**THIRSTING FOR THE SPRINGS - SERMONS BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**15. TO KNOW JESUS! by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."*

*John 17:3*

"THIS is life eternal"... to know Jesus. Do I know Jesus? Then I have eternal life. How tremendously profound must be the significance of this word "know"! What rich and vital content it must possess! We often profess to have knowledge which yet has no perceptible influence upon life. Our supposed knowledge of men has often no appreciable effect even in shaping our conduct, not to name the deeper result of determining our character. But here, in my text, knowledge implies life: nay, it is life! "This is life eternal, to know Jesus." You cannot have one without the other. This knowledge is not a separate or separable quantity, which at our pleasure we can isolate, and consider apart from life. Here, at any rate, knowing is inseparable from living, living is inseparable from knowing. To know Jesus is to live Jesus. "This is life"; to know is to live.

Let us note, then, that in the Christian Scriptures the word "know" has a far deeper significance than it receives in common life. In human relationships an introduction to another person appears to entitle us to claim that we know him. A nodding acquaintance in the street appears to establish a similar claim. "Do you know So-and-so?" "Yes; I met him at a friend's house for a few minutes a year ago." This kind of knowledge has little or no significance. It has no content. It is a mere superficies, a thing without depth. It is not implicated with anything vital. We might lose it, and its absence would in no wise impair the volume or quality of our personal life. Such knowledge and such life are in separate compartments, and have no more relationship than exists between the first and third class passengers in an ordinary train. Anyone who approaches the New Testament must leave that conception of knowledge far behind if he would enter into the interpretation of the truths and means of grace. For the peril abounds that men and women do take the shallow speech of the world, with all its impoverished content, and use it as their measure for the profound and sublime speech of the Bible. I sometimes wince at the almost careless way in which the question is frequently asked, "Do you know Jesus?" -- and at the almost flippant affirmative in which it is frequently answered. It is too frequently the speech of the street, the recognition of the common nod, which is suggested, and not the vital far-reaching speech of the Son of God. Let us use a great word greatly, and settle with ourselves that this word "know" is marvellously deep, and that no man has ever touched the bottom.

"To know Jesus" -- what does it mean? Here is a guiding word from the Apostle John: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar." Then how many of us know Him? "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not ... " Then knowledge implies obedience. There can be no knowledge of Christ without obedience. Without obedience we may have a few ideas about Him, but we do not know Him. If we are destitute of obedience, then that which we assume to be knowledge is no knowledge at all, and we must give it another name. Obedience is essential. What is obedience? Confining our inquiry strictly to the human plane, what is essentially implied in obedience? When one man obeys another it is implied that he subjects his will to the will of the other, and works in harmony with its demands. The oarsmen in our University boats have to subject their wills to the will of the strokesman, whose stroke determines and controls the rest. The oarsmen have but one will. That is obedience, a will attuned to the will of another, and without that attuning of the will no knowledge of Christ can ever be gained. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Let us proceed a step further, and again under the guidance of the Apostle John. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." Then how many of us know Him? No love: no knowledge! May we not slightly alter the former word of the Apostle, and read it thus -- "He that saith, I know Him, and loveth not, is a liar." It would be just as reasonable for a man without eyes to claim he sees the stars, as for a man without love to claim he knows the Lord. Without love we cannot know Christ.

What is love? It is indefinable, as indefinable as fragrance or light. Our descriptive words at the best are only vague and remote. But we cannot define a sentiment, we can sometimes suggest it by its effects, and this will suffice for our immediate purpose. Love is "good-will toward men." Observe, good will towards men, not merely good wish; willing good, not only wishing it! To wish a thing and to will it, may be quite two different things. Wishing may be only a sweet and transient sentiment; willing implies effort, active and persistent work. Wishing dreams; willing creates. Love is good-will, the willing of good toward all men, the effort to think the best of all men, and to help them on to the best. That is love. "He that loveth not ... knoweth not God." Then good-will is essential to knowledge of God; without it knowledge can never be. Now gather the argument together. No obedience, no knowledge! No love, no knowledge! To know Jesus, I must obey; to know Jesus, I must love. Therefore knowledge implies a certain relationship God-ward, and a certain relationship man-ward. I am to have a will that seeks the doing of His commandments; I am to have a disposition that seeks the good of all His children. All this is included in this most vital and pregnant word, "to know Christ."

Let us advance a further step. Habits are formed by repetition of acts. Much repetition creates what we very expressively call "second nature." As if the first nature had passed away, and we had acquired another! That which was at first almost unnatural, has now become quite natural. It began in discomfort; it ended in ease. Take the habit of walking. It began in great uncertainties. It was natural to creep; to walk was a task. But repetition of effort created the power of poise. The repetition of difficult acts resulted in fixed habits, and now we walk as easily and as unconsciously as we breathe. It has become our nature. That which begins in careful and almost painful thoughtfulness becomes at last a spontaneous and unconscious habit. Take the habit of reading. In our early stages a printed page was a very irregular country. We could not travel far without coming to apparently insuperable hills. Every letter was a conscious quantity, every word was regarded with curious suspicion. But repetition of effort induced a habit, and now we can read a page of print and not be conscious of the presence of a single letter, so absorbed are we in the mystic thought behind. Reading has become natural; that is to say, it has become a spontaneous and unconscious habit. Now, lift up the argument, for here, at any rate, natural law prevails in the spiritual world. In the spiritual world repetition of acts creates spontaneous habit. It is possible to so persistently subject the will to the will of Christ, that the subjection becomes an unconscious habit. We can so repeatedly bend our wills to His, that the inclination becomes perfectly natural -- the supernatural becomes natural -- and we do it as if by instinct. It is possible to do the will of Christ as naturally as we breathe. That is a tremendous ideal, but I am set to preach ideals. There is more than enough of low compromise round about us. It is well to lift our eyes to the hills, and this is one of the great heights, that a man can so persistently and determinedly bend his will to the Christ's that the inclination becomes permanent and natural, and he at last does unconsciously what at first was a heavy task. As for the other element in the content of knowledge, the willing of good to my fellows, the same great law prevails. If I determinedly and repeatedly will good to my fellows; if in learning the gracious art I am as painstaking as in the cultivation of any other habit, then the willing of good shall become a permanent disposition, a spontaneous habit, a fruitful instinct in my common life. Now again gather up the argument. To know Christ, I must obey, and obedience can become a spontaneous habit. To know Christ, I must love, and loving can become a spontaneous habit. To know Christ, I must will as Christ wills. To know Christ, I must love as Christ loves. To know Christ, I must have the habit of His willing and His loving. To know Christ, I must have the habits of Christ. And what is this but to say that to know Christ I must be like Him?

So are we driven a further step on towards our conclusion. The principle arrived at is this, that knowledge necessitates likeness. Have we not abundant proof of its truth? Two un-likes cannot know each other. Two men who are morally unlike each other may live together, and neither can possibly know the contents of the other's life. He may be able to name them; he does not know them. How would you describe pain to a man who has never experienced it? He cannot know it. He cannot even imagine it. Pain is only known by the pain-ridden. Knowledge implies likeness. There are women in our midst who can form no possible conception of jealousy. They have no jealous substance within them, and they cannot know it. Knowledge implies likeness. The principle has a wide application. To know you must be. To know music, you must be musical. To know art, you must be artistic. To know Christ, you must be Christ-like. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments " -- who has not the likeness of His will -- "is a liar." "He that loveth not" -- who has not the likeness of His love -- "knoweth not God." To have His will and to have His love, is to have His life, and therefore to know Him, just as He is, just what He is, our kinsman Christ! "This is life, ... to know Jesus." To know Jesus is to share His life! His life is eternal. Life eternal is just Christ-life. This is life eternal, to have life like Christ, to know Him in spirit and in truth.