

CONFESSIONS
OF A PASTOR

CONFESSIONS OF A PASTOR

NARAYAN NAIR



© 2012 by Narayan Nair. All rights reserved.

Cover photo by Cornelius Ralph Wong, *Rotuma Island, Republic of Fiji Islands.*

2nd Printing 2014.

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-313-2

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2011923390

This, my literary firstborn, is dedicated to
Savita: my wife, my critic, my friend.

.....

CONTENTS

Preface..... ix

Introduction xi

1. Lord! I Have Not Known Thee As I Ought1

2. Lord! I Have Not Feared Thee As I Ought . . .13

3. Lord! I Have Not Served Thee As I Ought . . .29

4. Lord! I Have Not Loved Thee As I Ought. . . .37

Conclusion47

Endnotes49

.....

PREFACE

IN THE INTRODUCTION to *The Pursuit of God* by Dr. A.W. Tozer, Samuel M. Zwemer wrote that this book contains not “the theology of the head, but of the heart.”¹ What he said about *The Pursuit of God* is also true of hymns.

Hymns are written to express the feelings of one’s heart. Some people utter praises from a heart filled with thanksgiving, like George Groves in “We Praise Thee Thou Blessed God Our Everlasting King.”² Others express adoration, as does Chapmen in, “Father How Great Delight Is Thou.”³ Miss Charlotte Elliott’s consecration to Christ was expressed in the beautiful hymn, “Just as I Am,”⁴ and some are like Thomas Benson Pollock’s confession.⁵ With our mind we formulate our theology, and with our heart we write hymns.

CONFESSIONS OF A PASTOR

The meditation of this little booklet is the expression from a heart that has been stirred by a hymn.

.....

INTRODUCTION

IN DEUTERONOMY 10:12-13 we read, “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, *and* to keep the LORD’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?”

These two verses are an introductory summary to the general exhortation (10:14-22). After informing the nation of the impossibility of living independently from God (Deuteronomy 8), and the impossibility of spiritual pride in the light of her rebellious history (Deuteronomy 9:1-11), Moses calls Israel to a total commitment. Total commitment to God was the only option available to them if they were to survive as a nation.

The first part of Moses' exhortation is God's commandment, the second is His requirement, and the third is God's blessing. The commandments of God are always given for man's benefit. When man meets God's requirements, then he will receive God's blessings. Failure to meet the requirements will result in man forfeiting the blessings attached to the commandment.

The exhortation is given in several infinitives (see Deuteronomy 4:10; 10:12-13): To walk in all His ways:

- To fear the Lord.
- To serve the Lord.
- To love the Lord.

The Church today, with all its spiritual privilege, is no better than Israel was in the wilderness. If we are to survive in this wicked generation, then we, too, must heed this call to meet His requirements. Alas, the Church has fallen far short.

Thomas Benson Pollock (1836-1896) was born in Ireland and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. Later, he studied medicine in London; but instead of pursuing a medical career, he decided to take holy orders. He first served at Saint Luke's Church, Leeds, then Saint Thomas' Church, Stamford Hill (London). For the remainder of his sixty years he ministered to the poor at Saint Alban's Mission in Birmingham, England.⁶

INTRODUCTION

After prayerful study of these requirements of God in Deuteronomy, Pollock confessed the Church's negligence in his beautiful hymn, "We Have Not Known Thee as We Ought."

We have not known Thee as we ought,
Nor learned Thy wisdom, grace and power;
The things of earth have filled our thought,
And trifles of the passing hour.

Lord, give us light Thy truth to see,
And make us wise in knowing Thee.

We have not feared Thee as we ought,
Nor bowed beneath Thine awful eye,
Nor guarded deed and word and thought,
Remembering that God was nigh.
Lord, give us faith to know Thee near,
And grant the grace of holy fear.

We have not loved Thee as we ought,
Nor cared that we are loved by Thee;
Thy presence we have coldly sought,
And feebly longed Thy face to see.
Lord, give a pure and loving heart
To feel and know the love Thou art.

We have not served Thee as we ought,
Alas, the duties left undone,
The work with little fervor wrought,
The battles lost, or scarcely won!
Lord, give the zeal, and give the might,
For Thee to toil, for Thee to fight.

CONFESSIONS OF A PASTOR

When shall we know Thee as we ought?
And fear and love and serve aright?
When shall we, out of trial brought,
Be perfect in the land of light?
Lord, may we day by day prepare
To see Thy face and serve Thee there.

Pollock was a minister of the gospel and I am convinced that many honest pastors today would echo the same daring confession of their own negligence in devotion to the Lord.

The first line of each of the four stanzas begins with the confession in the first person plural—*we*. For the purposes of this meditation, I have turned this confession to the first person singular—*I*, and rephrased the first lines by adding the word *Lord*.

- Lord, I have not known Thee as I ought.
- Lord, I have not feared Thee as I ought.
- Lord, I have not served Thee as I ought.
- Lord, I have not loved Thee as I ought.

Taking the first line of each stanza of Pollock's heart-wrenching confession, let us examine each of them a little more closely.

CHAPTER 1

.....

LORD! I HAVE NOT KNOWN THEE AS I OUGHT

IT IS THE Lord's desire that His people know Him. The Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God'" (Exodus 16:12). And to Jeremiah He said, "I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD ..." (Jeremiah 24:7).

The apostle Paul said, "...that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;" (Philippians 3:10).

The Hebrew word that is translated to English "know" is *yoda*, pronounced *yow-dah*, and it has several connotations. It can mean "to observe, to learn, to acquaint, to discover, to have understanding, and to know by learning."⁷

The Lord said, I will give him (man) a heart to know me by learning about me (*author's paraphrase*). What a wonderful promise! He said the same thing through Paul, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Notice, it is "heart knowledge" and not "head knowledge."

In English, there are three Greek words translated "know" or "knowledge:"

1. *Ginosko*: to come to know, recognize, understand; the knowledge learned through experience; a gradual knowledge; to know by observation (implies an active relation), a self-reference to the one who knows and the object known.
2. *Oida*: to know from observation; the immediate perception; to know by reflective thought.
3. *Epiginosko*: to fully perceive or understand; a full knowledge or exact knowledge gained gradually of what "*oida*" sees at once.

In Matthew 25:12, the Lord said to the women, "Truly I say to you, I do not know (*oida*) you." That is, I do not officially know you as young women; you are in no relation to me.

In Matthew 7:23, the Lord said to those who only gave lip service to Him, "I never knew (*ginosko*)

LORD! I HAVE NOT KNOWN THEE
AS I OUGHT

you.” I, personally, have never been in connection with you.

Paul confesses in Philippians 3:8, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing (i.e., personal acquaintance—*ginosko*—with) Christ Jesus my Lord.”

Oida is connected with the mind and leads to understanding. *Ginosko* is knowledge that leads to feeling. *Oida* is head knowledge, whereas *ginosko* is heart knowledge. *Ginosko* and *epiginosko* are experimental knowledge and growing personal experience, which comes day by day to those who have first seen (*oida*) and known Him by faith.

God has given us two eyes to see things that are visible, such as men and women, animals, mountains, rivers, and so forth. God has given us *three* eyes to see spiritual things. These three eyes are *intellect*, *will*, and *emotion*.

Intellect has to do with the mind, *emotion* with our feelings, and *will* with our conscience. This is the “light of men” that John speaks of in John 1:4; by this “light” (mind, emotion, and will) we can see God.

We can see God and know Him through His creation, but this is outward knowledge (*oida*) and may be carried much further by men’s imaginations, yet God can remain unknown. This is illustrated by the belief of the Athenian philosophers who were worshipping “an unknown god” (Acts 17:22-33). However, with the special revelation of the Word of God, we get to know God as we cannot know Him simply by observing His creation.

Both the Old and New Testament reveal God to mankind, but we get special knowledge of Him revealed in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). We get to know God's holiness, wisdom, love, pity, justice, and many other attributes, and may have the privilege of studying Him closely, yet not know—*ginosko*—Him in a deeper sense. For example, local church members may be familiar with their pastor, and many who are close to him may know some important traits of his character. The sound of his voice may be as clear as his appearance to their eyes, and yet they may not know him at all.

In the same way, many people, after studying the Old and New Testaments and through reflective thought—*oida*—of the truth gleaned from these studies, are yet truly without the intimate, simple knowledge—*ginosko*—of the Lord.

It is into our hearts and not our heads that this light of the knowledge of God shines. From the moment we respond to this knowledge of God, we become a child of God. This light of the knowledge of God began from that moment to change our life and our behavior.

An example of knowledge through feeling is illustrated by the words of a Greek princess who was asked, "How did you know that Hercules was a god?" She replied, "Because I was content the moment my eyes rested on him, he conquered whether he stood or walked or sat." She knew him by her feelings.⁸

LORD! I HAVE NOT KNOWN THEE
AS I OUGHT

This is what happened to us the day we were saved: We heard the Word of God, "...faith comes by hearing...the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17); we learned that God is love, and our Creator. Furthermore, we learned from Jesus' sacrifice that God's love brought Him to this earth to die for our sin and to satisfy His justice. We also learned that He rose from the dead and is alive today for those who believe Him. We may have had this head knowledge—*oida*—for many months, but then came that wonderful moment when our head knowledge became personal experience—heart knowledge—and we found ourselves at once in the presence of God. Then we, like Israel, cried, "My God, we...know Thee!" (Hosea 8:2). We began to call God "Abba" Father (see Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15). Before this we knew God by intellectual faith, but now, like the Greek princess, we have set our eyes upon Him and know Him by the feelings of our hearts.

The third Greek word for knowledge is comprised of two words: the preposition, *epi*, and the verb, *ginosko*. This compound word, *epiginosko*, refers to the deepest knowledge of God. The verb form of *epiginosko* occurs four times in the New Testament in connection with the knowledge of God. The noun form, *epignosis*, is found nine times in the New Testament.⁹

The Lord Jesus said, "...no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son" (Matthew 11:27). The Father's and Son's knowledge of each other is absolute because

it springs from the unity of the Godhead; this knowledge is far beyond our finite minds. However, the Lord not only spoke of His and His Father's knowledge of each other, but added that He would impart this profound knowledge to those who are His children—"...and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*" (Matthew 11:27b).

William Barclay said, "This is the greatest claim that Jesus ever made, the claim which is the center of the Christian faith, that He alone can reveal God to men. Other men may be sons of God, He is 'The Son.'"¹⁰

John put this in a different way when he told us that Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father;" (John 14:9).

In essence, what Jesus says is this: if you want to see what God is like, if you desire to know the mind of God, the heart of God, the nature of God; if you want to see God's whole attitude toward men, *look at Me!* It is the Christian conviction that in Jesus Christ alone we see what God is like. It is also the Christian conviction that Jesus can give that knowledge to anyone who is humble enough and trusting enough to receive it.

This verb *epignosis* (fuller knowledge) is also used by Paul twice in 1 Corinthians 13:12, when he tells the Corinthian believers they will have the fullest knowledge [of God] in heaven. To the Ephesian believers, Paul said this deep knowledge is a result of the gift from God of a spirit of wisdom and revelation (knowledge of Him), and that they

LORD! I HAVE NOT KNOWN THEE
AS I OUGHT

have the possibility of grasping this deep, intimate knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 1:17; 4:13). For the Colossian believers, Paul prayed that they might be filled with the fullest knowledge (*epignosis*) of God's will and continue to increase in the knowledge of the enjoyment of God: "For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;" (Colossians 1:9-10).

From these passages of Scripture, we learn that the deep, full knowledge of God was first possessed by our Lord by virtue of His position in the Godhead and we, too, one day will surely enjoy it in heaven. But it is also possible for believers *today* to acquire this deep, full knowledge of God by earnest prayer and a closer walk with the Lord. Furthermore, it is possible to detect those who have this knowledge because it will be reflected in their lives, attitudes, and actions.

Finally, let us look at the various stages in which a believer acquires this knowledge of God. First, there was the time when he had no knowledge of God; his life was filled with the material pleasures of this world. Then one day he was introduced to the message of the gospel. He heard about God's love demonstrated in the death of His Son, heaven and

hell became a reality to him, and God now became known (*oida*) to him.

Sometime after that, the Lord Jesus confronted him and says, “I am your Savior, believe Me; My sacrifice on the cross was for you, trust Me; I love you and want to live in you, accept Me” (*author’s paraphrase*). The Holy Spirit opens the believer’s heart and mind, and he accepts the Lord as His personal Savior. He now has personal acquaintance with God, and the two become friends. He spends much time in the Bible looking up God’s commands and does his best to obey them. He also reads, believes, and rejoices in the promises of God. His personal knowledge of God deepens; now he begins to experience the fullest knowledge (*epignosis*) of God. Like the psalmist, he exclaims, “My heart overflows with a good theme” (Psalm 45:1), and with the hymn writer, Fannie J. Crosby, the believer sings:

O’ the pure delight of a single hour
 That before Thy throne I spend,
 When I kneel in prayer and with Thee, my God,
 I commune as friend with friend.¹¹

There are those today who think they know the Lord, but in reality they don’t.

There was once a group of young American ladies who went to visit Buckingham Palace. They were filled with expectation and eagerness to see King George the Sixth, the father of the present Queen of England. These eager young ladies, however, had a

LORD! I HAVE NOT KNOWN THEE
AS I OUGHT

little problem: they were not sure what King George looked like! An elderly woman who was strolling past heard the concern and quietly crept up to them and offered her help, saying, “Don’t worry dears, I will be able to point him out to you.”

After a short wait two gentlemen, dressed in red tunics complemented with their well-polished shoes, approached the tall, dark-colored, gold tipped gate and went about opening it. Behind these two guards walked a man in an army uniform, followed by three other men. The lady said to the girls, “There he is! The one who is walking ahead of those three men is King George the Sixth.” A young English gentleman standing behind them laughed when he heard the elderly lady speak, and said, “I beg your pardon madam; that is not the king, but his body guard!” Then they saw another man walking many steps behind the three men, dressed in a casual shirt and long pants. The English gentleman said, “Now ladies; *that* is the king! I know because I have met him!”¹²

The moral of this story is simple. The elderly lady obviously knew *about* the King, but the English gentleman had an advantage; he knew who King George was and what he looked like, because he had had the privilege of meeting him.

There are those who know about Jesus as the Savior and Substitute, whose sacrifice on the cross brought them pardon from sin and new life. But there are those who are personally acquainted with Him and know Him as their Lord and Friend. Such was the case of an actor and a clergyman.

Some years ago a great actor had just finished a very successful evening of recital. Afterward he was asked into the drawing room by a group of people who followed him there pleading with him to recite one more time for them. After continuous requests he consented. He asked if there was anything they especially wanted to hear. After a minute's pause an old, retired minister of the gospel asked him to recite Psalm 23. A strange look came over the actor's face. He paused for a moment, and then said, "Sir, I will, on one condition, that after I have recited it, you, my friend, will do the same."

"I!" said the preacher, in surprise, "I am not an elocutionist, but, if you wish it, I shall do so as you please."

Impressively, the actor began the psalm. His voice and intonation were perfect. He held his audience spellbound, and as he finished there was a great burst of applause from those in the drawing room. Then the actor turned to the preacher and said, "Sir, now it is your turn." The preacher was helped to stand upon a chair and began to recite the psalm:

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
 He leads me beside quiet waters.
 He restores my soul;
 He guides me in the paths of righteousness
 For His name's sake.
 Even though I walk through the valley
 of the shadow of death,
 I fear no evil; for Thou art with me;

LORD! I HAVE NOT KNOWN THEE
AS I OUGHT

Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou dost prepare a table before me in the
presence of my enemies;
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow
me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

His voice was not remarkable, his tone was not faultless, but when he finished there was not a dry eye in the room. The actor stood up with tears in his eyes and his voice quivered as he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I reached your eyes and ears, yet this man has reached your hearts. The difference is just this: I know the Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd."¹³

Some of us know the psalm, and know *about* the Shepherd, but we do not know Him in an intimate way, nor have we desired to know Him in that way.

Pollock said, "Lord, we have not known Thee as we ought."

Lord, I don't know You as my personal acquaintance, nor do I know You as my Friend as I should.