property and some buildings (Job 1:3 to 19) then in chapter 2, God sacrificed Job's health, yet he was righteous and innocent. None of Job's children had done anything wrong, but the Lord allowed them to perish. We need to get to know God's thoughts and His ways because God is the One we have to deal with. God thinks differently to the way we do; His values are different; His standards are different and we need to get to know His higher standard in a deeper dimension.

When God personally met with Job out of the whirlwind, that solved all Job's problems. Once God had got His way with Job, God gave back to Job double of all that he had. Job ended up with 22,000 animals and ten more children. Why did Job receive double the animals but not double the children? One reason could have been that Mrs Job didn't want to go through childbirth more than 20 times. After all, they didn't have pain relief then. Another reason was because the first ten children were not lost eternally, they had simply gone on ahead of Job. They were also righteous and we will meet up with them in heaven when we get there. Job and his wife will enjoy eternity in the company of their twenty children. That can be a comfort to those who have lost loved ones ... in reality they are not lost, they have simply gone on ahead of us. It is a temporary separation and we will meet them again, although losing the ones we love can be devastating.

What did God seek to achieve by putting Job through all that suffering and pain? God is totally just, faithful, merciful. The highest that God has to offer us, is the revelation of Himself and that is what God brought Job to. It took a whole lot of suffering and things that Job couldn't understand, but God was working through it all to bring Job to the place where God could reveal Himself. God is a self-revealing Creator; God creates and then He reveals Himself to those whom He has created. That is the highest privilege and honour that God can give to any of us.

If you have dreadful trouble in your life, just remember that God is working through your suffering to bring you to a place whereby He can reveal Himself afresh to you in a new and deeper way. The revelation of God is inexhaustible and we will go on learning more about Him. The revelation of Himself is the greatest blessing God has to offer to His creation. Everything God has created, in some way, reveals God to us (Romans 1:20). The Lord reveals Himself through his creatures but the supreme revelation is God Himself.

What does God want in return for revealing Himself to us? What is God looking for in us? What response does He want from us? In one word – perseverance. 'You know how we call those blessed who were steadfast and endured. You have heard of the endurance (perseverance) of Job, and you have seen the Lord's purpose and how He blessed him in the end, inasmuch as the Lord is full of compassion and mercy' (James 5:11). Jesus gave Himself on our behalf to redeem us from all iniquity and purify us for Himself (Titus 2:14). If we draw close to God, He will draw closer to us. We are told to purify our hearts (James 4:8). No matter what difficulties we endure, how traumatic or long lasting, we must remember this: God is always faithful. He will strengthen us and set us on a firm foundation and guard us from the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

How can we know God in a deeper dimension? By submitting to His chastisement and correction, allowing Him to purify us. Once God has revealed Himself to us and we are able to bask in His presence and purity, we become 'hooked' and want more of Him. It becomes almost like a thirst. That is when the things of this earth no longer matter because we are able to focus our spiritual eyes on the Lord of glory. That is when our suffering diminishes to nothingness and we live and walk in the Spirit. Increasing the Kingdom of God becomes the highest priority in our lives before anything else. Eternity becomes so real that we are able to fellowship with angels and really enjoy their company, knowing that once we are in heaven, they will be our friends. Once we get to that place in God where He is able reveal Himself to us, and have us respond to Him, we will be able to really walk in the Spirit just like John did in Revelation chapter 1 and chapter 4. Like John was, we too will be visited by angels, be taken up into heaven, experience heavenly things, learn secrets of eternity and have the joy of deep, peaceful fellowship with our Lord.

Amen and God bless you

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