

Knowing the Father

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All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise stated.
The Holy Bible, NIV Version 1978, 1984 by New York International Bible Society
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Foreword

Are you horrified by the things you see happening in your neighbourhood, town, city, nation, and wider still – in the world? Are you anxious and fearful about the lack of moral standards in our society, which seems to be resulting in an unprecedented spiralling of crime and violence? Are you worried about the dreadful decline in human behaviour one towards another? Are you concerned about the insatiable greed of many for wealth and power, to the extent that other people no longer matter? Are you concerned, too, about the deplorable poverty in which many are living, whilst others bask in their feather-beds of wealth and materialism?

Yes, you may well be concerned – thousands are. You may even be able to see yourself in one of the situations mentioned above.

Many blame 'God' for the existing situations and suffering in the world. He is seen as One Who is dealing out punishment on both the innocent and the guilty, and so they have dismissed His promises of care as being irrelevant. The present conditions and problems in the world – are they because of Yahweh's inactivity? Are they really His fault?

The human tendency is to blame others for our failures rather than to admit that the fault lies with us. Humanity puts great value on its freedom – people of every generation have fought and died for it. We all like our freedom, but sadly it is viewed as "the right to do as we please"! – not "to do as we ought"! Indulgence in the excesses of freedom have resulted in a society wanting in moral standards. Yahweh is NOT to blame! With our freedom we have lived our lives without consideration of Yahweh's eternal laws, which, if adhered to, bring peace, security, stability, justice and prosperity – the very things the human heart yearns for. The answer to our dilemma, then, is in having a right relationship with the 'God' we have so long disregarded. "Knowing the Father" gives a step-by-step explanation as to how we can, personally, enter into such a relationship.

The Editor

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Who, or what do we worship?

Statisticians tell us that seventy-six per cent of the people in Britain believe in the existence of God. Frankly, I find that fact very misleading. A more pertinent question would be *“In what kind of a God do you believe?”* In our modern world we are inundated with ‘gods’ all of which are vying for our allegiance. It is reasonable to ask, *“Why so many gods, and consequently why so many religions?”* The answer is that worship* is an instinct common to all humanity. We must have someone or something to worship. We must either worship the Creator or idols*. There are many forms of idols; idols of wood and stone which we tend to associate with primitive cultures, yet in our modern, sophisticated societies such things as ambition, wealth and sex are worshipped as idols. Men worship men, ideologies, and even spirits. Creation and the Bible, however, convince us that there is a supreme “Creator-God”, and the Bible makes it quite clear that this Sovereign Being wants to have a relationship with us.

“Food satisfies our hunger-drive; intercourse our sexual drive; sleep our drive for rest. Isn’t it reasonable to suppose that our drive to worship was put in our hearts by Yahweh, Himself, the only possible reality that can completely satisfy it?”¹

“So, in what kind of a god do you believe?” I would like to answer that question on two levels: one from my own subjective experience of the reality of His presence in my life, and the second, more importantly, from an understanding of the teaching of the Bible.

I believe in the God Who revealed Himself to me, the One who changed the direction of my life and imparted His Own Spirit to me. Knowing, loving and serving the Almighty is, without doubt, the greatest and most fulfilling experience of my life. It is the ultimate purpose of our lives. There is nothing in this world to compare with it.

The good news is that this “Creator-God” is vitally interested in you, whom He considers to be the pinnacle of His creation, made in His Own image and likeness. He longs for you to know Him personally. Within this relationship He completely satisfies our innate thirst for worship. Do you know Him? Do you want to know Him? The purpose of this booklet is to show you how this relationship can be initiated.

*Worship: To give supreme value and worth to; to show profound devotion and respect to and adore any person or thing.

*Idol: Any material object, ideology or being that is worshipped (given supreme worth to) other than the one “Creator-God”.

The barrier

The Gospel of Yahshua is a means of entering into a meaningful relationship with Yahweh. The word ‘Gospel’ means ‘good news’; but before we can accept the good news, we must first concern ourselves with the bad news - the issue of sin*.

*Sin: The breaking of Yahweh’s moral code.

¹ Michael Green, “My God”, Eagle, Guildford, Surrey (1991)

Sin blocks our way to having close friendship with the Father. All of us are born with this; it is an ugly disease which permeates our lives.¹ The consequences of unforgiven sin in an individual are devastating, resulting in estrangement and separation from the Father, not only in this life, but also for eternity.² The consequences of sin are clearly in evidence in society today; vandalism, brutality, wars and disputes, racial hatred, family break-down, perversion, sexual abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, injustice and greed. Many (including our politicians) acknowledge that society is plunging into an abyss of evil, yet they fail to identify the root cause. However, this is the world that we live in, the society that we ourselves have created through choosing to live our lives entirely as we think best, with little or no regard for our fellow men and even less for the Creator, Himself.

“We cannot think lightly of sin if we think honestly of its results.”

David C. Potter

The Ten Commandments³ are Yahweh’s standard for mankind - standards which govern our conduct toward the Almighty and our fellow men. They tell us the kind of Person He is. All the troubles in our society stem from the fact that we, as individuals, and as whole communities, have turned aside from the righteous standard of Yahweh.

One thousand years after Moses had received the Ten Commandments, Yahweh sent His Own Son, Who was able to teach us more perfectly the true intentions of the Law. Commenting on the Law Yahshua said, “...it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder’... But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement. You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery’. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”⁴ If Yahshua is right, (and there is no reason to doubt His words), then which one of us can honestly say that we have not committed unmentionable sins - in our thoughts?

“Oh, dear” we say, “That’s far too difficult - unattainable!”

“There is no man so good, who, were he to submit all his thoughts and actions to the law, would not deserve hanging ten times in his life.”

Michael de Montaigne

If you think that such a standard is impossible to attain to, then you are quite correct. We are unable to keep these laws by our own ability.

Whereas Moses pointed to the need to change our actions, Yahshua pointed to the need of a change of heart. For a man’s heart to change to such an extent that his life mirrors the very character of the Almighty in word, thought and deed, requires a dramatic transformation of our inward selves. We need to have Immanuel* Who is able to keep His Own Law, actually living within us.

*Immanuel: A Hebrew name meaning “Yahweh (El) is with us”. This was fulfilled in Yahshua.

¹ see Genesis 8:21; Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23

² see Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23

³ we find these in Exodus 20:1-17

⁴ Matthew 5:21-22; 27-28

Such a transformation is what the Bible calls being “born again” and it is available to anyone who is prepared to take two vital steps:

1. ***Repent of one’s sin towards Yahweh***
2. ***Have faith in His Son, Yahshua***

Being born again is the entrance to a living relationship with Yahweh whereby we, as individuals, can come to know Him and find fulfilment for our lives.

Break from your past

In order to experience the life-changing power of Yahshua, we must first acknowledge our sinful condition and our need of Him. Having done so we must decide to turn from our old life, the life of sin and all that that involves, and turn to the new life that Yahshua gives. There is no halfway in this process. It involves a willingness to be rid of every evil thing, however dear it is to us. This process is known as ‘repentance’.¹

In taking this initial step, we may have to be willing to sacrifice some natural things such as certain relationships, hobbies or pursuits, which, whilst harmless in themselves, have come between us and Yahweh. Yahshua told one young earnest enquirer to go and sell all he had and to give to the poor!² In taking this step there are no hard and fast rules beyond this simple test: is this thing such an integral part of my old life that I cannot keep it, and still turn completely to Yahweh? Repentance is simply the willingness to turn without condition.

“Recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation.”

M Luther

Ultimately true repentance will affect us in three areas: our thoughts, our words and our actions. Having decided in our hearts and minds to break from our sinful past, Yahweh requires us to confess our sins to Him.

“He who conceals his sin does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”³

In doing so, we must realise that it is against Yahweh that we have sinned. Yes, we may have hurt other people, even ourselves as a result of our sinful acts, but the very worst part is that we have grieved our Maker. It is against Him and His righteous standard that we have rebelled. When this fact has truly been acknowledged there exists within us a deep sense of sorrow for the transgressions* we have committed against Yahweh. Such sorrow leads to true repentance.⁴

*Transgression: The committing of sin – going beyond Yahweh’s boundary of good and crossing over into the territory of evil.

David, an ancient king of Israel, having been found guilty of adultery and murder, prayed like this, *“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your*

¹ see Acts 3:19

² Matthew 19:16-22

³ Proverbs 28:13

⁴ 2 Corinthians 7:10

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*sight...*¹ True repentance will ultimately go beyond mere words, translating itself into action. Many of the early believers in Ephesus had been heavily involved in the occult before becoming Christians. Luke writes of a mass public burning of occult literature and artefacts by these zealous new believers, the value of which amounted to 50,000 times a typical days wage.²

“Repentance is sorrow for sin converted into action, into change in manner of life.”

Anon

True repentance comes from a sincere heart and we need to be open and honest with our heavenly Father. There is often a need to repent of specific sins. A general prayer of repentance is a good start, but problems can later arise in our walk with Yahshua when we are faced with hidden areas of our heart where unconfessed sin still lies and has its stronghold. Any contact with sorcery and witchcraft, cult religions and the worship of false gods needs to be severed and any artefacts connected to them destroyed. We need to turn from bitterness, anger, and wrong attitudes towards others. Some of us have been badly wronged by our fellow men, even by those near and dear to us, but the Scriptures are quite clear as to how we should now respond. We should forgive all who have wronged us including our parents whom we should seek to honour.³ We must also remember the importance of forgiving our own selves. Do not underestimate Yahweh’s sovereign ability to move powerfully in our lives. Some people have caused us such pain and anguish that we feel we could never forgive them, but Yahshua is a miracle worker and once we decide in our hearts the course we want to take He is able to heal us and set us free.

In this respect repentance is as much a gift from Yahweh as it is an action springing from our own will. In all the above, we must be sensible, we cannot possibly remember, let alone confess every sin we have ever committed, nor can we make amends for all of them - remember Yahweh is primarily concerned with the attitude of our heart, “...*a broken and contrite heart, oh [Yahweh], you will not despise.*”⁴ Not only must we repent but we must also accept the Father’s forgiveness. For true repentance evokes this immediate response from Yahweh, “*I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to [Yahweh]’ - and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*”⁵ There is no merit in repentance if at the end we are not prepared to receive the Father’s forgiveness. It was to procure this blessing that Yahshua’s blood was spilled⁶. Yahweh is able to make the vilest sinner clean. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, had a favourite saying, ‘*sinners, the worst first*’. What a great salvation* has been wrought for us if only we can accept it in the deepest level of our being. Our sins have been forgiven. Yahshua says, “...*go your way and sin no more!*”⁷

*Salvation: The rescue from the power of sin and all its adverse effects in a person’s life – and to be secured against its judgement.

¹ Psalm 51:4

² see Acts 19:18,19

³ Matthew 6:12-15

⁴ Psalm 51:17

⁵ Psalm 32:5

⁶ Hebrews 9:22

⁷ John 8:11^{AV}

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Yahshua, The Way

John the Baptist was a mighty prophet who emerged after Yahweh had been silent in Israel for 400 years. His ministry, foretold by Isaiah several hundred years prior to his appearance, was quite unique in the history of Israel. Yahshua said of him that "...Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater..."¹ At the beginning of his Gospel Mark identified him as the messenger predicted by Isaiah who would prepare the way for the Messiah*. "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"² – "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for [Yahweh]; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our [E]..."³

John's message and ministry had two special purposes. Firstly, they prepared the hearts of the people of Israel for the advent and revelation of their long-awaited Messiah. Secondly they provided a link between the Old Testament period governed by the law and the prophets*, and the era of the gospel, which began with the preaching of Yahshua.

John boldly asserted that the people of Israel should repent from their sins, be baptised, and believe on the One Who was to come. He baptised in water but declared that a greater than he was to come, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to undo. This Messiah would baptise them in the holy Spirit and fire.⁴ That anointed One was Yahshua.

The circumstances of Yahshua's birth were unique, and it is essential for us to understand these in order to gain an appreciation of who He really was. His conception was not the result of a man and a woman making love: His was a virgin birth. This was in direct fulfilment of one of many prophecies* about His life and ministry given hundreds of years before His birth, through the prophet Isaiah, "...The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."⁵

In this respect we can see that He had no earthly father and His Father was the Almighty Himself.

*Messiah: Comes from a Hebrew term (Mesiach) meaning 'the Anointed One'. It denotes the deliverer expected by the Jewish people, fulfilled in the Person of Yahshua.

*The law and the prophets: A term used to describe the first five books of the Bible, (The Law) and the prophetic writings.

*Prophecies: The inspired Old Testament writings predicting future events and interpreting the will of Yahweh to His people.

John's ministry of calling the nation to repentance was an essential one, for until Israel had been called back to Yahweh in repentance, their long-awaited Messiah could not be revealed to them. The same is true of us. It is not enough merely to believe in Yahshua, the first step according to the Scripture is to repent and believe.⁶ This was the gospel preached by Yahshua, and later by the Apostles.⁷ Yahshua boldly declared Himself to be the way to the Father. Notice that He did not claim that He was **a** way, nor that He would

¹ Matthew 11:11

² Mark 1:2

³ Isaiah 40:3

⁴ see Luke 3:16

⁵ Isaiah 7:14

⁶ Mark 1:14-15

⁷ Acts 20:20-21

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show the way - faith in Yahshua goes beyond that. To have faith in Yahshua is to trust Him entirely as being our only way to Yahweh. He is like the ladder that the patriarch Jacob saw in his dream, with its foot on the earth and its top in heaven.¹ "...*No-one comes to the Father except through me.*"² There is only one Sovereign El* and only one way to reach Him - through Yahshua the Messiah.

It is essential that we grasp how it is that Yahshua (whose name literally means Yah saves) has become our way to the Father.

In 1Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul reminds the believers at Corinth of the gospel message which he had preached to them and through which they had been saved*. There are three simple, definite facts outlined in this passage.

First, that *Yahshua died for our sins*, second, *He was buried*, and third, *He physically rose from the grave*.

In voluntarily dying for our sins, Yahshua bore the punishment that was due to us as a result of our sinful behaviour. His blood was shed on our behalf. Having died Yahshua was buried and for three days and three nights remained in the grave, descending into Sheol - the world of the departed.

After this period, a mighty transaction took place, death was conquered, Yahshua's spirit returned to His lifeless body and He came back to life. The stone covering His tomb was rolled away and "... *having disarmed the powers and authorities, ... triumphing over them by the cross*",³ he ascended into the presence of the Father. It was here that He offered His own blood as an atonement* for the sins of mankind,⁴ making a way into the presence of Yahweh for all who would know Him for themselves: by the blood our consciences are purged⁵ and ALL our sin cleansed⁶.

How can we be sure of these facts? In 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 Paul emphasizes that the first and most authoritative of all testimonies to the truth of these facts is the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures which had foretold these events hundreds of years before they actually took place. The testimony of contemporary eyewitnesses (he was seen by more than 500 saints after he had risen) is only mentioned later, as supporting that of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The message of the gospel is that righteousness is received from Yahweh by believing the facts of Yahshua's death, burial and resurrection.

We must realise that it is not by our own efforts that we have access to the Father. No human effort can contribute to our salvation. We cannot earn it by the observance of church ordinances or by devoting ourselves to such activities as prayer, penance, fasting, charity or self-denial. Salvation is a free gift, which can only be received.

*El: A Hebrew word meaning 'The Almighty' or 'Mighty One'.

*Saved: To be rescued from the dreadful consequences of sin. To have experienced salvation.

*Atonement: A term denoting 'to cover', to 'blot out', or 'to annul' man's sin, through Yahshua's vicarious death, enabling man to be reconciled to Yahweh the Father.

¹ Genesis 28:11-12; John 1:51

² John 14:6

³ Colossians 2:15

⁴ Hebrews 9:12

⁵ Hebrews 9:14

⁶ 1 John 1:7

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Paul emphasizes this truth in Ephesians 2:8-9, where he says to Christian believers: *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith; and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of [Yahweh] – not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

In the words of the hymn writer

Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil thy law’s demands
Could my zeal no respite know
Could my tears forever flow
All for sin could not atone
Thou must save, and Thou alone

A.M. Toplady

It is Yahweh’s grace, which affords us salvation; it is our faith, which appropriates it. When we have faith toward Yahweh then we are ready to enter into salvation.

Reach for the sky

If what I have just been describing is both your belief and experience, well and good, but it is important to realise at this point the vital difference between faith in the mind which is nothing more than an intellectual acceptance of the facts of the gospel, and faith in the heart, which always results in a definite, positive response to the facts. How should you respond? The Bible outlines a number of ways.

Romans 10:9-10

Paul explains that salvation comes through believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth the truth of the gospel.

Romans 10:13

Paul concludes that *“...everyone who calls on the name of [Yahweh] will be saved!”* He implies here that we should call on the name of Yahweh, asking Him out loud for salvation.

Matthew 11:28

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Here Yahshua uses the word come. In coming to Him, He promises that we will find rest for our souls.

John 4:13-14

When speaking to the woman at the well, Yahshua uses the simple act of drinking to explain the necessary response. The act of receiving salvation is compared to that of drinking water and is given with a promise that we will never thirst again.

John 1:11-13

Here the word used by the apostle John to denote this active response to the gospel is receive, implying that we should personally receive Yahshua as our Saviour. The result of this is a promised spiritual transformation called being born of Yahweh or ‘born again’ as referenced in John 3:3.

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If you have never responded in any of these ways and experienced the cleansing power of Yahshua's blood and the transforming power of the holy Spirit in your life, then it is as if Yahshua is knocking on your heart's door at this very moment. *"...If anyone hears My voice and opens the door,"* He promises us, *"I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."*¹

"A Christian worker once visited a poor woman in order to bring her a sum of money which she badly needed. He knocked at her door, not once or twice only, but got no response, and he had to go away disappointed with the money still in his pocket. Meeting her a few days later he told her of his fruitless visit. She replied, with tears in her eyes, that she had heard him knocking, but thought he was the rent collector and she dare not open the door, for she had not the money to pay the rent."

This story illustrates the working of the gospel. He Who stands at the door and knocks has come with a gift; the knock is the Saviour's knock, not that of a rent collector. The gospel is good news; news of a debt paid, not of rent required. It is not a demand but a free gift, which no one has deserved or could win by merit, but which is offered to all.

Opening the door of your heart and inviting Yahshua in is something that you must do for yourself. No one can perform any of the above-mentioned acts on your behalf.

Have you made this definite, personal response? If not, I urge you to do it now. Pray on these lines:

PRAAYER

Father, reading this booklet has convinced me that I am a sinner who does not know You. That I am bound by the power of sin and am in need of Your help. Therefore, I come to You in the name of Your Son, Yahshua, confessing my condition and letting You know that I have decided to turn from sin.

(If at this point any particular sins for which you feel guilty come to your mind, tell Yahweh that you are forsaking them: but remember that Yahshua's blood will cleanse you from ALL sin.)

I gladly accept your offer of forgiveness and salvation, believing that Your Son, Yahshua, died to pay the debt for my sin, and to destroy its power in my life.

I believe that for me, you raised Him from the dead after 3 days, and this helps me to know I am accepted by You as if I had never sinned. Yahshua, come into my heart and by Your blood cleanse me from all my sin, give me eternal life* and make me a child of Yours.

*Eternal Life: A conscious life without end that continues after our exit from this world, where we will be continually in the presence of Yahweh.

¹ Revelation 3:20

A new relationship

Accepting and appropriating what has been previously discussed brings us into a whole new relationship with the heavenly Father and His Son. By no means should it be seen as an end in itself, but a whole new beginning, the start of an exciting journey into a personal knowledge of the Almighty. A seed has been planted in your life, in order for it to grow and flourish; like any seed, it requires nourishment. Yahweh has provided us with the means to enable us to do this effectively.

The Bible

We need to realise that the word of Yahweh, the Bible, is now our own “personal letter”. We must make the effort to read and study it daily, in order to feed our new-born soul and to get to know Yahshua and the Father in a deeper way.

Prayer

Prayer is talking with Yahweh, and is an essential discipline that we must pursue in order to strengthen our relationship with Him.

Fellowship

We should also seek to fellowship with other believers who share the same faith since this will be a great source of strength and encouragement to us.

Finally, be sure to tell someone about what has happened to you. This will help to consolidate the experience in your own life.

Further steps

After presenting the gospel on the day of Pentecost, Peter urged the enquirers to “...*Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of [Yahshua] for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*”¹

Baptism in water and the infilling of the holy Spirit are two subsequent steps in salvation. These steps need to be made after repentance and faith in order to be adequately equipped to walk the pathway of salvation. These are the subjects of further articles in this series.

¹ Acts 2:38