

And keep his Word.

Now we can say this about the Lord Jesus. His knowing the Father was not by new birth, it wasn't by salvation, it wasn't by believing in the Father or having believing faith. No, that isn't how he came to know the Father. But by his nature. What do you mean? By being the eternal Son. By being God. By being part of the Godhead. He knew the Father. In that sense. As one with the Father. No knowledge could be more intimate than actually being part of oneness with the Father, as in the Godhead.

If you take a look with me a little further in John 17, when Jesus is in prayer to the Father, it's something that he said. Go up there to it if you would. (Jn 17:20) says, we're talking to the Father here in this

prayer. "I do not pray for these alone." And we believe that that was in reference to the saved out of Israel. "But also for those who will believe in me through their word." It's going to go out a witness. It came first to Israel, but it went out through them to other Jews, but also to the Gentile world. And since that time, people have heard the Word of God. The message of salvation and have believed in Jesus. So he's praying for us.

Also, in this prayer. Verse 21 that they may be one. As You, Father, Are in me And I in you. That they also may be one in us. That the world may believe that you sent me. So he's praying for us to be one in him and in the Father as. He is in the Father, and the Father is in him. So. You come to these phrases, you know, and you see what some have done with The scriptures.

There are those who want to teach, and they try to use the Word of God to do it. They try to teach that you can become God. Yes, you. You human being, you. You can become God. You can be one with God, be like him, and be him. They do teach that there are those who will. They come to verses like this, and they try to use these verses to teach that.

What does Jesus saying? That. He is one in the Father. The Father is one in him and wants us to be one with them. For us. He's speaking of unity in spirit. And I can say in the Holy Spirit. A unity. Of spirit, which means a unity of agreement. It means a unity of harmony in spirit with them. And. We can have this. If we. Want if we will. To do what he would want us to do. One day, we will have that perfect unity as God wants. We'll have that in heaven. We're promised that. But right here on this earth. We're still in our bodies. And the work of God in us to be united with him in complete harmony is not perfected yet. In this body. We go along, and we have our way at times. Listen. We will not become God. Jesus is not teaching that. We're going to be one with God. That does not mean we're going to become God. He's talking about. Unity of spirit. We're not going to be—part of God's being.

John 17:20, 21 NKJV

20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

He's independent of us. You always will be, always have been. Jesus' prayer is that we would experience this oneness with him in this life. We'll have it in heaven. This unity, this oneness of agreement and harmony and spirit. We're going to have that perfectly in heaven. But he would like for us to have it in this life. So you have to ask the question, How? How could that be?

Well, Jesus gives us two things. That must be true. In our lives, for that to happen. He's given them right here. He says. That we have to know him, that's number one. We have to know him. What does it mean to know him? You see, we're not one with Jesus by our nature. The truth is that by our nature, we're enemies. Of God, we're outcasts, we're aliens. We're an offense. We are lost. We're undone. We're sinners. That's what we are by nature. We're not one with God. And nobody can make themselves one with God.

The scriptures teach very clearly. We must come to Christ. Call on him. Call on him to cleanse us from our sins. Call on him, trusting only in him to take away our sins and forgive us. There is no other that we can trust in for forgiveness. God would want us to come to him to give ourselves to him. To worship him, to obey him, to love him. to follow him. We must do that to have unity with him. To know him is a living relationship. And that living relationship comes this way by recognizing our needs as sinners. We go to him, humble ourselves, and ask for his forgiveness. Trusting our lives into his hands. Not only our lives but our eternity. When we do that, we come to know him. The Bible says that when we put our faith in him as our Savior,

Well, Jesus doesn't only say that if you don't want to taste death, you have to know him. He says a second thing. He says you have to keep his Word. Now you know how far some have gone with keeping God's Word. The Pharisees took it to the point of unimagined extremes. They not only, like the Sadducees, believed in the first five books of the law of Moses. They added all the things the rabbis had added to the law. All the interpretations, let's say. All the little points that they could extend from the law to apply in daily life. And that number is hundreds and hundreds beyond what God said. Keep his Word. Only those who know the Lord Jesus can keep his Word. If you don't pass number one, if you don't know him, you can't keep his Word. The plain truth is that unbelievers cannot keep the Word of God. They can't do it. Even for an instant, they can't do it.

Do you remember Paul's use of the Old Testament scriptures in Romans 3? How he used it so powerfully to show us our sinfulness. Perhaps you remember this section. (Ro. 3:10, 11) "As it is written," and he means in the Old Testament. "There is none righteous, no, not one." There is none who understands. There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned

Rom. 3:10-12 10As it is written:
 "There is none righteous, no, not one;
 11There is none who understands;
 There is none who seeks after God.
 12They have all turned aside; They
 have together become unprofitable;
 There is none who does good, no,
 not one."
 OT. References Ps. 14:1-3; Eccl. 7:20

aside. They have together become unprofitable. There is none who does good, no, not one." They can't. They can't do good. By the world's standards, they can do good, yes. They can give to a charity. They can come to the aid of somebody in need. Sometimes, they even give their lives on the battlefield for their friends. But they can't really do good before God without a Savior. The reason is that the human being, as a sinner, cannot do righteousness. Only the righteous can do righteousness. That's the clear teaching. And he would say that we need to do righteousness.

We need to keep His Word, which is righteousness. How can you do that? Now listen, number one, I shouldn't put a number on this. I'm just going to say this. God's Word is not automatic for the Christian. Just because you're saved does not mean that you're going to keep God's Word. We can and we do sin. It's a clear teaching. You're going to sit under my handling of the Word of God. Know that you can sin as a Christian because God says so. I turn you to the book of Hebrews. I always want to back the teaching up with the Word of God.

Hebrews chapter 12:5, 6, I'm going to read it with you. Listen to this. "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord." By the way, this quote ran out of the Old Testament. (Prov. 3:11, 12) "Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him." I used to be discouraged when my dad would chasten me. But you know, I had every reason to reflect on that and realize I deserved every bit I got. And God does the same with us. He does discipline us but doesn't want us to be discouraged because God is perfect. He's not doing these things with us. He's not disciplining us in any way to discourage us. He's doing it for our good.

I wish I could say that my parents always chastened me for good. I strongly suspect that some of their chastening wasn't for my good. Sometimes, they'd say, "This is for your good." And whack, whack, whack. I know nowadays they call that abuse. But in those days, it wasn't abuse. It was just pure correction. It hurt a little bit, but I wasn't always sure that it was for my good, especially with the tone of voice that came at me and the aftermath of the voice.

But with God, it is always true. We shouldn't be discouraged when rebuked by him, "for whom the Lord loves. He chastens and scourges." Do you see the next Word? Every son. That means every child whom he receives. If God has received you, he knows something about you. First of all, you're his son. You're his daughter. By new birth into his family, by the blood of Jesus, you're his. He also knows that while you're in this life, at times, you're going to go your own way. And it's not the best way to go. And so he will help you by saying, "Get back in the way. It's over here, not over there. Come on, move." And sometimes, he does it gently with a little whisper. "Hey, you're starting to get a little--" Sometimes he says, "Hey, move over," you know? And sometimes he says, "Move." It's in his hands. He will always correct us perfectly. He always corrects those that he loves.

But then, as you go down a little bit, in verse 7, he says, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom the Father does not chasten?" I hope never to see a person who went through their whole childhood with never one bit of chastening. They would be rotten. You know, without correction, without a standard, without guidance, they would have gone their own way all their upbringing years. And if you think a 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8-year-old always knows the right, wise, and good ways, you're misguided. And they're misguided. And you know, when you're a Christian, if you think you always know better than God, you're a fool. You don't. But every time you go your way, you say, "I know better than God. I know God wants me to do this, but this is better. It's a foolish thing. And so God disciplines us.

And verse 8 says, "But if you're without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons." If God has never chastened you, guess what? You don't belong to him. It's as plain and blunt as that from the Scriptures. If God has never chastened you, you are not a Christian. There are different proofs in the Word of God about being a Christian. One of them is that God has chastened you. It's not one of the greatest proofs, but we don't like it. It does prove his love. Do you ever come through a tight spot when you think you could have died or gotten injured? You go through it and you say, "Well, thank the Lord that didn't happen." He could have let it happen, but he didn't. Maybe he did it to show you his love.

I've come through that time, and one thing I know after I come through one of those kinds of times is that the Lord still wants me here for a while. I don't want always to learn it that way, but I find that out. The Lord still wants me around for a little bit, so there must be something he wants me for. I better find out and seek to please him in it. He will chasten me because I am his child.

You see, keeping his Word is what he wants us to focus on. Do you know that keeping the Word of God is the will of God? Want to pray for the will of God? That's what he wants: to keep his Word. That's his will. He tells you that very plainly, verse by verse. Keeping his Word is what he wants you to focus on.

But on the other hand, do you know that believers are the only ones who can keep His Word? We're the only ones who can. The unbelievers can't. As we surrender to the Holy Spirit and choose to live according to his teaching, instruction, and Word, as long as we yield to live according to the Word of God, we show the world that we know Jesus.

See, keeping His Word and knowing him are tied together. When you keep his Word, you show the world that you know him. You know him. People who don't know him can't keep his Word. When you keep his Word, you prove that you know him. And even the world can see that. This person is different. They live by the Word of God. They may not agree with you, but you're showing them that you know him. So, these that have the evidence that they know him can be absolutely assured from the Lord himself, this last phrase, "They shall never see death." You will never see death if you know Him and keep His Word.

Now we have to talk about that—an example. You come to a funeral. There's a body lying there in a coffin. You come up to this body. You notice that it has makeup all over its face and hands, the only parts that are usually being seen. And you know enough that the reason the makeup is there is that if they didn't put the makeup on the body, it would not have any redness or ruddiness. It would be kind of an ashen gray. It's a scary thing to look at. So they put the nice makeup on it. Usually, those in the coffin have a nice suit of clothes or dress. Clean, perhaps as neat as they could ever be in life. Maybe their hands are folded. It looks so peaceful. It's a wonderful scene of death. But you're thinking of better times. Thinking this one is one you love, saying goodbye. These are your last moments with their body, with their corpse.

But Jesus said that those who know him and keep his Word will never see death. Well, we know that this person in the coffin has passed from this life. But you have to ask the question: What happened at the moment that they passed from this life? Right now, there are two possibilities according to the Scriptures.

I'm looking back in general to Luke 16, in which Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The poor man Lazarus, when he died, was immediately taken by angels into the presence of the saints. The Lord Jesus called it Abraham's bosom, the place of fellowship with all the deceased who have died in the Lord. They're all together. And when he dies, a believer is immediately carried by the angels to that place and escorted there. It happens in an instant. In an instant, we're escorted to that place of being with those who have gone before us into the presence of the Lord. But you have to combine with that the teaching in 2 Corinthians 5 that we go to be with the Lord himself. 2 Corinthians 5 at verse 6. Let me read this for you. He says, "So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." Now you know from John's 14, 15, and 16 chapters that Jesus says that when he goes, he will give us a comforter to be with us. He also says, "I will come and make my abode with you. The Father and I will make our abode with you." We are actually promised that we will have all three persons of the Godhead living in us when we receive Christ.

Yet, the scripture said that when you're in the body, you're absent from the Lord. Well, you see, that's not a contradiction. It means that though the Lord God, Father, Son, and Spirit are with us, in us, alive when we're here in this life, we're not in His eternal presence in heaven. We're not beyond this life in the place of his dwelling in heaven. We're not with the Lord in that sense. You want to say physically? Well, it's beyond physical. It's real, but it's not of this physical existence. But we're not with him when we're in the body. So, he says, "knowing that while we are at home in the body, we're absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight." The Christian is to live his life by faith, not based on seeing everything and all the workings of God and all the promises of God worked out second by second, the presence of God around you and in you. And

there's so much we don't see with these eyes that these things are real. We walk by faith, not by sight.

In other words, it's plain in Hebrews 11 that what we have from God in his Word is real. And when we trust him for it and walk according to what he says, that's the reality that he wants us to live with. If you live with the reality of your eyes, ears, nose, and fingers, you will miss the reality of fellowship with God. Christians are to live in touch with him all the time. That's a spiritual awareness of God around you, and he will be there according to his promises. He will work according to his promises. He is true to his Word.

"We're confident, yes, and pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Those are the only two states you can have. You're either in the body, or you're with the Lord. There isn't any place in between. There's no place to purge out some stuff in you. That's taken care of at the cross. That's taken care of when you receive Jesus as your Savior. The only thing that can purge you from sin is the blood of Jesus. That's applied when you receive Him as Savior so that you pass into His presence when you die. When you're at a funeral, that person is not there. Believer or unbeliever, they're not there. They're either in a place of torment that the rich man went to in Luke 16. That's a temporary place for now, but they have to wait until what we find in the book of Revelation is called the great white throne. They're going to come before the great white throne. God will deal with their whole life before them and show them their sinfulness. Every thought, every deed, every Word will be judged. And according to their sin, they will suffer in the lake of fire called hell. That's what they get to wait for.

The other option is to be in the presence of the Lord immediately, ushered there by the angels of God, to be with Jesus—no other place in between. So, we immediately pass into the presence of the Lord to enjoy him forever. We're not resurrected yet. Our bodies are not at that moment if we die right now before the Lord returns for his own. We're not in possession of the new body that he wants to give us. And in God's planning, in God's mind, it's because he wants to do it this way. This is the way it's going to be done. He wants to take the body you are in right now, and He wants to change that, use that, and somehow change that into the glorified body he wants to give you, which is like the Lord Jesus' body. That honors your body, and he wants you to honor the body of your dead.

I don't believe that cremation violates that right. I don't believe that at all. I believe that cremation is just fast oxidation versus slow oxidation in the grave. You can go fast or slow, but do you honor that person in death? By the way, some have raised objections to the thought of cremation. Do you know that they did, at times, burn bodies in the Old Testament? They burned bodies but did not desecrate them? It was done at times. And I don't mean when the Israelites offered their children on the altars to false gods. That was vile, evil. He wants us to honor our bodies while we live. He wants us to take care of it. When we die,

he wants those who love us to remember their responsibility to honor us and God in our death. And Jesus will remember it in raising the body or what's left of it, of its ashes or whatever.

I mean, God is God, and he knows where every one of your particles is, and he can raise it and change it into his glorified body that he wants to give you. You know, Abraham died a long time ago, didn't he? 2000 BC? 4000 years ago? Do you think his corpse is still intact? Well, I've seen some Egyptian mummies and they don't look too good. And the Israelites didn't do anything like that to try to preserve the bodies. I think he's become dust by now. But do you know that God will raise Abraham's body, which will be beautiful and changed into Christ-likeness? Instantaneously.

So he can tell you this: we will never see death. What does that mean? Death will never hold you. Death will never have victory over you. Death has no claim on you. When you die, in other words, leave this life, you instantly don't experience anything that you could call death. You instantly experience Jesus. You experience the life that we have in Christ. Death has no claim on you.

I'm going to read just one little section that you probably have read before from 1 Corinthians 15 to remind you of the victory that we have with Christ over death. 1 Corinthians 15. Right at the book's end, he says, "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption," that's when it happens. This is the corruptible, right? This puts on incorruption. This mortal has put on immortality. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" Oh, death, where is your sting? Oh, Hades, that's the abode of the grave. It's not the place of torment. Hades is used here to speak of the grave. Where is your victory? The grave doesn't have a victory over us. Death does not have a victory over us. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." That's what we have—victory over death.

You know what he wants you to do? If you know him, keep his Word. You'll never taste death. That's his promise. But he wants you, in the meantime, to keep his Word. Live by the Word of God until he comes and takes us home.

Lord, thank you for the clear teaching of your Word. These promises are not just dreamt up in our minds. They come from your heart and your mouth, Lord. And oh, we thank you for having victory over death. We thank you for our loved ones who have gone on before us and for their being with you if they knew you. We grieve for those who would dare to die without you, Lord. There is no hope. We thank You for ourselves that we have the hope of eternal time with You because of Your forgiveness in Your blood. Help us to keep your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.