

KNOWLEDGE

by T. E. Cramblet

TEXT — "My people are destroyed for lack, of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I also will reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me ; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." — Hos. 4.: 6.

Willful ignorance of priest and people made the time of Hosea the darkest period in the history of Israel. Every claim of the true religion was disregarded; every obligation of the law was relaxed. The licentious and cruel rites of idolatry were practiced not alone in the dark recesses of the groves, but even in the most public place. Baal not only rivaled Jehovah, he even surpassed the true God in the affections of the people. Bribery and impiety filled the lives of princes and priests, and, as might be expected, might triumphed over right. Pusey, speaking of this dark period, says: "Remonstrance was useless; the knowledge of God was willfully rejected; the people hated rebuke; the more they were called, the more they refused; they forbade their prophets to prophesy; and their false prophets hated God greatly. All attempts to heal this disease only showed its incurableness."

I. THE VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE IN GENERAL

We are dependent upon knowledge for happiness. Ignorance is connected with every evil that afflicts mankind. Knowledge is life, light and health. Knowledge is power. It opens every gateway to human progress.

The French nation went to Panama with ships, engineers, workmen, machinery, supplies, and every other seeming need, but did not take the necessary steps to prevent fever. They were defeated and destroyed for lack of knowledge. These Frenchmen did not know the habits, the disease and death carrying powers of the troublesome mosquito. It was this seemingly small lack of knowledge which more than anything else cheated France out of the glory and profit of giving to the world the Panama Canal. It remained for our Government to win this prize. The United States carried to Panama all that France did, and, in addition to this, knowledge of the habits and disease-breeding powers of the mosquito. This knowledge made the camps of the Panama workmen as healthy as similar camps anywhere.

Knowledge increases one's ability to serve his fellow man, his country and his God. We are indebted to knowledge for our inventions, our institutions and every other material good. Intellect is a talent from God, and this should be so used by each individual that its rightful increase may be procured. No gift from God is to be tied up in a napkin and hid in the earth.

II. THE OBLIGATION TO KNOW GOD AND GOD'S WILL

Not only was the priest condemned, the people generally were held responsible. They did not want to know. They were willing to forget. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true

God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

The servant who knew not his lord's will was beaten with few stripes. His sin evidently consisted in his failure to make the effort to know what his lord required of him. The very first obligation of a servant is to know his lord's will. "Thou hast rejected knowledge" is the charge brought by the prophet against these ancient apostates. They loved darkness rather than light. It is a grave sin to deliberately and knowingly forsake God and the worship of his sanctuary, and to make common cause with ungodly men and anti-Christian activities.

A man may be ignorant of the sciences and of letters and not suffer much, but to be ignorant of God is to rob himself of happiness and of the highest good. God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also." There can be no excuse for the man whose ears are dull of hearing, and whose heart is waxed gross. The knowledge of God is the most excellent of all sciences. Paul counted all things but loss in comparison with its possession. The prophet Isaiah attributed the captivity to its absence

"My people are gone into captivity because they have no knowledge."

III. THE SAD RESULTS OF A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

The people were destroyed. Ignorance, in every age, is the mother of destruction. It is the precursor of national as well as individual weakness. Just as the lack of heat and moisture will kill in the vegetable kingdom, or as the lack of air will cause the extinction of animal life, so ignorance wounds and kills in the moral and spiritual worlds. It is a recognized law of the divine government that willful ignorance entails moral deterioration.

A grave responsibility rests upon the teachers of a nation. If the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch. If the preacher, the Bible-school teacher and the parent are faithful, the knowledge of God can not be lost. In the days of Hosea, as in our own, the unfaithfulness of teachers did not, and does not, wholly exonerate those neglected. They had, and we have today, other means of knowledge. We are responsible for the use we make even of scant opportunities. The departure of the heart from God comes first. When one does not want to know, it is easy to be ignorant. Non-use forfeits. Place, office, honor, opportunities of usefulness, will be taken from us if we do not use, or if we misuse them. Rev. 2:5: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

IV. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND HIS WILL DOES NOT HAVE AN ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTE

1. Zeal can not be substituted. The great Gentile apostle, writing concerning his Jewish brethren who were not in Christ, said: "I bear record that they have a zeal, but not according to knowledge." Not being directed by knowledge, it profited not. They possessed the law of God, but neglected to look into it. The sound of the gospel was heard and was sent forth like the voice of nature through the land, and yet zealous Israel did not know, and therefore did not profit.

2. *Faith can not be substituted.* Knowledge is essential to faith. "How can they believe on him; of whom they have not heard?" "Faith comes by hearing." Through hearing comes knowledge, the basis of faith. To be ignorant of God is not to love him.

3. *Love can not be substituted.* We can not love without knowledge. We love Him because he first loved us; but a knowledge of him and his love always precedes our love and is causal to it. It was a remembrance and knowledge of the father's house and the plenty there that brought the prodigal home again.