

This science is excellent above all sciences, in that it delivers from that eternal misery which is the doom of all who are unacquainted with it. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, we are told that it will be to take "vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." What a terrible destruction is this! How excellent is that knowledge which delivers from such misery! The wise men of the world, instead of being delivered by their wisdom, will be condemned with an aggravated condemnation. The many talents which they received from the Lord they have used not in his service, but against him.

This science is the most excellent of the sciences, in that it frees the guilty not only from punishment but from guilt; and exalts the vilest of sinners above the highest archangels, without the smallest appearance of caprice. According to this science, when Christ's people are over all creation, they are only in a suitable rank. This, then, must be the most excellent, and the most wonderful of sciences. Even for this world, this science is the most excellent of the sciences, in that, as far as it prevails, it produces peace and happiness. The wisdom of this world, in legislators, philosophers, and philanthropists, has always been searching for plans to lessen human misery, reform from crime, and promote peace. But their efforts have in all ages been vain. The knowledge of the Lord would produce the effects which they foolishly expect from their own plans. When the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, peace and plenty will succeed to poverty and disorder. If statesmen were not blind, they might see that the disciples of the Lord Jesus are in countries the best subjects.

This science is the most excellent of all sciences, in that it introduces us to the immediate and intimate society, friendship, and familiarity with God. It connects us with him in a union which belongs to no other being in heaven or earth. By it he becomes our Father, and we become his children. It makes Jesus our brother, our husband, and the head of the body of which we are members. It makes us one with Him who is one with God. We have access at all times to his presence, and are permitted to ask of him whatever we need. The poorest Christian can look at the heavens and the earth and in Christ Jesus say, all these are mine. Paul declares that "having nothing, he possessed all things." No wonder, then, that he so highly prized the knowledge by which such possessions were bestowed on him. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of which is of God by faith." Philip iii. 7-9. Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; and what is