

Intellectualism and Faith

“All minds have their origin in God; and great minds seem to be created by Him as He creates great oceans, great mountains, great worlds, as proofs of His own greatness.... Saul of Tarsus was one of those men. Christianity needed such a mind; and the world had reached a point where it needed such a mind.” -Albert Barnes

1 Corinthians 8:1-3

8 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. 2 If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; 3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

Knowledge is the common property of all men- if they would like to know something, it is there to be discovered.

Knowledge alone is inferior, in that apart from God's love, it has a negative impact on the character, making one proud.

Knowledge alone is incomplete- only God can truly know all things, and to be known by Him is vastly superior to obtaining all knowledge on earth.

And yet, the way we think weighs heavily the kind of person we become: “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”

God does not ask us to choose between knowledge and being known by Him, but He does expect us to treat knowledge with appropriate caution.

2 Peter 1:4b having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

It was the lure of knowledge that compelled man at first to disobey God, and to go his own way.

Illustrate

In religious culture, this manifests in a very subtle and deceptive way: idolatry of the scriptures.

John 5:39-47

39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; 40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. 41 I do not receive glory from men; 42 but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. 43 I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. 44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? 45 Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

They searched the scriptures for truth, and loved Moses, but would not come to the Living Word to receive life!

Why not? Pride of knowledge and the praises of men had hardened their hearts so they could not see the Truth right in front of them. (Vanity of insight)

Notice the correlation: NONE of the love of God in themselves, and NOTHING of sincere faith, but full of sacred knowledge!

Acquiring knowledge had replaced sincere repentance as the standard of righteousness, so they could not grow in the knowledge of God.

Religious knowledge was the safety blanket that insulated them from the searing influence of God's Spirit.

How does an awakened soul move from mere intellectualism to a redeemed intellect, full of faith and God's Word?

Proverbs 9:10

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

1. Lift up your eyes! Greater understanding begins with a grander vision of the one who understands all things.

Hebrews 11:3

3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

2. Change your request. Ask for greater faith as a higher priority than great understanding, and you will have both.
(Solomon and wisdom)

Faith is the gift of God, and faith opens the understanding!

The result is a faith-based logic that begins with God and moves on from there.

John 7:14-17

14 But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. 15 The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" 16 So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 17 If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

3. Act on what you know. God gives greater light to those who walk in the light they have.

Obeying God, which is the close companion of real faith, opens our spiritual ears to gain understanding and clarifies discernment.

Acts 4:13

13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

4. Be with Jesus every day. There is no greater teacher than Him, and He has promised to instruct us in His ways.

Luke 6:40

40 A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.