

THE OBSTACLE OF RELATING TO KNOWLEDGE PRIDEFULLY

I. THE GOD OF TRUTH

27He said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.” (Ge 24:27 ^{NASB})

5The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. ***6***Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ***7***who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” (Ex 34:5–7 ^{NASB})

5Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day. (Ps 25:5 ^{NASB})

5Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth. (Ps 31:5 ^{NASB})

10But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, And the nations cannot endure His indignation. (Je 10:10 ^{NASB})

16“Because he who is blessed in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Will swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My sight! (Is 65:16 ^{NASB})

- A. The Hebrew word for ‘truth,’ *emet*, is a derivative of the word *aman*, where we get the word “amen,” meaning to confirm, support, uphold, or express certainty. *Emet* is used 127 times in the OT and means firmness or certainty, thus rendered “truth” or “faithful / faithfulness” the majority of the time.

*Faithfulness is the quality that provides an appropriate ground for confidence, which gives support to trust on the part of those who depend on the faithful one. Truth is that firm conformity to reality that proves to be wholly reliable, so that those who accept a statement may depend on it that it will not turn out to be false or deceitful.*¹

11The Lord has sworn to David A truth from which He will not turn back: “Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne. (Ps 132:11 ^{NASB})

- B. Often in the OT, the word *emet* when referring to God, is closely joined with God’s merciful lovingkindness (Heb, *hesed*) in His relating to man. This highlights God’s enduring reliability and commitment to His covenant promises in spite of man’s unfaithful commitments; as well as shows His kindness in merciful love toward those who are bent to turn to their own way.

¹ D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 288.

- C. In addition to a description of God Himself and His relation to creation, the idea of *emet* is, in turn, required of men in relationship with Him.

¹⁴“Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. (Jos 24:14 NASB)

¹O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? ²He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart. (Ps 15:1-2 NASB)

⁶Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. (Ps 51:6 NASB)

- D. Out of this same word group, we get the Hebrew word *emunah*, which is largely translated as “faith” or “faithful.” The term applies to God Himself (Dt. 32:4) as well as His works (Ps. 33:4) and words (Ps. 119:86). *Emunah* is also used to refer to the lives of men relating to God, and characteristic of those lives that are justified in God’s sight (Hab. 2:4). The truth and dependability of God and His word establishes a way for a response of trust and fidelity from the lives of men (Ps. 119:30).
- E. It’s important to recognize the general categories of language associated with these ideas, as we turn to the NT ideas of “truth” and “faith.”

Hebrew (OT)	Greek (NT)	Assoc. Definitions
emet	aletheia	truth, faithful, dependable, certain
emunah	pistis	faith, faithful, trust, reliance

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

³“Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the LORD is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed. (1 Sa 2:3 NKJV)

- A. In the OT and Hebrew thought, “knowledge” means ‘coming to know’ in the process of things or experience. It is more related to a way of hearing (contra Gk. thought of ‘seeing’), and is directly connected to God. This knowledge is connected to the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Is. 11:2).

It is thus respectful and obedient acknowledgment of the power and grace and demand of God. This means that knowledge is not thought of in terms of the possession of information. It is possessed only in its exercise or actualisation.²

² Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 698.

The Christian view of knowledge is thus largely determined by the OT. An obedient and grateful acknowledgment of the deeds and demands of God is linked with knowledge of God and what He has done and demands. It is in keeping that this Christian knowledge is not a fixed possession but develops in the life of the Christian as lasting obedience and reflection. For this reason γνῶσις [‘gnosis’ – ‘knowledge’] is regarded as a gift of grace which marks the life of the Christian by determining its expression³

III. KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH IN THE WORD OF TRUTH

¹³In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, (Eph 1:13 NASB)

³We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; (Col 1:3–6 NASB)

³giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, ⁴but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God... ⁷in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, (2 Co 6:3–7)

¹³But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Th 2:13–14 NASB)

¹First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ²for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Ti 2:1–4 NASB)

¹But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ²by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, ³men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Ti 4:1–3 NASB)

²⁴The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if

³ Ibid. 707.

perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, (2 Ti 2:24–25 ^{NASB})

¹But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant,...⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Ti 3:1–7 ^{NASB})

¹Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, (Tt 1:1 ^{NASB})

²⁶For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (Heb 10:26 ^{NASB})

IV. EXPRESSED PATTERN VS ESOTERIC PURSUITS

A. Pagan & Gnostic Characteristics

1. One of the defining markers of Gnosticism is that salvation is brought about through the deliverance of man's ignorance by means of a secret knowledge; thus, appropriating knowledge becomes a mechanism of salvation itself.

These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down. And, he said, "whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death." – Gospel of Thomas, Saying 1

When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty. – The Gospel of Thomas, Saying 3

What you seek after (is) within you. ~The Dialogue of the Savior

If you bring forth what is within you, what you have will save you. – Gospel of Thomas, Saying 70

2. The glaring feature of this pursuit of knowledge is that it assumes deliverance can be reached from within, or in independence of an outside source of trust. Perceived master of his own destiny, man, in arrogance undertakes the task of self-deliverance through strength and intellect; as if this process could bring about the life he seeks.

B. Message and Expressed Pattern

The apostles were entrusted with a message and tradition founded on the Law and Prophets and based upon the suffering and sacrificial death of the Messiah prior to the glory of the inheritance to be given at the end of the age through the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Israel. This historical testimony of tradition involved both *a message and pattern*, or way of life, exemplified by Jesus the Messiah. Because faith involves a heart-felt

commitment of trust, as well as identification and participation⁴, an identifiable way of life results from knowledge of the message – repentance and trust in the gospel. The apostle Paul often appeals to and speaks of his way of life as a model of faith to communities he has established (1 Cor. 4:16-17; Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:6-7; 2 Tim. 3:10).

¹⁶Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. ¹⁷For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. (1 Co 4:16–17 ^{NASB})

¹⁰Now you (Timothy) followed my (Paul) teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra (cf. Acts 14); what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! ¹²Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Ti 3:10–12 ^{NASB})

V. PURSUIT, ENTRUSTMENT, PATTERN

In the first two Pastoral Epistles we see in Paul's instruction to Timothy the closest approximations of exhortation related to the pursuit of knowledge in gospel and a stewardship of it in accord with the pattern of faith; as Timothy serves as a teacher. He is called on to steward the entrustment given to him, as well as emulate the pattern of life that is consistent with the knowledge of God through the gospel.

³As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, ⁴nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. ⁵But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Ti 1:3–5 ^{NASB})

Love (cf. Matt. 22:37-40; Mk. 12:28-31; Lk. 10:27)

- Pure Heart – repeated defilement repeatedly cleansed away; forgiveness and cleansing for continual confession of sin.
- Good Conscience – honest self-evaluation of conduct of obedience rather than disobedience
- Sincere Faith – trust / reliance that is genuine and (lit.) 'without hypocrisy'

¹²Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. ¹³Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. ¹⁴Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. ¹⁵Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. ¹⁶Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching;

⁴ See more on this in "Righteousness of God: The Challenge of Faith" in John P. Harrigan, *The Gospel of Christ Crucified: A Theology of Suffering Before Glory* (Paroikos Publishing, Kansas City, MO 2015).

persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. (1 Ti 4:12–16 NASB)

³If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. (1 Ti 6:3–5 NASB)

²⁰O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”— ²¹which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you. (1 Ti 6:20–21 NASB)

¹³Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. (2 Ti 1:13–14 NASB)

¹⁰For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. ¹¹It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹²If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; ¹³If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. ¹⁴Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. ¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. ¹⁶But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, ¹⁷and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. ¹⁹Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.” ²⁰Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. ²¹Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. ²²Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. ²⁴The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Ti 2:10–26 NASB)

¹³But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through

faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Ti 3:13–17 ^{NASB})