

A Righteous "Know It All"

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Ephesians 4. Let's go there this evening. I honestly never thought we would be in Ephesians this long on Sunday night. I was just going to do a few messages and I can't get out of it, but I think, well, I know it's the providence of God. The book of Ephesians was such a foundational book for us as a church as God was reforming us to be more biblically healthy in so many ways, and primarily with understanding the Gospel and understanding the doctrine of salvation, and so looking at it again has been good for all of us and perhaps for folks who are newer to us, it has been very good to kind of form in your heart and mind just what we stand on and what we believe.

Let me say to you that where we stand and what we believe is nothing new. Two things that I've always done when I have led you to a conclusion or to a conviction that might be different from most evangelical churches of our day is that number one, it's got to be thoroughly taught in Scripture. It can't be a secondary doctrine. It can't be something that good men can disagree on. It's got to be foundational doctrines like the doctrine of salvation and like the doctrine of repentance, the doctrine of faith, whatever it might be. And not only must it be thoroughly biblical, secondly, it must be taught in church history. We would be the most arrogant if we think we have run upon something in Scripture that 2,000 years of scholarship missed. Amen? But what we do find if you will study church history, is the things you and I stand on and believe were thoroughly embraced and practiced in church history. Just in the last 75 to 150 years, the church has drifted away from these things when a real spirit of pragmatism, where is all the practical ways we can get results; and good men, I think, and often had good motives and some of them walked into some things and it always happens when you try to help God's work out, when you try to help God's work advance outside of biblical parameters, you get in a mess every single time. You're like fighting a tar baby. Remember that old story? Was it Brer Rabbit? Was he the one that fought the tar baby? Just every time you try to get away and do better, you get more tar all over you.

So Ephesians, getting back to what I was saying, was that book that sort of nailed down this is where we stand on the Gospel and on the doctrine of salvation. Now we are in the practical part of the book where the apostle is giving these exhortations about how we ought to be living as a church family together and as individual Christians in this fallen world, and we come in Ephesians 4:20 and 21, a message I've entitled, "A Righteous

'Know It All.'" Usually when you think of a know it all, it's a proud person and they are unrighteous, but there is a righteous way to be a know it all.

Verse 20 and 21, Ephesians 4. He says,

20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

We're going to talk a whole lot about have you heard him? Are you one of those who are learning of him? Are you taught by him? Heard him, learned from him, and being taught by him.

I, not IV, I. It's all true. That little phrase at the end of verse 21, "just as truth is in Jesus." Jesus is the source of all truth, all spiritual reality. Jesus transcends all of the things. He transcends time. He transcends space, the realm of things. He transcends history. I think we get a little sloppy on this doctrine of Jesus is the truth and we kind of hold that, "Well, he's the highest and wisest." No, he's not, he's the only. He's not the best among others, he's the only truth. He's the only one that's eternal and transcends everything. He even transcends eternal reality. He always was and always is. He always is, he always was perfect. He always was, he always is right. He always was and he always is truth. He was all of these things before time. Colossians 1:16 and 17 reminds us, "For by Him," that's Jesus, "all things were created," he's the Creator, "both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before," that's eternity, "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." When Jesus was being challenged by the religious authorities of his day as to, "Just who are you? Why do you think you can just show up, you untrained, unlearned country boy from Galilee? How can you just show up and speak so authoritatively?" And Jesus said, well, I'm paraphrasing, that's where they were coming from, and Jesus responds in John 8:58 and says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." You guys go back to father Abraham, and rightfully so, that's your blood lineage. You go back to Abraham, he said, but before Abraham ever was, I am. He is eternal. He is truth.

He is before time but he is also during time. John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'" He was true from eternity past. He is true in time, and he will be true in eternity future, or the truth, I should say. Revelation 11:15, "Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.'" So he's the truth of eternity past, he is truth in time, he is truth in eternity future. The truth is in Jesus.

Listen, what Jesus says about everything is the absolute truth about everything. Again, he doesn't just have a higher understanding, he doesn't just have a deeper viewpoint, he's not just more spiritual than others, he is it. Period. His viewpoint is the only truth. There is no truth outside of him. You see, what Jesus says about God is truth. What Jesus says about man, what man is. Oh, I wish I could go into our culture hearing what these politicians

are doing today and all the people that they are supposed to be so smart and so intellectual and have the insight on how man is supposed to live. I wish they would learn what Jesus says about who man is, how fallen he is, how blinded he is, how depraved and lost he is. What Jesus says about God is the truth and what Jesus says about man is the truth. What Jesus says about creation is the truth. What Jesus says about history is the truth. What Jesus says about sin is the truth. What Jesus says about righteousness is the truth. What Jesus says about grace is the truth. What Jesus says about faith is the truth. What Jesus says about salvation is the truth. What Jesus says about life, the purpose of life is the truth. What Jesus says about death is the truth. What Jesus says about relationships, how they work, is the truth. What Jesus says about heaven is the truth. What Jesus says about hell is the truth. What Jesus says about judgment is the truth. What Jesus says about eternity is the truth. And everything else Jesus says is the truth. Am I making myself clear? He is truth. He's not just the greatest among many great teachers, he's the only true teacher. Anyone else who stumbles upon something of the truth, it's truth about him and truth he already knew. He is the truth. Jesus, this physical man, this one who took on human flesh and dwelt among us, died on the cross, was buried, rose again, has ascended back up into heaven, who sits at the right hand of the Majesty on High. There is a man running the world, the universe today, and he is the truth, the true man, Jesus Christ.

So it's all true. I. It's all true. He's talking to these Ephesians. You've got to understand, they came out of pagan darkness. They came out of these of old Roman, Greek, idolatrous philosophies. They worshiped all these gods and had all these man-centered, man-derived ideas about what made life worth living and how you are to live life, and their society was just full of wickedness. That's what happens when a society becomes man-centered instead of God-centered, wickedness abounds everywhere: lust, immorality, sensuality, callousness, hardness, just ugliness everywhere.

So Paul says to these Ephesians, "You've been saved out of that error and you have come to know Christ who is now the truth." Now, what is his point going to be? His point is going to be everything about your new life is different from your old life. It's all different now. You've gone from black to white. You've gone from darkness to light. You've gone from the kingdom of Satan to the glorious kingdom of God and what you're involved in now, what you are a part of now that you've become Christians, it's all true. It's the truth.

Don't listen, you young people, don't listen to these, sometimes you're going to have a teacher at school or somebody you listen to in the culture, maybe a politician or somebody, and they seem so right and they so compassionate and they seem so caring. Listen to me: anything they say that contradicts the word of God or Jesus Christ is a lie. Anything. And listen, Satan sends some of his most persuasive messengers in a sweet caring package. You say, "But they are so kind. They care so much. They even cry about it."

I literally saw maybe 10 minutes of this Golden Globes thing they had the other night, you know, where Hollywood stars dress up to congratulate each other on how great they are, and the whole evening was dedicated to women being abused and harassed, and there

is a problem there but there has always been a problem there and that is wrong and that is sin. I raised three daughters and I'm married to one, and I believe that's as evil as anybody does. But here it shows you the foolishness, wickedness of the world, here these women are, beautiful women, standing before God and everybody, 90% unclothed, \$10,000 gowns, \$1,000 hairdos and make-up, and I understand they can borrow jewels, they can wear millions of dollars in jewels sometimes, and all of this sensual, dressed like a harlot presentation and they are standing up there crying hot crocodile tears saying, "Please respect us for our intellect." Hello? That's not what you are presenting. You are dressed like a harlot and you want us to respect you for your intellect and your talent and your creative ability? Now listen to me, it doesn't matter how a woman dresses, a man should never abuse a woman. Period. Period. But if you ladies want to be taken seriously, dress like a woman of God, not a harlot. But, you see, that's the wisdom of the world, amen?

You see, what Paul, and that's the culture the Ephesians came out of. They came out of a culture of gross sexual promiscuity and immorality and he's saying, "Now you're on a different track. Now you ladies can learn that there is a beauty to even your body and your hair and your eyes, there is a beauty God has given you, but he has given it to you for your husbands, not to the world." So Jesus, he gets it all back in line again. He gets it all squared away and within the parameters and where it's supposed to be. It's all truth now that you are a part of. It's all truth.

Secondly, notice this, II. How am I doing so far tonight? II. It's all new. He's saying to these Ephesians it's a brand new thing that has happened to you. Nothing of what you are experiencing now as a Christian is what you knew before. This is not just a tuned up, a little more moral, a little cleaner, a little more ethical way of life than you knew before. No, it's all totally radically new.

Verse 20, he says, "you did not learn Christ in this way." What he's saying is that, "Through my preaching when I came to you, you believed the Gospel, you believed on Christ, and from that point onward you began to make a radical break with your past." From that point onward, as I have told you 1001 times, let me tell you 1002 times, you became a repentant. You became one that began to see what's in your heart and what's in the world is warped and untrue and error and sinful and evil and you don't want to walk in that any longer. Now that you've learned of Christ, you are learning a whole new way to live because Christ is not anything like this old world.

Now he doesn't just say in verse 20 that you learned Christ, he says in verse 21, "if indeed you have heard Him." Interesting, you have heard him. He didn't say you have heard about him, he said you heard him. I think that's very significant. Can't be just super dogmatic here but I believe there is really something to that. Paul is basically saying, "When I preached the Gospel to you, Jesus spoke to you." There is some truth to the phrase "God spoke to my heart." I understand it's mystical. I understand you can't put it under a microscope and examine it, but God speaks to men's hearts and he does it through the Gospel.

God speaks to hearts and can I say something to you? Whoever they are, wherever they are, whatever their condition, if God doesn't speak to them through the Gospel, he's not going to speak to them through anything else. You can just put on all the fanciful shows on you want, you can put the dog and pony show on and the signs and wonders and miracles and strobe lights and smoke machines, you can do all the shenanigans you want, if God doesn't speak through the Gospel, he's not going to speak. Are you kidding me, you mean to tell me that the eternal souls of men depends on us being clever and in tune with the culture? Are you kidding me? Do you really believe that's true? "Well, this is helping folks get saved." No, it's not, it's helping folks make false professions of faith, is what it's doing, because they are getting all wound up in the emotion of the thing and they are getting an emotional decision instead of a true, hard, mature, resting faith in Jesus Christ. I mean, what are you going to have to do next? If you get them saved in that kind of shenanigans and nonsense going on, amusements and entertainments of the world that you brought into the church, how are you going to keep them for 37 years? That's how long I've been here. There is only one way I've been able to stay here 37 years is Jesus spoke to many of your hearts, not because we've got a better show this year than we had last year.

He said, "if you have heard Him." Did not Jesus say in John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice"? Same idea. "And I know them, and they follow Me." Then Romans 10:14, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" The Greek wording is not whom they had not heard about, it's they haven't heard him. "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Again, not heard about him, heard him. So Paul says there is a brand-new thing that has happened to you, the Gospel has been preached to you and you have heard Christ. You've heard him.

I'm telling you, when I was a brand-new 19-year-old kid driving back to Middle Tennessee State University, lost, undone, miserable, turned on my radio, heard a Presbyterian preacher share a simple Gospel message over the radio, and that night I was apprehended by Christ. I want to tell you, I heard Jesus that night. I mean, I heard him. He became as real to me as you sitting in front of me. You say, "Well, pastor, did he speak to you in an audible voice?" No, it was louder than that. That's what happens when God reaches in, you hear Christ. Now, for some people it's not just an immediate loud voice but it's a continuation under the ministry of the word where you are sensing, "Christ speaks to me." I often call it the amen of the Spirit. The truth goes out. My preaching is not important, what's important is that I just preach the truth and the Spirit applies it to your heart. The Spirit of God who lives in you because you are now one who has been taught of Christ. You are one who has heard Christ and now you continue to hear him. He said this is all brand-new. It's all true and it's all brand-new. When Christ is preached faithfully whether it's for evangelism to the lost or edification of the saved, it is in essence Christ teaching about Christ. I marvel, I absolutely marvel that God would ordain the means of fallen, fallible, weak humans proclaiming Christ to be his means, if you will, to communicate himself to others. That's a phenomenal thing. I would not have done it that way but I'm not God. When sound Bible teaching goes forth, it is Christ teaching about Christ.

So he says you have been taught in him and you have learned Christ as you have heard him, and his point, here is where his point is coming from: as you've heard him, you are learning him, you are taught of him, you find yourself on a very different path than you were on before you heard him. It's just different now. It's all true and it's all new.

Now the last thing, it's all you. It's all you. He's saying all this is true and new in you. III. in your outline. It's all true and it's all new and it's all in you. That's where he's coming from. He uses aorist tense verbs here in all three of these expressions: where you have heard him, you have learned of him, and you are being taught by him. Aorist tense means God performed it in the past. Paul is saying when you first believed back yonder when I preached to you, was he in Ephesus three years preaching in Ephesus? Somewhere in that three years, they were saved and that began, but now it has continuing consequences. Aorist tense means finished action with continuing results and he says, "That's where you are. You heard him but you are hearing him still. You've learned of him but you are learning of him still. You have been taught of him but you are being taught of him still. It's all in you. It's all yours now. It's who you are. There is a brand-new you."

Now, let's contrast this new true you with the old you. We could just say, let's go back to verse 17. You've got to get the flow of the context. "I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind." You used to be one who walked like the other pagan lost people in the world. You had an empty mind and your life was on futile, worthless, empty purposes, and that's no longer who you are. Verse 18, "being darkened in their understanding," that's what you used to be, "excluded from the life of God," that's what you used to be, "ignorance that was in you," that's what you used to be, ignorant of God and the truth of God and what mattered, "hardness of your heart," that's what you used to be. Verse 19, "they, having become callous," a callused and hardness to sin in your life; sin didn't bother you, you wanted to see how much more I can get involved in and that used to be you, that's not who you are anymore, you "have given yourselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity," that's what you used to be, he says. That's no longer who you are, though. That's the old you but now there is a true new you since you heard him. Since you heard him.

Do you know what's wrong with these 8 to 10 million Baptists that are on church rolls that never go to church? They have heard some preachers but they haven't heard him. They have heard some preachers but they haven't heard him. They walked to the magic spot down front but they haven't walked to him. They have repeated a prayer after an evangelist but they haven't heard him. Paul says when you have heard him, because he says, "if indeed you have heard Him." Now, you are not perfect. Paul is not suggesting that but there is a new trajectory. I like to say it this way, there is a new purpose and pattern to your life now.

Now, the implied question of the hour is: what are some things we should be looking for in our lives that assures us that we have heard him, that we are one of those who have learned of him, that we are one of those who have been taught of Christ? Well, 2 Peter

1:10 tells us we ought to be thinking these things, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing of you." How do you know you are one whom he has called and chosen? Be all the more certain. It's kind of interesting, isn't it, that Peter didn't say, "Don't be all the more certain that you've believed on Jesus." That wouldn't be wrong biblically but that's just not the emphasis. Be certain about him calling and choosing you. "Well, pastor, how do I know if he has called me and chosen me?" You will be one who has heard him, who is learning him and being taught of him.

From the balance of Scripture, let me give you some thoughts here. 1 under III, I'm doing real good tonight. I'm getting them all right. 1 under III is: a deepening awareness of sin, and I want you to add-on there, guilt and overall ungodliness. A deepening awareness. You see, as Christ teaches you, you'll become more deeply aware of the sinner you are before a holy God. I mean, if you just got saved and you say, "Well, I'm not just that bad of a guy, I'm not that bad of a lady, and you know, everybody sins. I know I've sinned. I've got a bad temper every now and then." If it's kind of flippant to you, you either have never heard him or you are very shallow and backslidden being taught of him. If you have heard him and you are being taught of him and you are learning of him, there is a deepening awareness of this.

Romans 3:9 through 19. We'll blitz through there real quick. "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks," that's everybody, "are all under sin; just as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.'" Now here's what happens: if you know him and are learning of him and are being taught of him, when you read that, something inside of you says, "Lord, that's me. Lord, that's me. Apart from grace, that's me." There is just a solid amen of affirmation, "That's me. That's me."

Verse 13, "Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips." That means there is a tendency for rottenness to keep coming out of our mouths because our natural fallen heart is full of rottenness.

Verse 14, "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." If you are one who has heard him and are taught of him and are learning him, something in you says, "Lord, that's me. Lord, that's me."

When the woman was caught in adultery, Jesus was teaching on this very subject, and later on after that event, Jesus says to the disciples, "I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." You see, these Pharisees just looked at the outside and those Pharisees who were adulterers had hidden it quite well, and so they felt pretty good about themselves because they felt like nobody has seen me do it, and Jesus said, "You don't understand something, every time you have lusted in your heart, you are guilty before God as an adulterer." And so

that makes all guilty and when you have known him, when you have heard him, when you are a learner of him, when you are taught of him, you are his, there is something in your heart that says, "Lord, that's me. Lord, that's me." You are more, there is a deepening awareness. Like the Apostle Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:15, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."

I was talking to the professor who is an atheist from New York, Columbia, I don't know where he is a professor. He is doing some kind of study. I told you about him. And I said, "Professor," I think I said, "Doc, you've got to understand something." You know, he had just a simplistic view of Bible thumping, Southern Baptist people. I said, "You've got to understand something, I'm the worst sinner I know. We do not proclaim these truths saying that we've arrived and everybody else is beneath us, we're just saying we're repenters and we've found a Savior and we're trying to walk on a different track. But I'm the worst sinner I know." If you've heard him and are being taught of him and are learning of him, there is a deepening awareness of sin and guilt and overall ungodliness.

2 under III. There is a deepening confidence, trust, on Christ to cleanse and pardon from all sin. There is just a deepening awareness. Paul said in Philippians 3:3, "I put no confidence in the flesh. I put no confidence in the flesh." There is a part of us perhaps after we are first converted where we are still in that fleshly, "I'm going to do good works," kind of thing. "I'm going to prove to God that I'm worthy of this salvation." But as you mature, if you've heard him and you are learning of him and you are taught of him, there is just that deepening awareness, "O God, there is nothing! Everything I put on to try to prove my worth just makes me more guilty before you." It's another effort for you to throw up your merit which makes God sick. You don't cast up your merit and say, "God, I'm worth it." You admit your worthlessness to say, "Christ, you are the only worthy one." A deepening trust, confidence, in Christ's death and that alone to cleanse and pardon of sin.

3. A deepening love for Christ. I can say to you with a straight face and all the joy in my heart, "I love him more today than I ever have." The more I learn of him, the more I love him. I just marvel over his wisdom, his power, his beauty, the depths of his love, the unfathomable truth of election and predestination and me being the object of his unmerited favor, that he chose me as an object of his favor and not to be an object of his wrath. How do you explain that? I just marvel over him. If you have heard him, Paul says to the Ephesians, you are learning of him and being taught of him, there is just a deepening love for him.

In John 16:27, Jesus said, "for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me." Interesting. He said you are one of those true children of God and one of the evidences of that, you just have a growing love for me, and that means the Father loves you. Do you know that God doesn't love everybody? Not the same way. It is true there is a general love of God for all men. That's why as I preached in the message this morning, that's why justice hasn't fallen from heaven on everybody yet because God has got a general love and long-suffering for mankind. But there is a special, unique, covenant love he has only for those who love Jesus, his Son. A special, unique, covenant love for those

who love Jesus. Now, I know what some of you do, some of you are just on an ever unceasing investigation and condemnation of yourselves and you are saying tonight, "I don't love him like I ought to." Well, that's good that you recognize you ought to love him more, but as he is revealed more to you, you love him more dearly. You trust him more fully.

4. A deepening contentment, a deepening joy in his Lordship. A deepening embrace of his Lordship. Paul said, "I am a prisoner of Christ Jesus," as he is chained in that little hut outside the Imperial Palace of Nero, probably in filth and squalor and suffering in his health, and yet he could say, "This is my Lord's assignment," and you just sense it in the spirit of how he writes it that he has learned to joy in whatever his Lord says is his lot in life. We don't arrive at these things but there is a growing joy and embracing of Christ's lordship.

5. The last one, if you have heard him, you are learning of him, if you are taught of him, you are totally different, on a different radical, different track than what you were on as an unsaved man, you have a deepening love for Scripture and for his church. A deepening love for Scripture and for his church. John 14:21, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me." It's just a deepening confidence in the truth of the word of God.

That's why, brothers and sisters, when we are surrounded and bombarded by a culture that just keeps pounding us that the truth of the Bible is not reliable and not trustworthy, some of y'all know what the Babylonian Bee is? Have you seen the Babylonian Bee? I think it's a twitter thing and it's satire, did I use that word right? It kind of has a funny way of expressing the truth, a twist on things. And they had one the other day that showed a young woman looking at her smart phone and it says, "A millennial is looking at her Bible out to see if God has updated his position on homosexuality." It's just a sarcastic way of saying, that's the age we are in. Everything is up for grabs. Everything is for sale. No, when you love Jesus – now listen to me – even if you get in the culture and it begins to work on you, you come and sit under some firebrand preacher and he throws it out again and something in you says, "Yes, that's right. I'm lining back up with the word of God."

Not only a love for scriptures but a love for his church. That's your local church. That's your brothers and sisters in Christ. 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life," that's another phrase that just means you've heard him, you are learning of him, you are taught of him, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." I just find myself drawn to, I find myself wanting to be around, I find myself wanting to fellowship with other folks who look like they have heard him too. And that does take a while sometimes because in this Bible Belt culture, there is a lot of false profession, there is a lot of churchianity without Christianity, there is a lot of going through the motions without the real thing, and as I've told you in my own testimony, I wondered why I didn't feel a bonding and a close love connection with so many people very early in my Christianity that went to church and were regular and I thought what's wrong, and I thought there was something wrong with me. Well, I would

admit I need to keep growing and maturing but as time went on, I believe what really was the issue, the biggest part of the issue was there were just a lot of faithful church members who had never heard him and there is a spiritual bond and a spiritual love and a spiritual connection that God gives you for brothers and sisters in Christ.

That's the real evidence that you are one of these that Paul says to the church at Ephesus, "if indeed you have heard Him." You are on a totally different track. Everything now, you know the truth, it's all yours. It's all true, it's all new. You can't bring anything out of your old life to help you. Nothing. It's all true, it's all new, and it's all you, and so there is a righteous way you can be a know it all, because if you know him, you know it all. You know it all. It's all true. It's all new. It's all you. Now Paul is basically saying, "Live like it." Live like it.