

5087U

VICTORIA STUDY WEEKEND - 2004

THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE - THAT I MIGHT KNOW HIM

Speaker: Bro. Ted Sleeper

Study #1: This is Life Eternal (Part 1)

Reading:

Good afternoon to everyone! I'm very happy to be here with my wife, sister Dolores, and to bring with us, and to be able to share with you, as best we can, the love of the San Francisco Peninsula ecclesia, and I think it was quite some time ago, that we've had some of your brethren in our midst, and they brought their love to us, and we were quite glad to be able to share that.

We're going to take a look this afternoon, I want to share with you some thoughts that have been accumulating in my own head, over a number of years, thoughts that although still incomplete, I think what I have to share with you, I hope that what I have to share with you, will be of an encouraging nature. The specific theme that I want to deal with is, Jesus Christ is our Saviour; now those terms, if you were to say that perhaps to your Christian neighbour, they have ideas which that conjures up! They have taken the very thought of Jesus Christ the Saviour to the extent that they almost replace, in fact, in many cases do replace the Eternal One Himself and God is lost, but Jesus is somehow elevated and becomes God.

Or perhaps it is your neighbourhood that says, 'have you accepted Jesus Christ into your heart? by which they mean, have you had some kind of personal emotional experience? and perhaps for some it even goes to the extent, 'have you spoken in tongues? or is there some other outward manifestation of Christ coming into your heart?' That's kind of the Christian's world, but I don't know, b&s, whether we ourselves have done too much better!

Sometimes I feel, and maybe that's not your feelings, sometimes I feel we relegate Jesus to a postscript on a prayer, 'in Jesus name, amen'. Well, do you feel that Jesus Christ is a living Saviour in your personal life? Now I have to be honest, and thinking of Jesus Christ I may think of Him as a historical figure, now at the right hand of God; in a sense, passively waiting as God as the march of history goes forward, as God is working through those events, that will now culminate in a great day when He will be revealed from heaven, to which we all look forward to! But in the meantime, perhaps we're not too clear as to what the Lord Jesus is doing. Well, we may feel that Jesus is our Advocate at the Father's right hand, (and I don't know how you picture this) I have

pictured it at times, perhaps Jesus is kind of explaining to the Father what it's like to struggle with sin, and therefore, why the prayer of this individual is so important and needs to be heard.

Well, for me also, I have to confess that Jesus Christ is my Saviour has usually been expressed more in terms of theology rather than reality! Turn with me over to Philippians 3 and let's listen again just for a few moments to the apostle Paul as he becomes engaged on this theme about Jesus Christ. Look at verse 8 of Philippians 3 (oh, as I should warn you, this is a zero-tech talk that we'll be having through this weekend); I'm going to be making use of the best technology that exists, that has ever been formed or crafted; I'm going to make use of your imagination, so just be aware of this throughout this weekend, I like to engage your thinking and your visualization as opposed to what I might be able to put up on the screen. Anyway, back to Philippians 3 verse 8, 'But indeed I count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith. That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death, if by any means I may obtain to the resurrection from the dead'.

Now, do you get a sense that maybe the apostle Paul sees the Lord Jesus Christ a little bit differently? I know for me when I read these words, I get a sense that Paul's grasped something that I don't particularly grasp very well. For Paul, the goal in verse 10 is that **he may know Jesus Christ**; of course, that forms the title of these talks this weekend, and that he may **know the power of His resurrection**, and that he might **know the fellowship of His sufferings**. So there's something here that Paul is seeing as vital to his own religion, his life in the faith, and this is what I'd like to be able to share with you this weekend, because I have to confess in my own life, knowing Jesus Christ for me has been a lot more about the amount of information I could accumulate about Jesus Christ so I could defend His historicity, you know, the truth of His words than it has been about **knowing** this man. I don't know if that's the same for you but what I would propose and what I hope to be able to do this weekend, is to give you a sense of what Paul means by these words in verse 10.

As I've grown older, Clyde accuses me of not growing quite as old as rapidly as he does, but, no, we're close in age! But as I've grown older this is what I have experienced, I've experienced an accumulating burden of sin, because I've recognized my own failures over a longer period of time; you see, when you're young you don't see that, you just made your mistakes and moved on, but as you grow older those burdens of failures begin to weigh heavily upon you because you realize I haven't been the one I had wanted to be for my Lord! I have also struggled, perhaps you have too, from time to time, about the lifelessness of my religion. I say that in a personal sense of the faith that one embraces; the sense of lifelessness and sometimes the helplessness in my life, and I've wondered, 'what's missing in me? what's going on here? what's missing in the

religion of my beloved brethren that I should have these feelings? Well, it's all of these kinds of thoughts and issues that have brought me to a consideration over many years of this particular theme of knowing Jesus Christ, because it's helped me considerably, and I hope in sharing with you my reflections this weekend, it will help you! Alright?

So here's what I propose: today we're going to be looking at two of these issues in verse 10, the first is, **to know Him** and what that really means, and also **to know the fellowship of His sufferings**, (that will be class 3) today, and tomorrow we're going to pick up the remainder of this, and take a look at the **power of His resurrection** and that will culminate this weekend of **getting to know (I hope) the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour**.

Alright, now since you're fresh, you're feeling good, you don't have to think about having a nice lunch that's weighing heavy and the eyes are getting droopy, because you've already had that and you've come here in the crisp air and you're ready to go, I want you to turn your bibles open to John 17, because right now we're going to be confronted with some difficult verses to understand, and we're going to take time in this first class, to work it out and to try to see just what is being said. John 17, we have here these enigmatic words that Jesus speaks to His disciples. Verse 1, 'Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son, that your Son also may glorify you: As you have given Him authority over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as you have given Him. And this is eternal life, **that they might know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent**'. Now I want you to think critically now, verses 1 and 2 read pretty easily, 'Father glorify Me that your Son may glorify you; you have given Him authority over all flesh that He should give eternal to as many as you have given Him; and this is eternal life', and yes, you're saying this is eternal life but then you say, **that you may know Him**, what on earth does this have to do with eternal life, there's a disconnect here! I understand the first two verses but something doesn't quite make sense, 'and this is eternal life, that and that word 'that' a little Greek word actually is pretty important in trying to understand this. Alright, this little Greek word usually means 'in order that'(3754), as you can see in verses 1 and 2, 'glorify your Son in order that your Son may glorify you', alright? so it has this simple sense of this is what is done in order that this purpose might be accomplished and that word 'that' makes the connection between the two, and that's pretty straightforward. Verse 2 again, he says, 'You've given Him authority over all flesh, in order that, He may give eternal life to all those that belong to Him, whom you have given Him'. Alright?

That makes sense, but how does this make sense? 'And this is eternal life in order that you may know Him the only true God'. This is eternal life in order that, well, I don't know for you but in my mind when I tried to run those through my language filters and tried to figure out what was going on, it didn't make any sense! It might say nice words but they don't make any sense, I couldn't say I can do something with these words now! So let's take a look and see if we can figure out just what this is about. Could you turn with me over to John 6 and here you have a similar statement, well, not the same statement it's

different, but it's a similar kind of construction and it has our little word in it 'that'; he says in verse 29, 'Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, **that** you believe in Him whom He sent'. There's that word, then you say, 'this is the work of God, in order that you may believe in Him whom He sent'; this isn't quite making sense. Try this one! 'This is the work of God, **even that** you believe in Him whom He sent'; do you see what it's doing? **Even that** is saying the work of God is being explained by the second phrase, and this, in fact, is the other way in which this little Greek phrase is used; it's used to set two things in apposition, that means the first thing is followed by a second explanatory statement, as if to tell us, okay, if this is the first thing, this is telling you about that! So take a look at another example in verses 39 and 40; 'this is the will of the Father who sent Me **that** of all that He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. This is the will of Him who sent Me, **that** everyone who sees the Son, and believes in Him may have everlasting life'. This is the will of Him who sent me, **even that**, in other words, what follows that is telling me what the will of God is! and the will of God is that Jesus will indeed save those that come to Him. Look again in chapter 15 where you see this coming up, this same kind of construction coming up again; John 15 verse 12 he says, 'This is my commandment that you love one another, this is my commandment **even that** you love one another'. The second phrase is explaining the first one, alright! are you kind of getting the sense of this? So that if you want to know what the new commandment is, you look at the second phrase, 'loving one another' is the explanation.

Now come back to chapter 17, and you'll notice in verse 3 it's starting the same way, 'and this is eternal life', alright? so our minds have now been prepared because that's how all the other ones started and 'this is' and now you're going to get a word or a phrase which is going to be followed by that word 'that' or 'even that' which is going to explain what the first phrase is all about. 'And this is eternal life **even that** you may know the only true God, and Him whom He has sent'. So, that's interesting! I don't know if that throws you as it throws me, but how on earth is eternal life being explained by knowing God? Well, that's somewhat unexpected, unexpected because in our minds when we're thinking of eternal life, we're thinking of living forever, right? We're thinking of a quantity of life, but here it seems to be describing something to do more with quality of life, perhaps if you like, the nature of living as opposed to the measure of those days. Huh! Well perhaps it will help you to realize just to prepare your minds for what we're being told by the Lord Jesus, is to understand in the Greek world, the Greeks were very great about compartmentalizing everything in their thinking. So to make a separation between what is physical life and what is moral life, was quite normal for the Greek mind, this is way they could do some of the abhorrent behaviours that they practised, because they could make this wonderful separation between the two! In Hebraic thought, it is not possible to disconnect those two! Your way of life is as equally important as the number of days or the measure of that particular life, so the kind of living that you have is as important as the physical attribute of just being alive! And says Jesus in verse 3, He says, 'Not just this is eternal life, He actually says, 'this is **the** eternal life', as if to say, there is only one way of life which is going to be a manner of life that will continue forever. There is only **one** eternal life!

Now you remember Jesus in Matthew talks about two ways, right? there is the **broad way** and there is the **narrow or the straight way**; right? it's a constricted way is what the Greek is telling us. The broad way is a way of living, isn't it? it's a way of living that is going to take us to an end, a terminal point, destruction; and the narrow way or the constricted way is the way that will take us unto life that never ends. Two ways of living, each has a measure to it and only one could truly be called **the eternal life**, because it is the **Father's way** of life that's being set out.

Take a look at another example in John, John 5, I just want to demonstrate to you how Jesus utilizes this whole concept of life, not just being a measure of quantity but rather also a description of the quality, the kind of life. So here in John 5 verse 24 he says, 'Most assuredly I say to you, He who hears My word, and believes in Him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment but is passed from (literally) the death (as if that marked off one section of the universe) and passes unto the life (as if He's now creating another world, so to speak). Two ways, people are living in both of these worlds, but in one world Jesus says it's death, it's death because men will die in that world and perish, it's death because the whole way of life is the way of death. This world over here is a way of life, and therefore, is called 'the life'. Alright!

One last one that we need to look at in this, is over in 1 John 1 where you will see how strongly this way of speaking of the hope that we have in Christ Jesus, our hope of eternal life, John views it in a far bigger picture, he sees something much more than just the fact of living for ever. So 1 John 1 verses 1 to 3, he says, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled (are you when you read those words are you getting the picture that John is drawing your minds to?) 'That which we **heard**' what had they heard? what had they heard? it was the Lord Jesus Christ and His teaching, 'and we have **looked upon, and we have seen with our eyes** because we saw the man and we saw the miracles that He did, and we **looked upon** Him (a different word) because that describes when they saw Him on the cross; and a hand that **handled**'. 'Thomas touch Me and see, it is I'. Alright! So we're talking about the Lord Jesus Christ and John says, '**He is the word of life, the word of the life**', because verse 2, '**the life was manifested** and we have **seen** and bear **witness** and **declare** unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us!' We saw the life that God says is eternal in Jesus Christ, His Son; and that is the thing that we have declared to you, verse 3, so that you (all of us here, b&s, in Christ) may have fellowship with all those that are, indeed, in the household of the Father and share with the Son that life'.

One last little passage, 1 John 3 verse 15, just to emphasize this point, 'Whoever hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has **the eternal life** abiding in him'. So would you be willing to say that, in fact, this idea about the eternal life representing more than just living forever but really talking about **a way of living forever** is, in fact, what John is very concerned to get across to us as disciples and potential disciples. Also there are those that cannot have that life in them! because

what they express in their behaviour is antithetical to that life! Now, this is getting a little technical but hopefully you can see we're getting a little closer perhaps to understanding Jesus's enigmatic words; but there's one last technical matter that we have to take a look at before we can sort of step back from it and say, 'Jesus, what are you saying?' and kind of take a look at the big picture!

It has to do with the word '**know**'; now in the Greek, there are two major words that are used, I'm going to actually give you the names of it (you don't have to take notes on it) but one is 'ginosko' (1097) and one is 'eido' (1492); **ginosko** is a word which has to do with and this is Vine's Expository Dictionary, but it has to do with the inception or the beginnings of knowledge within us and the growth and progress of that knowledge. If it's in terms of human beings you can think of it as 'getting to know someone', so it's not just that I know something about you, it's that I've gotten to know you as a person, or you've gotten to know me and who I am, and that's the word 'ginosko'. So it involves this sense that there's some kind of a relationship between the individuals, the knower and the knowee, there's some connection there, there's some kind of intimacy of knowledge in that sense. I don't just know things about you, I know things that may disturb you, or what will make you happy and all of those kinds of things. So that's the word 'ginosko', then the other word 'eido' is the more technical word, 'you know, I know about your hall now, I've been here and seen it, I don't really know what goes on in this hall, but I know about it; I have information, I've accumulated information at this point about it! alright? and I may know some of you in that sense, I may know what you look like or how you dress this day; but this is just thatkind of knowledge, that's 'eido'!

So you say to yourself, 'okay, which word is it?' Well, it turns out to be the first word in John 17. So when you go back to John 17 and you let your minds kind of settle on that, and you try to let this sink into your thinking and say to yourself, 'What is Jesus trying to tell me?' You then realize that Jesus is saying, the life that the Son of God wants us to live (now think about this) **the life that the Son of God wants us to live, is a life of 'getting to know the Father and His Son'**. That is the **eternal life**, getting to know the Father and His Son. Now you may even think of Jesus, remember when He said, I am the way, the truth and the life, actually the Greek phraseology of that one, has the sense of I am the true and the living way; the way unto the Father? I am the **true and I am the living way unto the Father**, so in the Son was expressed this life, getting to know the Son is getting to know that life.

Well, that's helpful but we're still perhaps struggling a bit with how does this help me get to know the Father? alright? I can kind of know that on a human level, but how do I know this on this higher level with God and His Son? what does that mean? how does this happen? So let's take a little detour to the Old Testament and see if we can begin to understand the fullness of this word. As it turns out, the Hebrew use of this word 'know', is literally the frame for the Greek word that's used in the New Testament; in other words, as the Christians used it in the New Testament, as the New Testament writers used it, it's the Hebraic idea that is being utilized in this, so you need to get a grasp on this word. So let's go to Exodus 1 and we're just going to go through 4 or 5

little examples of the use of this word in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word, that is the counterpart to this one, and hopefully from this get a sense of what it really means. So Exodus 1 verse 8, and as you let your eyes roll over the context, you'll remember what this is about! A time had come, Joseph was dead, all his brothers were dead, the children of Israel multiplied, verse 7, and then we come to verse 8, 'There arose a new king over Egypt who did not **know** Joseph', what? didn't know Joseph! well, obviously the man is dead so how would he have known Joseph? Well, we recognize that piece of it; they didn't know Joseph in that sense - that's not what it's saying obviously. In what sense can it be said that he didn't know Joseph? He didn't know what this man had done for the whole nation of Egypt? and how he'd delivered Egypt and the very prosperity of the Pharaoh himself was because of the way that Joseph had created the system of taxation and the very greatness of Egypt itself, resided on all that Joseph had done, the man didn't know that about Joseph? He knew this! he knew the history but the problem is **he didn't know Joseph** in the sense of caring about the man. He didn't care about that man, he had no attachment to him and therefore, he had no attachment to Israel, he didn't care what happened to them, other than to exploit them.

Look again at Exodus 23, this will give you a little better feeling for the word. Verse 9, he says, 'Also, you shall not oppress a stranger, for you **know** the heart of a stranger because you were strangers in the land of Egypt'. Now you can recognize that it's not just the clinical facts about the idea of sojourning in another land that they knew; obviously, but think about this, these knew the heart of a stranger because they had experienced what it was like to be a stranger in a strange land. They had gone through those experiences! that formed those sets of feelings that allowed them to know what it was like for a stranger that came into their land and lived in their midst. So they were to act as a result of this, with compassion and kindness toward the stranger and the sojourner, because they knew what it was like! Ah, this is interesting!

Come over to Proverbs 12, look at verse 10, he says, 'A righteous man regards the life of his animal; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel' , now mine says in the NKJ that I'm reading from, I think KJV probably says 'know', it does, okay, good! So verse 10 says, 'a righteous man **knows** the life of the animal'. Now look, obviously a farmer who works with animals knows the facts about his animals, sure, he does! but that's not what the word is telling us; it's not that he knew the information in details about how hard his animal may have been working, this man **knew** what the life of the beast was because he himself had been a labourer and was labouring hard on the earth along with his animal. He shared the experience of what it was like to work hard, and therefore, he knew the heart of his beast, he **knew the heart of his beast**, and therefore, was going to be disposed to compassion. But the other man, the wicked, their passions are cruel because they shut off all feeling; they don't care, they beat the beast and they do whatever they do to it because they don't care, there's no connection there! they don't know their beast in that sense. Alright?

Another one in Proverbs 14 verse 10, this one I think you'll relate to very well. Verse 10, 'the heart **knows its own bitterness**, and a stranger does not share its joy'. That's true,

isn't it? you know how we often say, 'you don't know what I'm going through' (young people say this, I teach, so I hear that; Dolores is a counsellor in high school, she hears this) 'you don't know what I'm experiencing you don't know what I'm going through!', right? What they're saying is you've never experienced what I've experienced, so how can you give me some advice?' The heart knows its own bitterness and a stranger does not share its joy'. You only get to know someone when you have shared their experiences, when you've gone through similar circumstances; often times, you know, the kids in my classroom well, they will talk with each other especially you know ones that have major problems, they tend to congregate together because they understand each other. If it's broken up families, and all of the devastation that goes with that, they're all coming from the same experience, so they try to help each other because of it; the heart knows its own bitterness and also those who have shared in that experience can know it and therefore, be of help.

So where does that bring us? well, it brings us to this point, that to know someone is not just to accumulate information about an individual, but it's to **share** the experiences of another. So when we have gotten to know someone, it means because we've had these shared experiences, there is a certain level of sympathy and concern that is being forged through those experiences, right? and in the forging of those circumstances, there's an attachment that's being created to that other person. So if something happens to them, because we know what they're going through, we're there! we're there to either help or provide whatever comfort that we can! **we're sensitive to it**; for someone else who doesn't know, they just walk by, they don't see it. We see it because we've shared it with them and so that attachment is there.

So brethren and sisters, the use of the word '**know**' is not mistaken when it occurs in its very first place in the bible and that's in Genesis 4; 'Adam **knew** his wife Eve', because in the intimacy of that relationship, where having expressed the fullness of this idea of those who share common experiences and are bonded together in this common bond that holds them together for their lives, alright? because there's this act of sympathy and empathy that is flowing between them and sympathetic attachment to each other.

Well, that's pretty good! I've given you a little extra time, Gordon. We're going to stop right there and have a hymn and then we're going to have a break, because I want you to try and digest this a bit and when we come back from our break, we're then going to go a little deeper into this whole idea about 'this is eternal life-getting to know the Father and His Son'.