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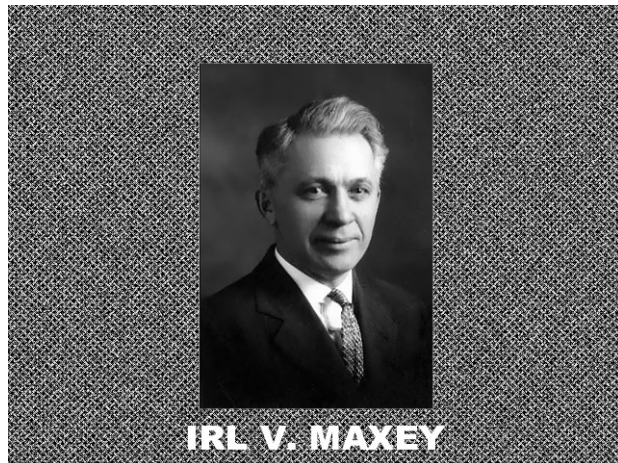
**KNOWING GOD
A Sermon By Irl V. Maxey**

**Digitized and Edited
By Duane V. Maxey**

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS FILE

This sermon was written in Alicel, Oregon on October 9, 1914 -- not far from Imbler, Oregon where papa's sermons of 1913 were written. Chronologically, he would have been 32 years old at the time this sermon was written, but within days of being 15 years old as a Christian, having been converted on October 15, 1899. Our brother, Irl Parker Maxey records the following in his book, "We'll Get To That Later": -- "In his early ministry Father was a Methodist circuit rider. It was while he was on one of these circuits in the northeast corner of the state of Oregon in the beautiful Blue Mountains where he lived then that my brother, John and I were born. John, the second child, was born on December 29, 1913 at Imbler, Oregon about twenty miles north of the city of LaGrande. I was the third child, born in the little village of Alicel halfway between LaGrande and Imbler on August 24, 1915."

I am not sure whether papa preached both at Imbler and at Alicel while living at each of those places, but it appears from Parker's remarks that the family had moved to Alicel at the time of his birth. Regardless of where the family was then residing, again, papa records that this sermon was written in Alicel. May God bless the reading of this sermon to the hearts of all who read it. -- Duane V. Maxey, (Ahwatukee) Phoenix, Arizona, February 8, 2006.

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You will find our text this morning in that wonderful prayer of Jesus as recorded in the 17th chapter of the gospel according to John.

SERMON TEXT: -- John 17:3 -- "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

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Is there one here today who does not want to live eternally? Looking into the narrow walls of the grave, as the poet says, "makes thee to shudder." I will not say to you as he did, "Go forth under the open sky and list to nature's teaching." For my wail against the mountains only brings back the echo of my miseries: "I shall not die! I shall not die!"

Oh, to live! Oh, to live! comes to my heart, and not being able to look behind the dark curtain that hangs at the grave I cling to this life. As the poet says, "The life I cling to, my fathers would cling to, though it fleets from us all like a hind on the wing." Search the fields of nature and you will not be relieved, for there all echoes your own heart burden: "I shall die."

Though the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork, it does not bring joy and knowledge to the soul. Oh, if you would live forever you must know God, for this is life eternal.

What is it to know God? The Greek word here "know" is "ginosko" -- to be acquainted with, to be familiar with.

Now surely that is very plain. We must be acquainted with God and familiar with Him, till His character is well-known. Oh, it is life to realize that God, the great being He is, is so familiar to us. We say "Father" and it is neither a stretch of imagination nor strain of sense. It is no exaggeration of terms. Glory to God! Oh, the lack of this knowledge among professed Christians!

I shall tell you a few things of Dr. Abbott that darken and help our view of God. I only take his suggestions and work the way.

It is very plain why some people do not know God. They are anarchists to His will. They do not wish to be subservient to a Holy Will, but must be free and independent. They will not say, "Tomorrow, if God wills, I will do so and so."

Even church people are in mad pursuit of other things that nights are spent in worry over loss of money, grain, apples, or honor and friendship, but they never lay awake at night because they do not know God -- because they are not familiar with Him. The fact is that the loss of familiarity with God always brings worry over earthly things to its utmost height.

A woman once said to me: "You should not call Jesus such endearing names in prayer, for that is not proper." No one would prevent me from using endearing names for my wife, for she is very dear to me. Oh, Jesus is more dear to me than any earthly thing. Why may I not say "Dear Jesus"?

Again, some may be prevented from knowing God by the mere seeking of the fruits of Christianity. They want peace and joy, but are not willing to take the persecutions. Jesus told his disciples that they who forsook houses and lands would receive a hundred fold more -- with persecutions. We are heirs with Jesus, not only in glory, but in persecutions also. You will never know God if you hope to be pleasers of men -- just "nicey salvy" folks who never offend anyone. "The offence of the cross" has not "ceased" (Galatians 5:11), and "Yea, and all that will live godly (all who know God) in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Fruits of the Spirit will come, but must be in God's way.

Some do not know God because their soul-powers are atrophied through disuse. Darwin says of himself: "At thirty, I liked to read the poetry of Shelley, Byron, Milton, and others. I liked to read Shakespeare, especially the historical parts. Also, I had tastes for art and music." But at fifty he never liked poetry, nauseated at reading Shakespeare, and all love of art and music were gone.

Oh, you can fail to use the Spirit as He comes, and thus, not retaining God in your souls, you are finally given over to a reprobate mind. To you, there is no God, though He shone over you with the brightness of the sun.

How strange that folks enjoy such as they say they do. Hear the blind man criticizing his brother who sees because he shouts at the sunlight. You may not be entirely so, but you have not been exercised in soul and hence you never will know God.

Again, I would say that the great thing of the church that prevents many from knowing God is idolatry.

The first is creeds. Oh, how I would like to break your old idol! -- the creed. Creeds were made a long time ago. One generation is full of the Spirit and makes a

creed consisting of a few simple words to help their faith and to clarify their belief. The next generation stops at the belief in their belief, and never knows God.

The Apostolic Creed, The Nicene Creed, The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, or The Westminster Confession -- what are they but rattling shells! -- the idols of thousands who never knew God or heard of Him but my mental vision.

Here you come to say my creed is right. Another says, no this should be left out, and so we have a new church started at once. Creeds, Creeds, Creeds!

Here I come to clear away your old, fossilized creeds. Oh! that you would here stop, clear away the rubbish, and get to God! Oh, I hear Bryant say,

"Through clouds of doubt and creeds of fear,
The light is breaking, calm and clear."

Creeds were only windows to let the light out:

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

-- "The Chambered Nautilus" by Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894)

Again, someone is confident that they do not believe in creeds, but surely the church is infallible, and Christ said Peter would build on this Rock, and the gates of Hell should not prevail against it.*

[*This is an obvious reference to Roman Catholicism.]

Hear me! The church is a human organization of saved people who know God. Knowing God was first, and if a church or churches cease to know God, that moment they become a menace to society. Oh! for shame! that people think or speak of a continuing church [such as the Roman Catholic Church] as if it were a great, big holy something without lives! The church is made of lives. The church is nothing, yea worse than nothing, if the people in it do not know God! Break away from the idea of clinging to a church! Cling to God! -- and you will cling to the church.

Last, I will say that the Bible itself is used by many to prevent them from knowing God. Wonderful Book! but unless God was the author it is no more than any other. More, you may fill your mind with scripture, as many atheists do, and it

will only be so much queer literature. The Bible did not cause religion, but the religion of Jehovah revealed to hearts caused the Bible.*

[*I am confident that papa here meant that, in its origin, the Bible came into existence through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit who inspired men of God to write it, rather than vice versa: -- the Bible leading men to God. However, I am sure that my father did not mean to say that God does not often lead men to God through enlightening their hearts as they read the Bible.]

The Bible is holy because God is its Author. The words are spirit and life because God makes them so. Do not misunderstand me. The Dear Old Book is wonderful, but you must not let even this hinder you from knowing its Author -- for only then can the Bible be to you what it should be. The Church can only be powerful as its members know God. "This is life eternal."

How can I know God? is a great question to me.

Jesus reveals God to us. The great All-Present, All-Wise and All-Powerful God is revealed to our minds by the lowly Jesus of Nazareth. I could not grasp God's character till I saw it in Jesus' life. Thank God, that He manifested Himself in the flesh. That manifestation was Jesus. That is the only true God.

How does God think of sorrow? Jesus, at the tomb of Lazarus, will tell you. How does God think of the vile? Jesus forgiving the adulteress will tell you. How does God think of the unstable or doubting? Jesus' treatment of Peter and Thomas will tell you. What does God think of hypocrisy? Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees in Jerusalem as recorded in Matthew 23 will tell you.

Thus, we know the character of God and become familiar with it in the abstract. Now, make His character real. I will say the Holy Ghost overshadows man's heart and there writes His laws upon the fleshly tables of the heart. He also rolls back the veil of the flesh and you behold Him face to face, and having thus accepted His nature you keep His commandments. He, taking the things of God, shows them to you. You are acquainted with Him -- your spirit rejoicing in its treasure, His Spirit witnessing to you in peace and to the world through your righteous life. Now knowing God includes being familiar with Him. You have touched His character. Yielding your all, you keep His commandments and He, God the Holy Ghost, and God the Son take up their abode with you. Surely then you are familiar with God if He lives with you. "This is life eternal." You know the God of eternity. He lives in you.

Last, I will say that all true preaching takes the Word to show Christ to your mind. Jesus moves in the power of the Holy Ghost to bring Himself to your heart. He will come to you today, if you will let Him. He will change your heart and stay with you. This is eternal life, friends. What is death? Now it is only changing faith for sight. Glory to God!

Ah, friends, know Him! Come to Jesus today!

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THE END OF THIS SERMON