

***Spiritual Knowledge**, by Stephen Kaung*

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Excerpts:

### **The Knowledge of Good and Evil**

What is the knowledge of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? That knowledge includes all the knowledge that we know of apart from the life of God, whether it is scientific or technological knowledge, or philosophical or speculative knowledge, or moral, ethical, or religious knowledge. It includes all kinds of knowledge. As a matter of fact, when you come to the knowledge of good and evil, that is the top of all knowledge in this world. Sometimes we think scientific knowledge, technological knowledge is the top. Not so. Or we may think that philosophical, speculative knowledge is purer than technological knowledge. No, as a matter of fact, in human beings the highest knowledge is the knowledge of good and evil. It is the rational, ethical, moral sense in man—that is the highest knowledge. Yet strangely, even that highest knowledge, instead of giving man life, puts

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## ***Spiritual Knowledge***

man to death. So, at the very outset, we need to see the distinction between these two kinds of knowledge, and then we need to know what kind of knowledge we are really pursuing.

### **Scientific or Technological Knowledge**

Let's illustrate. The world has made great progress in the area of scientific or technological knowledge, and because of such knowledge, life becomes more convenient. It does give us lots of advantages physically, but does that knowledge help us to become better men and better women? Even though this knowledge gives us so much convenience in this world, it creates many more problems and it even brings us to the brink of the annihilation of human beings.

You know the real purpose of scientific or technological knowledge, according to the word of God, is to bring us closer to God. Romans 1:20 says that the invisible things of God, His power and divinity are apprehended through the mind by the things visible, created. So actually, when we look at the things that God has created and we discover these things, these should bring us closer to God. No wonder, in Psalm 19 we find the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork. When you look at these things and begin to discover the laws and try to apply them, use them, enjoy them, actually, this should bring us closer to God. But on the contrary, such knowledge takes us further away from God and makes us feel that we do not need God anymore—we are gods. We can do everything and anything, and the result is death. There is nothing wrong with this knowledge. What is wrong is the person—the man, the woman that is handling that knowledge because that man has become selfish, self-centered. With that kind of degraded, fallen life, the more scientific, technological knowledge you

## ***Pursuing Spiritual Knowledge***

have, the worse the world becomes. It does not help us spiritually, morally. It does not bring us to God; it takes us away from God.

### **Philosophical or Speculative Knowledge**

The same thing is true with philosophical or speculative knowledge. When we are trying to seek after God with your mind, with your thought, or will, or emotion, these seem to bring us closer to God. But in actuality they lead us away from God. People can have very noble thoughts about God and yet they are deceived. They think by that they know God. Well, they know about God, maybe, but very darkly. They really do not know God, and because of that, it serves as a substitute in a sense to lead them away from God. For instance, in the letter to the Colossians, those Colossian believers came to the Lord, but in their search for more knowledge of God, they were led astray. And if you read the letter to the Colossians, you find that they got into what commentators call, "Colossian heresy."

What is Colossian heresy? It is a strange combination of heathen gnosticism and Jewish ritualism. It is speculative. They speculate about the universe, they speculate about its origin, they speculate about a good God, a bad God, and things like that. They speculate about physical, material things, saying that material things are evil in themselves. Yet it is combined with a Jewish ritualism: Do not touch, do not taste, and so forth. And these Colossian believers sought after that knowledge. They thought by having that knowledge, trying to explain the universe, the system, then they would really know God, and grow spiritually, but instead they were drawn away from God. Paul had to write that letter to help them see that all the wisdom and knowledge of God are hid in Christ Jesus and we are perfect in Him. It is only in

## ***Spiritual Knowledge***

Him that there is true knowledge, and if you try to find a knowledge outside of Him you are led astray.

In I Timothy 6:20-21, you find Paul exhorts Timothy to guard against false-named knowledge that missed the faith. So if we seek after philosophical, speculative knowledge apart from life, we miss the faith. We are led astray. It gives us death, not life.

## **Moral, Ethical, and Religious Knowledge**

Maybe we can say if scientific and philosophical knowledge does not bring life to us but instead leads us to death, then certainly moral, ethical, religious knowledge will bring us to God and bring God to us. Now is that true?

Take for instance the law. God gave the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel, and even though we Gentiles did not have that written law, God by His Spirit had inscribed His law in our hearts. So in other words, the whole world, all human beings are under God's law, whether it is written on stones or it is inscribed upon our heart. We all have God's law in us. God is holy. His law is holy, and when that law is given to us, what is the purpose of that law? The purpose of that law is to give us the knowledge of sin. By that law we know we have sinned. That is the purpose of law. The law drives us or leads us as our schoolmaster to Christ because if we do not know we have sinned, if we are not convicted of our sin, then we will have no need for Christ, a Savior. But law shows us we have sinned and law brings us to Christ. Now that is the purpose of law. But unfortunately, instead of taking law as a means to an end, we make law the end. We try to keep the law by our own works, the works of the flesh. We try to keep the law and discover that we cannot do it, so we try to deceive ourselves.

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-10-

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## **Spiritual Knowledge is the Knowledge of Christ**

What is spiritual knowledge? Spiritual knowledge is the knowledge of Christ. Christ is the wisdom of God. Spiritual knowledge is not an *it*; that is to say, it is not a teaching, a doctrine, an instruction, a rule, a regulation. That is not spiritual knowledge. Spiritual knowledge is not *it*. It is *He*; it is a Person. For instance, when we think of righteousness, how can we be righteous before God? We know that God is righteous and we are unrighteous. Now how can we be righteous before God? We discover that our righteousness is not an *it*; it is *He*. Christ is our righteousness.

In the beginning we may feel we are unrighteous. But thank God, Christ took our sins away. If we believe in Him our sins are forgotten, forgiven, and God calls us righteous. Now you are justified, just as if you had never sinned. Now that is true, but if our understanding of righteousness is just that God has reckoned us righteous, that is not enough. We have to see that the reason God has reckoned us righteous is because Christ is our righteousness. It is not that we have changed to be righteous, but we are clothed with Christ who is our righteousness. God has made Christ our righteousness.

## **Spiritual Knowledge is not a Teaching**

What is spiritual knowledge? It is not a teaching. We have heard teaching about sanctification. God is holy, therefore we must be holy, and we try very hard to be holy, to be



## *Obtaining Spiritual Knowledge*

separated from the world. Holiness is not an experience; holiness is a Person. One day you realize that holiness is not you. It is not your work; it is not your trying. Holiness is Christ. He lives in you; that is holiness. That is spiritual knowledge. And that kind of knowledge sets you free. So what we really need is spiritual knowledge.

How do we obtain spiritual knowledge? I think this is a very important question. Spiritual knowledge is life knowledge; that is to say it comes from life, from divine life, not our natural life. If it comes from our natural life that is world knowledge, that is soul knowledge. It comes from divine life, and if it comes from divine life, then the only way to obtain more spiritual knowledge must be through life. When divine life in you increases, then your spiritual knowledge automatically increases. So the way to spiritual knowledge is by the way of life. How we begin is the way we need to continue on. We have begun and now we need to pursue, to continue on in that way.

I would like to use the illustration of metabolism. As our physical life grows, there is a process going on, and it is the dying of the old cells and the coming out of the new cells. It is a process of dying and living, dying and living. That is the process of life. In spiritual life you find the same thing. There is a spiritual metabolism going on. Daily there is a dying and daily there is a living. And in that way you find you grow spiritually, you grow in spiritual knowledge.

To put it in another way, it is the cross. The way of the increase of spiritual life is by way of the cross, and therefore the increase of spiritual knowledge is also by way of the cross. The cross of our Lord Jesus is more than an historical fact. People can believe that two thousand years ago, outside of the city of Jerusalem in Golgotha, Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross. People may believe it as an historical fact. That is knowledge, but that is head knowledge, soul