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FAITH KNOWLEDGE

BY: C. D. COLE

INTRODUCTION

There are two sources of knowledge: human and divine. Human knowledge comes from the study of history and from research into the material creation. Divine knowledge comes from a divine revelation. The Bible is a divine revelation of things we cannot possibly know by human reason or scientific research. The most valuable knowledge is based upon divine revelation--knowledge based upon what God says in His Word. Romans 10:17, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

Divine knowledge is lost to us either because of ignorance of what God says or because of disbelief in what he says. The people of Noah's day did not know the flood was coming because they would not believe what God said through Noah.

Human knowledge of events is limited to the past and present--no man knows what a day may bring forth. And since God has not announced what will happen to any man tomorrow, nobody can predict with certainty the events of the next 24 hours. James 4:14, *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow..."*

But the things we really need to know about the past and the future have been revealed in the Bible. And these things we cannot know except as we know and believe the Bible. I want us to consider some things about which we could not possibly know the truth except as we believe what God says.

THE SUBJECT OF CREATION

How did this vast universe come into existence? The Bible is the only source of knowledge. Genesis 1:1, *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* Hebrews 11:3, *"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."* See also John 1:3. The only knowledge we can have of the origin of the universe is **faith knowledge**. Colossians 1:16 and 17, *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth,....all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."* It is an axiom, that is, a self-evident truth, that from nothing, nothing can come. So wise men have argued that matter is eternal; that there had to be something

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from which all else has come. The Christian replies that the universe did not come from nothing; it came from God.

THE SUBJECT OF GOD

Nobody knows God by reason or research, for God cannot be found or discovered. He must reveal himself. I Corinthians 1:21, *"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by*

wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." You cannot put God under a microscope to see what He is like. You cannot discover what God is by pure reason. When men have been left to their own powers of reason, they have imagined and invented many gods. The Romans had 12 major gods and many lesser gods.

But God has revealed himself in the Bible. His word tells us what He is. His word sets forth His personal perfections.

1. As to His mode of being, God is a Spirit.

2. As to duration, He is eternal, without either beginning or end.

3. As to His moral nature, He is love and light. And from these proceed His attributes such as grace, mercy, holiness, wrath, etc.

4. In relation to His creatures, He is self-sufficient, independent, and Sovereign in power and authority, incomparable and incomprehensible.

THE QUESTION OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD

This is the question of salvation.

1. To be accepted means to be righteous before God--to have "right standing" before His law. Acceptance is a familiar word. The applicant wants to be accepted for the position applied for; boy wants to be accepted by the girl he wants to marry; defendant wants to be accepted by the court and pronounced free from guilt; politician wants to be accepted by the voters. But none of these is half as important as being accepted by God.

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THE PRAYER OF FAITH

BY: C. D. COLE

Matthew 21:22, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Mark 11:24, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

The meaning of these verses is simple. They say that one can have anything he wants if he only believes he will get it. They speak of the prayer of faith. In Romans 10:17, we learn that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Faith presupposes a divine revelation. There can be no faith where God has not spoken. If God has not spoken about Jesus Christ there can be no faith in Christ. Romans 10:13 and 14, "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*" And so saving faith is based upon what God says about His Son. The verses before us do not speak of saving faith, for they were spoken to the 12 apostles--to men already saved.

Now the prayer of faith is based upon a divine promise. Suppose I want a million dollars. I ask God for it and I believe I will get it, what then? I am most certain to be disappointed, because my prayer is not based upon any revelation from God. Suppose I have cancer. I ask God to heal me and I believe He will heal me. Will my faith that He will heal me make me well? No, not unless I can point to a promise that He will. I believe He can, but I do not know His will.

In the prayer of faith we must distinguish between the general promises of God and promises made to particular people for a particular time. A general promise covering everything and for all time is Romans 8:28, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according*

to his purpose." When I am ill I cannot know what the outcome will be, because I have no particular promise from God, but I do know that whether I get well or die, it will be for my good.

Now the promises of the scriptures before us were made to a particular group for a particular emergency. These promises were accepted with miracle working faith. And miracle working faith was for men endowed with power to work miracles. By faith they could have removed a mountain into the sea, if God had told them to. We have no account that this was ever done.

In Matthew 10, we have the account of Christ commissioning the twelve. He gave them power to perform miracles and commanded them to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. They were to go out without money or provisions or extra clothes. This power was free and they must make no charge for using it, but merely depend upon the hospitality of the people among whom they worked. And they were to go only to lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now this was a temporary and limited commission. This was for the twelve for a limited time. We today have nothing to do with such a commission. Our commission is found in Matthew 28:19 and 20, where we are told to make disciples of all nations, baptize and teach them, with the promise God will be with us even to the end of the age. Neither is there any promise that we will be able to do these miracles if we have faith. As further proof that the commission to the twelve in the beginning was not permanent, we find in Luke 22:35 these words of Christ: "*When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?*" And they replied: nothing. Then he said, "But now if you have a purse or wallet, take it and scrip or luggage with extra clothes. If you don't have a sword, sell a garment and buy one.

Now this power to perform miracles was not automatic and mechanical. In Matthew 17 we have a case of failure on

the part of nine of the apostles. While Christ and three of them were on the mount of transfiguration, the other nine had a lunatic boy brought to them for healing and they fled. When Christ came down from the mountain he was met by the father of the boy who told Him about the failure of his disciples to cast the demon out. Jesus held the boy. And when the disciples asked Him why they had fled, he said, "*because of your unbelief.*"

to him.

Now let me give you the foundation for the prayer of faith today. In I John 5:14, "*...if we ask anything according to His will, he heareth us.*" The child of God may pray with the assurance that if what he asks for is in the will of God, that he will get it. He can have implicit faith in God's ability to do what he prays for. Philippians 4:6, "*...but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*" But he has no right to say that he knows God will always give what he asks for. One may pray with the feeling that he will get it, but his feelings might prove wrong. We cannot always depend upon our impressions.

We honor God by praying in faith that he is able, but we cannot pray in faith that he is willing, for there are many things He has not promised which we might desire. We cannot know His will apart from a specific promise. For example, in II Samuel 12:22, we see David praying for his baby; and in II Corinthians 12:7-10, we see Paul praying for the removal of the thorn in his flesh.

CONCLUSION

Prayer is going to God as our Father in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, with a desire for something, believing He is able to do what we desire, but willing to be denied it if it is not according to His will.

If we pray without desire, we are formal pretenders; if we pray without believing God is able to do what we ask,

we deny that he is the Almighty God; and if we pray without submission to His will, we cease to be supplicants and become dictators. We have no claims upon God, nor do we have the right to make demands of Him. We are only beggars before Him. And let us remember that He is wiser in giving than we are in asking.

FAITH KNOWLEDGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

2. There is no answer except in the Bible. False ways of salvation have come from not knowing what the Bible says or by rejecting what it says. Where the Bible has not gone, men have thought they must make themselves accepted by God--they must do something to merit acceptance. Where the Bible has been preached and men have disbelieved, they have tried to be accepted on the ground of works and merit.

3. The Bible says God accepts no man's person. The Bible says we are accepted in the Beloved. The Bible says no man can make himself righteous, for by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight. The Bible says nobody is righteous by his own obedience, for all have sinned. Men by nature are called children of wrath and children of disobedience--no hope for any man by the life he lives, for nobody lives a sinless life. The Bible says we are made righteous by the obedience of another. Romans 5:19, *"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."* See also I Corinthians 1:30. Suppose you break some city ordinance, and I pay the penalty. You would be righteous--you would not be brought to court and made to suffer the penalty--you would be righteous by my obedience. You might do something to show your appreciation, but you would not be suffering the penalty imposed by the judge.

The Bible says the sinner becomes righteous by faith. Romans 3:20, *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."* Romans 4:16,

"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." If anything is added to faith, then salvation would not be by grace. If the sinner does anything to make himself righteous then he would not need the righteousness of Christ and would be his own saviour. II Corinthians 5:21, *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

CONCLUSION

This is the whole truth and may be summed up in Ephesians 2:8-10, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

But this is not all the truth on the subject of faith. Saving faith is not the faith of a man who hates God, and only trusts Christ to keep him out of hell. Saving faith is the faith of a person who has been born of God, and who, because of this birth, has a new nature that loves God. I John 4:7, *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."* Galatians 5:6, *"...faith which worketh by love."* These texts we have before us are associated with this miracle-working power. See Matthew 21:21 and Mark 11:23.

To take these verses as the basis for the prayer of faith is to claim power to work miracles and the command to do so--such miracles as healing the sick, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, and casting out demons.

Much confusion and disturbance to faith has resulted in making these verses the basis for the prayer of faith. Several years ago a certain preacher was a sensation at the Murray Bible Institute. He preached daily from Matthew 21:22 emphasizing that failure to get anything one prayed for was lack of faith. He put the rest of us preachers to shame for our lack of faith. Some years afterward he quit the ministry and dropped out of sight.

George Whitfield, a great and good man, friend of the Wesleys made these

passages the basis for this prayer of faith. He prayed that his small son might become a preacher and confidently believed he would be called into the ministry. But the child died at the age of four. One can imagine his perplexity. This did not prove Whitfield had no faith, but it did prove that his faith was based upon a promise not made.