

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Four Points Of Knowledge

C. H. Mackintosh

In Deuteronomy 8:1-9 we have four valuable points of knowledge connected with our walk through the wilderness: 1. the knowledge of ourselves; 2. the knowledge of God; 3. the knowledge of our relationship; and 4. the knowledge of our hope.

1. *The Knowledge Of Self.* “And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, *to know what was in your heart*, whether you would keep His commandments or not” (Deut. 8:2). Here is a wondrous point of knowledge. Who can utter it? Who can penetrate the depths of a human heart? Who can tell its windings and labyrinths? The details of a wilderness life tend to bring out a vast deal of the evil that is in us. At our first starting upon our Christian career, we are apt to be so occupied with the present joy of deliverance that we know but very little of the real character of nature. It is as we get on, from stage to stage of our desert course, that we become acquainted with self.

2. *The Knowledge Of God.* “So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, *that he might make you know* that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut. 8:3). We are not to suppose that, as we grow in self-knowledge, our joy must decline. Quite the opposite. This would make our joy depend upon ignorance of self, whereas it really depends upon the knowledge of God. In point of fact, as the believer advances in the knowledge of himself, his joy becomes deeper and more solid, inasmuch as he is led more thoroughly out of, and away from, himself, to find his sole object in Christ. He learns that nature’s total ruin is not merely a true doctrine of the Christian faith, but a deep reality in his own experience. He also learns that divine grace is a reality, that salvation is a reality. In a word, he learns the depth, the fullness, the power, the application of God’s gracious resources.

3. *The Knowledge Of Our Relationship.* “So You Should Know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord

your God chastens you” (Deut. 8:5). This accounts for all. The hunger and the food; the thirst and the water; the trackless desert and the guiding pillar; the toil and the refreshment; the sickness and the healing—all tell of the same thing, a Father’s hand, a Father’s heart. It is well to remember this, “lest we be weary and faint in our minds” (Heb. 12:3). An earthly father will have to take down the rod of discipline, as well as to imprint the kiss of affection—to administer the rebuke as well as express his approval; to chasten as well as minister supplies. Thus it is with our heavenly Father. All His dealings flow out of that marvellous relationship in which He stands towards us. When we walk with Him, we are happy; when we lean on Him, we are strong; and when we imitate Him, we are practically holy and gracious.

4. *The Knowledge Of Our Hope.* “For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills” (Deut. 8:7). Finally in the midst of all the exercises, the trials, the conflicts, and even the mercies and privileges of the wilderness, we must keep the eye steadily fixed on that which lies before us. The joys of the kingdom are to fill our hearts, and to give vigor and buoyancy to our steps, as we pass across the desert. We are called to cherish the hope of glory—a hope which will never make ashamed. When the sand of the desert tries us, let the thought of Canaan cheer us. Let us dwell upon the “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4). *

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The Ministry Of An Elder Or Overseer

1 Peter 5:1-4

1. **The Responsibility Of The Ministry** - “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers” (1 Pet. 5:2). “Tend - nurture, guard, guide—the flock of God that is your responsibility” (Amplified). There is no suggestion here of a clerical order ruling arbitrarily over the laity. These elders were mature, godly men, upon whom rested the responsibility of watching over the souls of believers, as those for whom they must give an account. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account” (Heb. 13:17). Peter links himself with them, “who am also an elder.” If Peter was ever a Pope he never knew it! He took his place as one with his elder-brethren in sharing the ministry for the edification of the saints, even though he was one of the original twelve. He admonishes the elders to feed, not fleece, “the flock of God which is among you.” They were to feed the people by ministering the truth of God as made known in His holy Word. (H. A. Ironside)

2. **The Motivation Of The Ministry** - “Not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly” (1 Pet. 5:2). “Not by coercion or constraint but willingly; not dishonorably motivated by the advantages and profits (belonging to the office) but eagerly and cheerfully” (Amplified). If it is undertaken as the result of strong pressure brought to bear on him, or for any reward which may be offered, the shepherd does not fulfill the ideal of this passage. None of God’s soldiers are mercenaries or pressed men; they are all volunteers. We must have a shepherd’s heart, if we would do a shepherd’s work. Nor is this love merely the liking which may come from the flesh, or be dictated by the inclination of the soul. There must be the love which is akin to the love of the Chief Shepherd Himself. A love which can endure without return or thanks; which can grow where there is scarcely any soil; and which clings to the least lovely and thankful. That love is only shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (F. B. Meyer)

3. **The Character Of The Ministry** - “Not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3). “Not (as arrogant, dictatorial and overbearing persons) domineering over those in your charge, but being examples—patterns and models of Christian living—to the flock” (Amplified). The Spirit also no doubt foresaw that some would be lording it over God’s flocks, and so forewarns in this verse. Many today take the position of rulers, and the people just must knuckle down to their ways. They well nigh

demand worship as well as obedience. The elders are to care for God’s sheep, but not have dominion over them. There is nothing worse than a domineering man assuming a high place in the church. We have seen shepherds in our country driving the sheep with sticks and stones. In the eastern lands, he leads them, calling them by name, and they follow him. You cannot drive God’s sheep. You will just drive them away. You must lead them. Diotrophes in 3 John 9 is an example of one who lorded it over the flock of God. John speaks scathingly of him. He loved to have the preeminence. He would not receive John into the church, and spoke against him with malicious words. He also refused to receive others, and cast them out of the church. Such there are today, too. We are not to lord it over one another, but to serve. The elders should not drive, but show the way to the sheep. They should be examples in word and deed. (J. Nieboer)

4. **The Reward Of The Ministry** - “When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Pet. 5:4). “And (then) when the Chief Shepherd is revealed you will win the conqueror’s crown of glory” (Amplified). It is a work that requires much labor, often gives much sorrow, and yields little present return. People have much interest in the evangelist’s work, and there is a present joy in seeing sinners saved, but the shepherd’s work is more arduous and often little in it to cheer. It is because of this that the “crown of glory” with its dazzling brightness, is promised from the Chief Pastor’s own hand. He knows all the toil, has seen all the tears, and fully estimated all the labors spent upon the sheep for whom He gave His life. That crown of unfading glory will tell to all how much He appreciated the service of which men thought so little. (William Lincoln) *

“If a man DESIRES the position of an overseer, he desires a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1),

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Gideon - A Mighty Man Of Valor

Peter J. Pell

“And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!” (Judges 6:12) The sculptor does not think of the rude, rough stone before him in terms of what it is, but in terms of what he is going to make it. “Little is much when God is in it.” God was much, Gideon little; but in the little that Gideon was God saw possibilities. Let us now consider some of the things in Gideon which made him a vessel which God could use.

1. GIDEON WAS AN OVERCOMER. “...Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.” (Judges 6:11) Because Israel sinned God allowed the Midianites to destroy the increase of the earth. But Gideon overcame; he would not surrender his God-given portion. “The wheat” speaks of Christ the Food of His people. Satan will do his utmost to rob us of “the wheat” leaving our souls “dried away” and our strength gone and “the meal offering” missing from the table of the Lord. Gideon had reserved a portion out of the hands of the Midianites.

2. GIDEON WAS UNSELFISH. “O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?” (Judges 6:13) He could not think of himself apart from all the people of God. He quickly changes the “you” to “us” as he answers the angel. “If God is with me,” he reasons, “He must be with all His people.” He can only think of himself as a part of the whole. The divided condition of the church has in no sense altered the truth that there is one body and that we are members one of another.

3. GIDEON HAD AN EXERCISED HEART. Gideon cared. “Oh, my Lord,” he said, “If the Lord is with us, why then is all this befallen us?” He had a heart for the people of God. He had contrasted their present condition with their past triumphs. As he read the pages of their former glory, he knew the secret was the fact of Jehovah being with them. And is there not an echo reaching us today? Are we not tempted to ask the question, “Can it be possible that God the Holy Spirit is in the Church when at the same time the Church is so worldly and so divided in strife?” We read the pages of her former glory, and we know the secret—the presence and power of the Spirit of God. We are assured of His continued presence. Then why the present condition? May God exercise our hearts to seek His face!

4. GIDEON HAD THE SECRET OF POWER. “Then the Lord turned to him and said, Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?” (Judges 6:14) Because Gideon recog-

nized God in it all, there was hope. True, the situation was extremely dark, and Gideon himself was utterly helpless; but, while Gideon had no strength, Jehovah had strength for him. That was the secret made known to him. Have we forgotten that lesson? Is it therefore that the Church is weak before Her foes? “Little strength” (Rev. 3:8) would cling to the mighty “I Am.”

5. GIDEON WAS A HUMBLE MAN. “So he said to Him, O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” (Judges 6:15) Gideon had learned his nothingness. Such humility is not the way of the world, nor is it the spirit of the age. How much better it is to humble ourselves before God that He may exalt us in due time, than to boast, as Laodicea did, and then to be humiliated by God’s exposure of our true condition (1 Pet. 5:6; Rev. 3:17).

6. GIDEON WAS A DEPENDENT MAN. Gideon had no resources of his own. Surely his threshing instrument was a poor thing to look to as the “wherewith” to go against the host of the Midianites. He needed the “Lord of hosts” for that. Thus, being insufficient in himself, he was cast upon God. When we consider ourselves competent and attempt great things, we come to grief. God makes our failures so apparent that they are ridiculous. Almost without exception we can trace our failures to self-confidence. To prove God’s all-sufficiency we must drop into our own absolute nothingness.

7. GIDEON WAS THE MAN GOD NEEDED. “And the Lord said to him. Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.” (Judges 6:16) God was looking for a man to lead His people against the Midianites. What kind of a man did he seek? A fearless, powerful man, with muscles of iron and nerves of steel? Nay, “but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.” (Isa. 66:2) Such a man was Gideon.

Let us take this lesson to heart as we consider the call of Gideon. If we abide beneath the shadow of the cross, feed upon the Word of God, have a heart for the people of God, know that power divine is made perfect in weakness and humbly wait upon God, we too shall be used by God for the blessing of His own and the salvation of precious souls. Let us never forget that “little is much when God is in it.” *

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Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved
Acts 16:31

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The Responses Of Christ To Faith

Matthew Henry—William MacDonald—August VanRyn

Christ always responds to those have faith in Him. Here are four examples of His responses.

1. JESUS SAW THEIR FAITH. “When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven you.” (Mk. 2:5) He saw their faith; perhaps not so much his, for his distemper hindered him from the exercise of faith, but theirs that brought him. He commended their faith, because they did bring their friend through so much difficulty. True faith and strong faith may work variously, conquering sometimes the objections of reason, sometimes those of sense; but, however manifested, it shall be accepted and approved by Jesus Christ. (Matthew Henry)

2. JESUS FELT HER FAITH. “Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, when she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, Who touched My clothes?” (Mk. 5:25,27,30) He needed not that any should inform him, for he had presently his eye upon her. As secret acts of sin, so secret acts of faith, are known to the Lord Jesus, and are under His eye. If believers derive virtue from Christ ever so closely, He knows it, and is pleased with it. (Matthew Henry)

3. JESUS TESTED HIS FAITH. “...Jesus said to Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.” (Jn. 6:5,6) The Lord was going to teach Philip a very valuable

lesson and test his faith. Jesus Himself knew that He would perform a miracle to feed this great crowd of people. But did Philip realize that He was able to do this? Was Philip’s faith great or was it small? Apparently, Philip’s faith did not rise to very great heights. (William MacDonald)

4. JESUS MARVELED AT HIS FAITH. “And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die.” He said to Jesus, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof....But say the word, and my servant will be healed. When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him...” (Lk. 7:2,6,7,9) The centurion’s Jewish friends declare he is well worthy that the Lord should heal his servant. But the man himself flatly contradicts them and declares that he is not worthy at all. I am sure our Lord appreciated this genuine humility. Ah, it is those who confess their own utter unworthiness whom the Lord delights to bless. The centurion had the right conception. No matter how well we might stand with our neighbors and friends; no matter how worthy we are in their sight; we have no standing before God except on the ground of our unworthiness alone. And still higher rises this man’s faith. “Just speak the word and my servant shall be healed.” No wonder Jesus marveled at his faith, for, while this man confessed his own unworthiness, he also recognized the infinite worth of the Lord Jesus. How it must have gladdened the heart of our Savior to find one who recognized His glory and greatness and confessed his own worthlessness. (August Van Ryn) *

But without faith it is impossible to please him...

(Heb. 11:6)