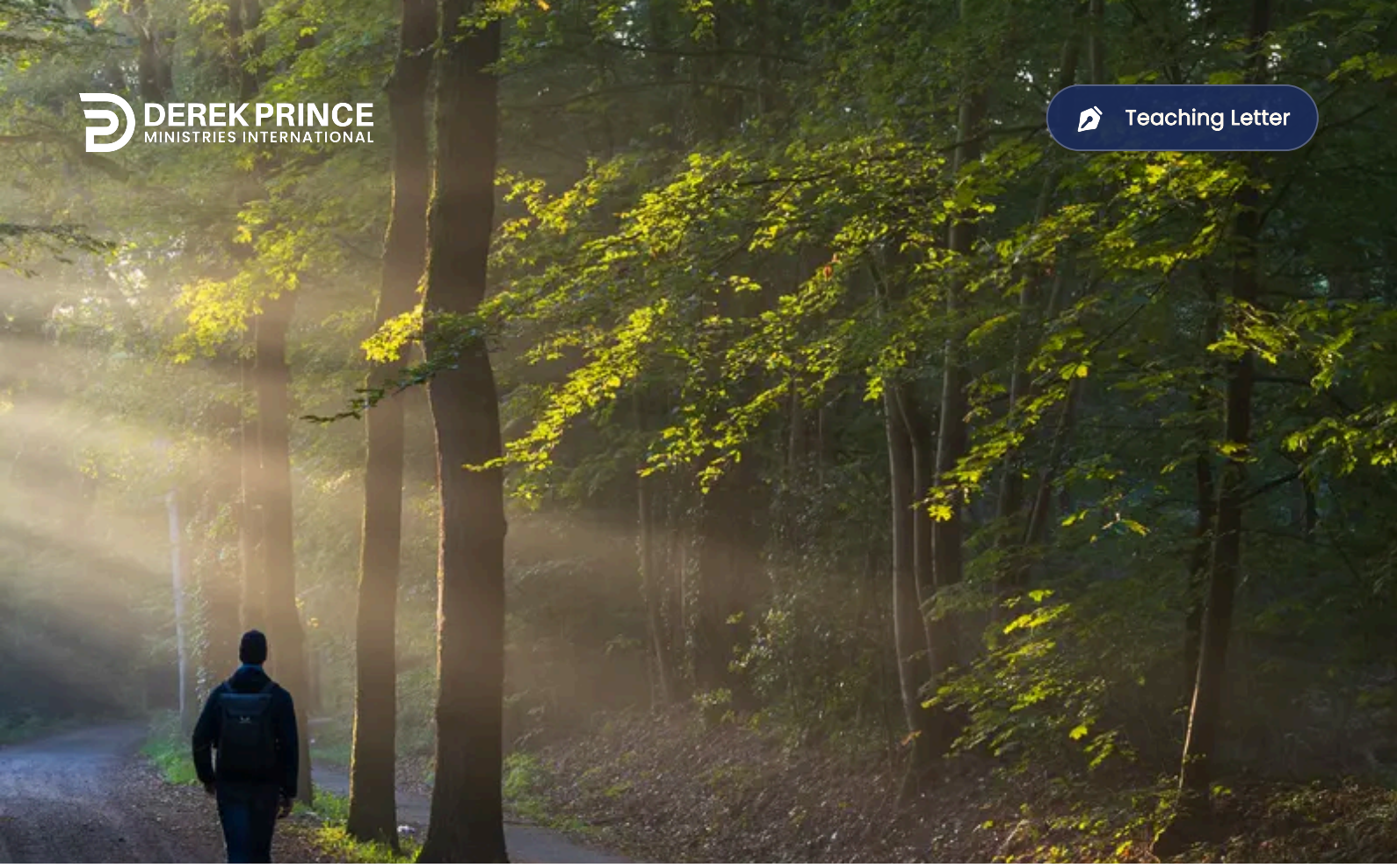

The Path to Knowing God



Teaching Letter
By Derek Prince

> "Knowing God in a personal relationship is the ultimate purpose of our redemption."

This quote, by Derek Prince, perfectly summarizes the theme and purpose for his book, The Path to Knowing God, from which this issue of The Teaching Legacy of Derek Prince is taken.

An Unwelcome Trend

After nearly seventy years of active involvement in the work of God in many nations, I have seen evil rise in the world at an alarming rate. The decline I have witnessed can only be described as cataclysmic. Dramatic changes in morality, relationships, and family life have resulted in violence, an upsurge of the divorce rate, and the open flaunting of wickedness in the form of sexually perverted lifestyles.

When I look back at the decline I have seen, I ask myself, "Did all this happen in just a few years?"

We live in a period of incessant, violent, and uncontrollable change, a time about which Jesus prophesied that people's hearts will be "failing them from fear" (Luke 21:26). As we witness the decline coming on the earth, a pointed question arises within me: "Where will the people of God find the strength to stand in the midst of this rising tide of evil and to prevail against it? Where will they find the strength to stay true to their faith?"

Strong People

The world depicted at the close of the book of Daniel could just as well describe the world we are living in today. Daniel's world was a place of increasing evil and opposition to God and His ways. This book of the Bible prophetically describes a time when evil will be tremendously powerful, sweeping away almost everything before it. However, Daniel also describes the kind of person who will not be overwhelmed by the flood of evil—a person who will instead be active, successful, and triumphant in the midst of it:

> "Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be

> strong, and carry out great exploits." (Daniel 11:32)

The New International Version says God's people "will firmly resist" this evil king. The Hebrew simply says they "shall do." That usage is like a blank check upon which "the people who know their God" can write anything. In other words, there is nothing believers will not be able to do. But here is the phrase that deserves our complete focus: "The people who know their God shall be strong."

Ultimate Security

Ultimately, the only secure source of strength and power available to any of us is the knowledge of God. Over many years, I have met Christians from just about every denomination and type in a variety of segments of the Church. To my sorrow, most of them could not be described as strong. Despite their interest in many subjects related to the faith, many of them have relatively little time for God Himself.

When preachers teach about power, people's ears open. When they focus on healing, crowds will come. When they speak about dramatic aspects of Christian ministry, people seem ready to listen. Rarely, however, have I heard preachers speak about knowing God Himself. Why is that focus so important? May I suggest an answer? Because anything not rooted in God Himself will be swept away by the flood of evil rising in the world with each passing year.

Avoiding 'God Plus Something'

As we have noted, many people in the Church today bypass a personal relationship with the Lord. Instead, they are distracted or preoccupied with some secondary pursuit. They may be able to quote Scripture and discuss doctrine, especially if they have a particular axe to grind. Sometimes, regardless of what you try to talk with them about, they always bring the topic back to their own particular focus. It's unfortunate, because they are missing the primary purpose of their redemption—which is to know the Lord.

Their attitude is that it has to be "God–plus–something." (Different groups each have their different "somethings.") They believe "God–plus–something" will do the job for them. No, God will do the job—never mind about the something. When we have God, we don't need anything or anyone else. These "God–plus–something" people ought to go to Colossians. That's where Paul says it clearly: Jesus Christ is the final answer.

> "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." (Colossians 2:9-10)

Jesus is the only answer. We do not need God–plus–anything–else. In fact, it is a sacrilege for anyone to put Jesus Christ on the same level with Buddha, Socrates, Muhammad, or anyone or anything.

Our Primary Focus

Some of us may get all wrapped up in going to church, knowing the Bible, seeking miracles, or even advancing evangelism. Those are all good pursuits, but if we are not primarily wrapped up in God, we are missing the central purpose of our salvation. When we bypass knowing God, we miss everything. God will still bless us and help us. But we will miss His purpose for us.

If you and I could hear the sounds of heaven, we would hear a deep sob in the heart of the Lord. He would be saying, "They want everything I have to offer but they are not interested in knowing Me."

This was true of me. As a professional philosopher, I searched everywhere (except for the right place—God) for the answer to life's problems. Earlier in life, I had concluded that Christianity was not the answer, so I turned to Greek philosophy, to yoga, and to all sorts of other outlandish ideas. Finally, late one night in 1941 in an army barracks room, when no one else was awake, I had a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. In that encounter, I met the Answer.

Later, I read in Colossians about Jesus Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3 kjv). I said to myself, "Why should I grub around any longer in the rubbish bins of human wisdom, when all the treasures are hidden in Jesus Christ?" The Bible, I decided, is the Book with the answers, and I wanted to find in its pages what God has hidden in Jesus Christ. Everything I had tried to find in philosophy and in human wisdom I now found in Him.

The Alpha and Omega

Since then, I have been deflected and diverted on occasions into side issues. But, thankfully, I have always returned to this truth: Jesus is "the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Revelation 22:13), "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). We are complete in Him.

Whenever anyone starts to look outside of Jesus Christ, they will discover a multitude of fascinating and exciting theories and doctrines. But ultimately, they will find, like the prodigal son, that they are feeding on husks when they could be living on the Father's bread!

For any of us as believers, it is possible to know the Bible inside and out, to read stacks of inspirational books, to attend conferences year after year, hearing the best preachers in the world, but still miss the mark. What should be your true objective? What is the supreme experience to fulfill the purpose for which God redeemed you? The knowledge of God Himself. Knowledge of anything else—no matter how good or right—will never satisfy the deepest desires of your heart. Only a personal relationship with God Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, will accomplish this.

So, if you find yourself inclined to study the philosophies of human beings to find the ultimate answer for your life, I advise you to check your motives. What are you searching for? Are you seeking more knowledge about God? Or are you seeking a personal relationship with God? Before you close your eyes tonight, take the opportunity now to set the personal knowledge of God as your highest pursuit. Once you know Him personally, you are on your way to finding true security. Only then will you truly fulfill His purpose for your life.

Is that your desire? If so, let's express that intention together with the following prayer:

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