

Basic Christian Theology  
Part Two  
KNOWING GOD

In our series on the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, We begin now with the most basic doctrine of any faith: the doctrine of God.

We could say that the purpose of our existence is to know God. When a person becomes a Christian, he or she enters into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The Apostle John, in his epistles, often describes the essence of a Christian as someone who “knows Him”. In John’s Gospel, Jesus, in his High priestly Prayer equates eternal life with knowing God. In John 17:3, he prays:

3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. (NASB)

The purpose and destiny of the Christian life is to know God and to continually grow in that relationship of love. Love and knowledge go together. If we truly love someone, we want to get to know them better, and as our knowledge of them increases, so does our love. We can also make a distinction between knowing ABOUT God and knowing God himself. These go together too. For even though our main goal is to know God himself in a deep personal way, we cannot really know Him without growing in knowledge about him. So while it is possible to know about God without actually knowing him, we cannot know God without ever learning about him and what He is like.

In our study of the doctrine of God, we will ask the question: What is God like? But first it might be helpful to answer another question, and that is: How can we even know anything about God in the first place? Through human philosophies and religions man has sought for millennia to discover ultimate reality or to know what God is like. But the only sure way we can know about God is if God reveals himself to us. Unless God communicates himself and his purposes to us, we can never be sure we know anything about him, or even whether he even exists.

The good news is that God has indeed revealed himself to man. Christianity is both a personal relationship and a divine revelation. The relationship is based on God’s revelation of himself, primarily in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible speaks of two basic kinds of revelation from God. One is often called “General Revelation”. This is God revealing his existence through

nature. It is called “general” revelation because it is universal in scope. All people have received this knowledge of God. Paul wrote about this in Romans 1:

19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.<sup>20</sup>

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.(NASB). See also Psalm 19.

General revelation, while given to all, is limited to knowing God’s existence and some of his attributes. It is enough to hold man accountable to God so that he is “without excuse”. But this natural revelation is not enough to save anyone. This is where the second kind of revelation comes in, which is the Holy Scriptures (See 2 Tim. 3:16-17 and 2 Pet. 1:20-21). The inspired Word of God will be our infallible source we will look to for the answers to what God is like. We will begin a study of God’s attributes next time.