

AMKPC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dear AMKPC Friends,

BOOTH will run tentatively on 4 and 25 June 2017.

LIBRARY UPDATES

We are in the midst of clearing out old titles. If you would like to have any of the books to bless someone, please let us know.

If you are looking for a particular resource, you can do a search in the church website (<https://www.amkpc.org.sg/library/>) or contact us.



How God Opens the Eyes of the Heart

by John Piper, from *desiringGod.org*

How does someone who is blind to the glory of God come to see him for who he really is?

To be sure, the natural eyes and ears and brains are part of the process. Without them we cannot even see or hear or construe the natural things that reveal God's glory: creation, incarnation, gospel, Scripture. But this natural seeing is not decisive in seeing the glory of God. "Seeing they do not see," Jesus said (Matthew 13:13). Something more than the use of the natural eyes and ears and brains must happen.

The way the apostle Paul puts it is that you must have "the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know" (Ephesians 1:18). This too is strange — the heart has eyes! But perhaps not beyond comprehension.

Most people are at home speaking of "the heart" as something more than the blood-pumping organ in our chest. Such language is not foreign to us. This "heart" is the real us. Intuitively we know that there is more to us than flesh and bones. We know we are not mere chemicals in a sack of skin. We would not talk the way we do about things like justice and love if we didn't believe that.

Eyes of the Heart

Is it so strange, then, to add to this immaterial personhood the idea of immaterial eyes — “the eyes of the heart”? This inner person, who is the real us, sees and knows things that are not identical with what the eyes of the body can see. Pascal said, “The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things” (*Pensées*). There is a spiritual seeing through and beyond natural seeing. There is a spiritual hearing through and beyond natural hearing. There is spiritual discerning through and beyond natural reasoning.

How, then, may we conceive of what happens when the heart sees the glory of God? I found a clue in the way Paul speaks of our knowledge of the glory of God in nature. On the one hand, Paul says that we all “know God.”

“Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him” (Romans 1:21). That is astonishing. Everyone knows God! But in other places, Paul emphatically says that by nature people do *not* know God. For example, “In the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:21). The “Gentiles do not know God” (1 Thessalonians 4:5). Formerly “you did not know God” (Galatians 4:8; see 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 John 4:8).

Who Knows God?

So, what does Paul mean in Romans 1:21 when he says that all human beings “know God”? To answer this, we might simply quote Romans 1:19–20, “What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.”

But is that all Paul means when he says, “They knew God”? I think there is more. In Romans 2:14–15, Paul says that people who have never heard of the law of God sometimes do what the law requires. Their consciences witness to God’s will. He puts it like this: “They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts.”

So, here is my suggestion: “Knowing God” in Romans 1:21 includes this deeper heart experience of Romans 2:15. The analogy that I find helpful is to conceive of the innate knowledge of God and his will as a kind of template or mold in the human heart. This template is designed by God in every human heart with a shape, or a form, that corresponds to the glory of God. In other words, if the glory of God were seen with the eyes of the heart, it would fit the template so perfectly that we would know the glory is real. We would know we were made for this.

When Paul says that all humans “know God,” or that all humans have the work of the law “written on their hearts,” he means that there is a glory-shaped template in every heart waiting to receive the glory of God. We all “know God” in the sense that we have this witness in our hearts that we were made for this glory. There is a latent expectancy and longing, and the shape of it is buried deep in our souls.

Hearts Packed Hard

The reason we do not see the glory of God is not that the template is faulty or that God’s glory is not shining. The reason is “hardness of heart” (Ephesians 4:18). This hardness is a deep aversion to God, and a corresponding love for self-exaltation. Paul said that the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God (Romans 8:7). And Jesus said that “light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light” (John 3:19).

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Our problem is not that we lack the light, but that we love the dark. This is the hardness of our hearts.

So, in my analogy of the template, this means that the hollowed-out shapes of the mold, which are perfectly shaped for the all-satisfying glory of God, are instead packed hard with the love of other things. So, when the glory of God shines into the heart — from creation or incarnation or Jesus or the gospel — it finds no place. It is not felt or perceived as fitting.

To the natural mind — the mind whose glory-shaped mold is packed hard with idols — the glory of God is foolishness (1 Corinthians 2:14). It doesn't fit. As Jesus said to those whose hardness pushed them to the point of murder, "You seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you" (John 8:37). Of course, they could construe his words, and remember his words. But they could not see them as glorious or compellingly beautiful.

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They heard the words, but they did not love them. They loved the darkness that filled the template that was designed for the brightness of the glory of God.

Supernatural Excavation

If we are on the right track, the only hope for seeing the glory of God in Scripture is that God might cut away the diamond-hard, idolatrous substitutes for the glory of God that are packed into the template of our heart.

The Bible speaks of this supernatural act in many ways. For example, it describes this supernatural in-breaking as a shining into our hearts of divine glory (2 Corinthians 4:6), and as a granting of truth and repentance (2 Timothy 2:25), and as the giving of faith (Philippians 1:29), and as raising us from the dead (Ephesians 2:5), and as new birth by the word (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18), and as the special revelation of the Father (Matthew 16:17) and the Son (Matthew 11:27), and as the enlightening of the eyes of the heart (Ephesians 1:18), and as being given the secret of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:10).

When this miracle happens to us, the glory of God cuts and burns and melts and removes from the template the suicidal cement of alien loves and takes its rightful place. We were made for this. And the witness of this glory to the authenticity of the Scriptures is overwhelming. Where we saw only foolishness before, we now see the all-satisfying beauty of God. God has done this — supernaturally.

No one merely decides to experience the Christian Scriptures as the all-compelling, all-satisfying truth of one's life. Seeing is a gift. And so, the free embrace of God's word is a gift. God's Spirit opens the eyes of our heart, and what was once boring, or absurd, or foolish, or mythical is now self-evidently real.