

OB Elbert - Known By God

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Known of God.

And it's something that really resonated with me when I read a certain scripture, and we will get to that. But thinking about our plight here as a family of humanity and those of us who the Lord has called to do his will, and with that beautiful prospect of eternal life, serving our Heavenly Father in just so many wonderful aspects, we're only given the clue that in the ages to come he will show the riches of his glory in the body of Christ, and that's so tantalizing, isn't it? Do you ever imagine that a takeoff point.

He will show his riches in the body of Christ in the ages of glory to come. I think it's going to be spectacular myself.

Well, here we are on planet Earth, and it seems quite a large place to us. You know, we were flying in from our home to Sacramento area and just always enjoy looking out and looking at the vast expanses of space around us. But you know, the Earth is really quite small.

And there was a video presentation that we came across this past year. It's called the Pale Blue Dot, and the story behind it is the Voyager space probe that was launched in 1977 had gone on, I think, for like something like 6 billion kilometers or 3 billion plus miles from the Earth, and a scientist by the name of Carl Sagan was quite prominent back in the 70s through the 90s. He had a series on public television called Cosmos.

Perhaps some of you saw it.

And Mr. Sagan persuaded the folks at NASA to turn the Voyager space probe around and take a snapshot of Earth, and after much lobbying and encouragement, they said, okay, we'll do it. Well, I don't know that that's verbatim what they said, but they agreed to it. They turned it around and they took a, a picture of the Earth, and actually yesterday, February 14th of 2026 was the 36th year anniversary of the taking of this picture.

It's so compelling to see the vastness of space that surrounds this planet and from that perspective of the vastness of space, to turn around and refocus on the smallness of the human family and the planet we live on is very moving. I find this video to be exceptionally moving, and so I am going to play it for you, and Lord willing, it will work.

From this distant vantage point, the Earth might not seem of any particular interest, but for us, it's different. Consider again that dot that's here, that's home, that's us on it. Everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was lived out their lives, the aggregate of our joy and suffering. Thousands of confident religions, ideologies and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every superstar, every supreme leader, every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there on a mote of dust, suspended in a sunbeam. The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena.

Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that in glory and triumph they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of

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some other corner. How frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another. How fervent their hatreds. Our posturings, our imagined self importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by this point of pale light.

Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. The Earth is the only world known so far to harbor life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate. Visit?

Yes. Settle? Not yet. Like it or not, for the moment the Earth is where we make our stand. It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character building experience.

There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

All right, all that was so little rehearsal time.

But it makes the point that pale blue dot floating in the nothingness of billions of miles of space, and here we are with all our concerns, hatreds, bigotries, prejudices.

Our hearts cry out and say, Lord, how long thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

Brethren, we are privileged in a unique way.

In the second psalm.

Sorry, Psalm 8, beginning with verse 3. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place. What is man, that you are mindful of him, and the Son of Man, that you care for him, yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet.

All sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea. Whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

What is man that thou art mindful of him?

We often speak of the appalling brevity of life. The days of a man's life are how long?

Three score and 10, and if by force, by the will of God, we get another 10 years, we're really doing well, and we're considered blessed, and these miraculous organisms that are our bodies just function without us regulating it or doing anything about it. You know, the average person will take about 12 breaths every minute without even thinking about it. That means every hour we take 720 breaths every day.

17,280 breaths a day in a year. 6,307,200 breaths every year really puts a perspective on that miraculous, marvelous moment when God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and it's been continuing for all these many years. But the, the breath

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without circulation, without the heart to pump the oxygen to the body would be useless, and so our heart, maybe our heart rate averages about 80 beats per minute throughout life.

Well, that means that every hour our heart beats without us saying, take another beat, take another beat, take another beat. Does it on its own. 4800 times every hour in a day. 115,200 times in a year, 42,048,000.

And in my life we just observed another year this past Friday, and in my life, my heart has probably beat 3,027,456,000 times. All that without me having to think about it.

But we are small creatures, and what are we that God even considers us? The narration in the video said that there's apparently no one coming to help us. We're stuck out in space on our own. Thank you, Brother Mike. Brother Mike is saying, no, we've got help coming.

Yes, we do. That's one of the main points of our presentation today. We have help coming. Divine interest. But what is man that you are mindful of him?

And I will say this, what are we, the disciples of Jesus Christ that you consider us? Who are we? Why do we have this privilege? Well, now that we frame the context, we'd like to read a few more scriptures from the book of Isaiah. God declares this I will read from Isaiah 57, verse 15.

Thus says the one who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite, the high and lofty one who inhabits the holy place. He inhabits eternity, and yet he chooses also to dwell with us, if we are of a contrite heart and a lowly spirit, to revive and sustain us.

I was reading in the context of First Corinthians, chapter 8, that section that tells us that idols don't really exist. They're just stone or wood. There's no sentient being there. There's no God associated with that. It's just a rock or a slab of wood that people have carved on.

Paul tells us that there is no God but one. For although there may be so called gods in heaven, in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there's one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. Have you meditated on that recently, that it is through Jesus that we exist as new creatures? Well, in meditating a bit on that sixth verse there of First Corinthians 8, that phrase from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and then Jesus through whom are all things and through whom we exist, I wanted to back up in the context and see how the apostle is framing that, and there I found a statement, as I often do when I read Scripture, that at that time really moved me.

I was in fellowship with some of the brethren yesterday, and we were speaking of reading the Word of God, and sometimes when we're reading it, the message is so vibrant and so moving to us that sometimes, at least, I find I have to close the book. I'm just overwhelmed with the message of Scripture backing up in the context 1st Corinthians 8, verse 3.

If anyone loves God, he is known by God.

And there you go. If anyone loves God, he is known by God.

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What a thrilling concept that we, so small, so seemingly insignificant on the pale blue dot with billions of miles of empty space around us. The Creator of the universe knows us and he cares for us.

It's not a fluke. Paul wasn't just waxing eloquent and saying, you know, would be a great phrase to stick here, and this will really please My brethren, I'll say that you are known of God, but he reiterates it in the book of Galatians just to make sure that that point in his ministry came across. I'm reading From Galatians, chapter 4, verses 6 through 9. Because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, abba Father, so you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world whose slaves you want to be once more? You that have come to know God, or rather to be known by God.

We have to ponder that. You know, there is much opposition to Christianity in this world, even by professed Christians who don't understand the true message of the Gospel.

Doubts can come in our mind. We can wonder, am I really his or am I not?

I think the answer is resoundingly positive. Jesus gave us the inside word. It's recorded in John, chapter 16, verse 27, where Jesus assures the disciples then and us now, the Father himself loves you. Don't doubt it.

Second Timothy 2, verses 15 through 19 underscores this concept that the Father knows us and the implications of that in our daily lives.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed. Rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hermanias and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They're upsetting the faith of some.

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal, and we quote, the Lord knows them who are His.

End quote and quote. Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.

The Lord knows them that are His.

And if you name the name of the Lord in your life, depart from iniquity, and I'm sure that we are all fighting the good fight of faith every day to overcome our fleshly weaknesses and the sin that we find present in us.

And so we boast. We boast in our relationship with the Heavenly Father. We can call him, as Paul Paul said in Galatians, we can call him Abba, Father. That's how intimately close we are with God. Abba Father and I try to bear that in mind in my prayers, in the morning, in the wee hours, laying in bed, meditating upon the word Abba Father and so we might boast of our relationship with God.

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Jeremiah 9, 23 and 24 record God's words, giving us perspective on our feelings that we would like to boast about this relationship. He's going to set boasting in its proper place.

Thus says the Lord. Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast in his might. Let not the rich man boast in his riches. But let him who boasts boast in his in this that he understands and knows me that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.

Boom. That's a great perspective on our Christian boasting that we understand God, that we know God, and that we practice steadfast love and justice and righteousness. Because in those things Abba Father delights in fellowship with some brethren Several months ago, a seemingly obvious question was asked by one of the brethren, and the question was, how do we know that we love God?

And we always just assume, well, of course we love God. Well, how do we know it? Well, because He's God. But how do we know that we love Him?

And the best answer I could come up with at the time still seems reasonable and good to me. It's from the First Epistle of John, First John, chapter 5, verses 1 through 3.

The apostle says, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments.

For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome.

How do we know that we love God? Because we keep his commandments. But it's so hard to keep his commandments. No, it's not. It's hard to not keep his commandments.

Harder still to try to serve the flesh and serve God at the same time. No man can serve two masters, or else they're torn between and the inner turmoil that comes from trying to serve two masters is overwhelming.

This is the love of God that we keep his commandments. His commandments are not burdensome. When I was in the workforce, we had some of our medical diagnostic equipment break down, and I was waiting for over a week to get the part that I needed to repair the machine, and get up and running and be able to feature that diagnostic service to our patients once again, and I called the receiving department to see.

Has it come in yet? No, it hasn't come in yet.

Call again after lunch. Has it come in yet? No, it hasn't come in yet. Finally, after about that week, they said, yes, we have it, we'll bring it up now. They brought it up to me and I opened the box.

It was the wrong thing. Not the wrong part, but the wrong thing. It wasn't even from my department, and they brought it up and I was mild. I, I guess I kind of come across as being a mild mannered person.

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I was angry. Oh, I was, yeah, because I was angry for my patients sake and I was angry for the sake of the laboratory that I was running, and so I didn't speak as kindly to them as I wish that I had.

And some people wouldn't even notice that it was sharp in its tone. But you know, we are sensitized by the principles of righteousness and by the love of God, and so things that might seem insignificant to others are mountains to us. What is it? Don't sweat the small things.

No, that's not the right one.

Everything matters in our service to God. So after a few minutes of pulling my thoughts together, I walked down to the receiving department and found the guys, they were hanging out with a few of their co workers, and in front of them all, I apologized for my reaction because I felt that that was the will of God. I felt that he was commanding me to be a peacemaker and to do the right thing, and they were stunned.

They couldn't believe it, and my flesh was telling me, you, you really didn't need to do this, you know, aren't you in the least embarrassed to come down here? I mean, they work down here and you work up here and all those little devilish things that can go through our mind to tempt us, but it was the right thing to do, and the joy I felt and the closeness I felt to our Creator after doing that was tremendous. It was wonderful.

And so his commandments are not burdensome. They always serve the interests of peace and righteousness.

I take seriously Jesus words of warning from Matthew chapter seven. I'll read Matthew chapter seven, verses 21 through 23.

A little sobering, a little perspective reset here. Jesus said, not everyone who says to me, lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Well, on that day, many will say to me, lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

Our relationship with the Lord must be informed by the principles of Scripture. We all know that. But it's good to hear a reminder about it every once in a while, isn't it? I certainly appreciate that.

Why do we love God? I'm going to reach to first John chapter four.

This is the Apostles insight. Why do we love God? Verses 19 through 21.

We love because he first loved us.

If anyone says I love God and hates his brother, the scripture is kind of severe. Here it says he is a liar, and I'll go along with that. But I would be a little reticent to say he's a liar. I'd say he's ill informed.

But then it loses its force. We got to stick to the word of scripture, right? If anyone says he loves God and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen can't love God whom he has not seen, and this commandment we have from him.

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Whoever loves God must also love his brother because his brother is a member of the body of Christ. In Prospect, one of my favorite scriptures and one of sister Janet's, we often speak about it because it's just a rich source of fellowship in our relationship is Romans chapter 12.

Romans chapter 12 is what the authentic Christian experience is all about. The apostle delineates the body of Christ and then says this is how the body of Christ ought to behave. I'll begin reading at verse 4. For as in one body we have many members and the members do not all have the same function. So we though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another.

So we are very connected.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. If prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with zeal, the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness, let love be genuine, abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good, love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor.

Have you heard of the Message Bible? Anybody heard of that? I know Sister Kathy loves that. A modern language vernacular version of the Scriptures by a pastor whose name is Eugene or was. He has since passed Eugene Peterson.

And he had a unique way of putting the Scriptures in modern language to give us more the feel and the sense of what it was like for those brethren centuries ago who were reading these epistles for the first time.

And I'm going to read from the message Bible the same verses that I just read from the English Standard Version, beginning with verse 12 in Romans, verse 4 in Romans 12.

In this way, we're like the various parts of the human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body, but as a chopped off finger or cut off toe, we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other or trying to be something we aren't.

If you preach, just preach God's message, nothing else. If you help, just help. Don't take over. If you teach, stick to your teaching. If you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy.

If you're put in charge, don't manipulate. If you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond. If you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

Love from the center of who you are. Don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil, hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply. Practice playing second fiddle.

When I read that last phrase, practice playing second fiddle, a thing rang in my mind. You know, I love music and classical music and religious music and many other types of music, and I remember someone used that phrase, second fiddle, and I searched on the Internet to see if my memory was correct and it was.

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Someone went up to Leonard Bernstein. Ever hear of him? Leonard Bernstein, great composer, great conductor, great musician. They went up to him and they asked him, Mr. Bernstein, what is the most difficult instrument to play in the orchestra?

And he said, second fiddle. Second fiddle. He says the second fiddle. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find someone who can play the second fiddle with enthusiasm, that's a problem, and if we have no second fiddle, we have no harmony.

Bernstein, of course, was highlighting the importance of supportive roles in music, and by Extension, the philosophy of being supportive in life to others. Play second fiddle. It takes humility, it takes teamwork, and underlying it all is the beauty of collaboration.

Bernstein says, yes, I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find someone who can play the second fiddle with enthusiasm is a problem. Without the second fiddle, we have no harmony.

And I find that to be true with us.

In closing, a few scriptures for all of those out there who want to play second fiddle or second trombone.

So if there's any encouragement in Christ, we're reading from Philippians, chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. If there's any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Then will we be perfected in love, and as we read in John, chapter four, first John, chapter four, first JohnS chapter four, verse 18. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, fear has punishments, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

And we enjoyed the reading of the version of Psalm 23 from a very unique perspective yesterday. But I often think of the relationship of fear to Psalm 23, and it has affected me from my childhood. I was raised in a religious home. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack. He makes me to lie down in green pastures and leads me beside the still water.

He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yay. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, because thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.