

SAVING KNOWLEDGE

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A SERMON

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Jesus answered and said unto her,
If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is who saith to thee, Give me to drink;
thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”
John 4:10*

THE matter will turn, this morning, upon those few words, “If thou knewest the gift of God.” The woman of Samaria, who was met by our Lord at the well, was an object of electing love, but she was not yet regenerated. One difficulty alone lay in the way—she was willing to receive the truth, she was an honest ingenuous spirit, willing to receive the truth, perfectly willing to be obedient to it, but ignorance lay like a stone before the door of her sepulchre.

“If thou knewest the gift of God,” says Christ, “then thou wouldest have asked, and I would have given.” There was the one barrier. If that could be removed, she would be a saved soul. The impediment which lay so much in her way was ignorance concerning the Lord Jesus Himself.

She was not an uninstructed woman. She was evidently acquainted at least with portions of Biblical history. She could speak of “Father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle.” She was versed certainly in the peculiarities of her sect. “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest for a drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”

She was equally well-acquainted with the hopes which were common to her people and to the Jewish nation, “I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.” She was not, therefore, kept out of the kingdom on account of ignorance. In these matters she was better instructed.

I am afraid there are some of you—for, alas! in this age there are hundreds of people who are educated in everything except their Bibles—who could answer questions upon most sciences, but concerning Christ crucified, they know not even so much as the very elements. But the point which kept this woman, I say, out of the kingdom was this, that she did not know Christ. She knew not “the gift of God,” and who it was that said to her, “Give me to drink.”

And this, indeed, is enough to keep any of us out of peace, and life, and joy, for until we know God in human flesh, we cannot find peace and comfort. The great riddle of, “What must I do to be saved?” remains unsolved till we know Christ and are found in Him. We may go about, and we may study this, and that, and the other, but we shall remain fools in the matters of eternal salvation until we come and sit at the feet of the great Teacher, and know Him, and are known of Him.

I shall essay, this morning, as God may help me, to speak with you upon spiritual ignorance, upon what would follow if that ignorance were removed, hoping that I may be allowed to say a few stirring things to some of you, to induce you to get rid of any ignorance which now bars you out of peace, and that others of you who know the truths of Jesus Christ, may be more earnest to tell to the unenlightened what you know yourselves, lest they should perish and their blood should be required at your hands.

I shall commence, then, this morning, by some few remarks upon *the gift of God and the knowledge of it*. And then, secondly, I shall turn to *the “if” of the text, and what then?* And thirdly, I shall take up *the “if” of the text once more and show what it has to do with the believer*.

I. First, our text speaks of A GIFT AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF IT.

The latter half of the verse informs us that the gift of God is no other than the Man who spoke to the woman and said, “Give me to drink.” In fact, Jesus Christ is “God’s unspeakable gift,” for whom we should daily and hourly lift up our hearts in gratitude to God. Christ was God’s gift to the fallen seed of man.

Long ere this world was made, He ordained in His eternal purpose that Christ should be the covenant Head of His elect, their Surety, and their Redeemer. He gave Christ to us before He spread the starry sky. He was the Father’s goodly gift when the fullness of time was come. Many promises had heralded the Master’s coming, and at last He appeared, a babe of a span long in His mother’s arms.

His holy life and His suffering death were the gifts of God to us, for “He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” To the whole company of God’s elect, Christ Jesus is the priceless boon which the Father’s love has bestowed upon them.

And when you and I receive Jesus Christ into our heart, He evermore comes as a gift. The faith by which we receive Him is a gift—the gift of God is faith, but Jesus Christ Himself never comes to a soul that has faith, as a reward. No man ever received Christ by the works of the law or the deeds of the flesh. It is not possible, my brethren, that the highest and most perfect obedience should ever deserve such a reward as the gift of the Son of God.

Conceive of any virtue, and you will not dare to blaspheme so much as to think that it could deserve the death of Christ. Nay, the price is too great to be a recompense for any of our exertions. It is the spontaneous boon of heaven, given to us, not on the footing of the law, but on the grounds of the sovereign grace of God, who gives as He wills to the unworthy sons of men.

If you come to God with a price in your hands, you shall not have Christ. If you come to God thinking to force your way to heaven, or supposing that you could even contribute towards your entrance there, you shall find the gates of the law shutting you out forever. But if you come humbly penitent, confessing your soul-poverty, and plead with the Father that He would give to you His Son, you shall receive the gift of God into your soul most freely.

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life.” “We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Man is dead in sin, but Christ is a gift bringing life to the dead.

The text uses the definite article, “If thou knewest *the* gift of God,” setting Christ as God’s gift beyond all other gifts. True, the light of the sun is the gift of God to us. There is not a piece of bread we eat, nor a drop of water we drink, but what it may be called the gift of God. But *the* gift which comprehends, excels, and sanctifies all other gifts, is the gift of Jesus Christ to the sons of men.

I wish I had the power to speak as I should do of this gift, but I am reminded by God’s Word that it is “unspeakable.” “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” I can comprehend God’s giving the earth to the children of men, giving to Adam and his seed dominion over all the works of His hands. I think I can understand God’s giving heaven to His people, and permitting them to dwell at His right hand forever and ever.

But that God should give the Only Begotten, “very God of very God,” to take upon Himself our nature, and in that nature to actually be “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”—this we cannot understand and even the angels with their mightier intellects cannot grasp it fully. They look into it, but as they gaze they desire to see more, for even they feel they cannot search this out to perfection. An depth unfathomable of divine love is there in the condescending loving-kindness which gave Jesus Christ to die for us when we were yet sinners.

Beloved, it is *an unrivalled gift*. God has given to us such a treasure, that if heaven and earth were melted down, the price could not buy another like to Him. All eternity cannot yield such a person as the Lord Jesus. Eternal God, You have no equal! and becoming Son of man, Your condescension has nothing that can rival it. Oh, what a gift!

You cannot conceive of anything that you can put side by side with it. It is a gift, beloved, which comprehends all things within itself. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Get Christ and you have the pardon of sin, the justification of your person. In the bowels of that redemption you shall find sanctification, adoption, regeneration. Every covenant gift is wrapped up in Christ Jesus. “A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me.” Not one sprig of it, but a whole bundle. All things that can possibly be needed for the Christian for time and for eternity, are given to him in the person of the Lord Jesus.

And *as this gift comprehends all, so it sweetens all*. Temporal mercies without Christ are like ciphers without a figure. But when you have these temporal mercies, and Christ stands in front of them, oh, what an amount they make! Temporal mercies without Christ are unripe fruit, but when Christ shines upon them, they grow mellow and sweet.

Temporal mercies without Christ are the dry rivers—Christ fills them to the brim. They are like trees with leaves only, but Christ comes to give them fruit upon which we may live. Brethren, what are all the mercies of this life to us without Christ? Would they not make our souls hunger? “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.”

The full wine vat, or the barn that needs to be enlarged, what would these be without a Savior? O God, take them all away if You will, but give us more of Christ. Fill our hearts with the love of Christ, and You may empty the cupboard and purse if You will. Mercies are blessed when we have Christ with them, but if Christ be gone, they are but empty vanities.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a gift most precious, my brethren, *because he who gets it is sure that he has the favor of God*. Other mercies do not necessarily bring with them God’s favor. God gives the most of this world full often to wicked men. He pours the husks out to the swine. As for His children, He often wrings out to them a full cup of bitterness.

This world is not our portion, as we know right well. The wicked have their portion here and they are full of fatness. Their houses are full of store, and they leave the rest of their substance unto their babes. But get Christ, and you have God’s favor—you are sure of it. This is “The blessing of the LORD that maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.”

It is a right-hand and a left-hand blessing. Get Christ, and it is all blessing and no curse whatsoever. If you have Christ, as sure as you live, God loves you, for there never was a soul that had Christ’s name written upon its forehead but what eternal love had inscribed it there, and in that writing had given a sure evidence and pledge of love that could not end.

If you have Christ, again, you must prize the gift, *because this is a token of your everlasting salvation*. Hell never did enclose within its gates a single soul that rested on the cross of Christ and it never shall. If you have Christ, you have the melodies of heaven, you have the goodly land that “floweth with milk and honey”. You shall never bear the wrath of God, Christ has borne it for you. You shall never hear it said, “Depart, ye cursed,” for Christ has said, “Ye are blessed for ever and ever,” yea, and you shall be blessed.

We shall now turn to the further thought which stands linked to the one I have thus tried to lay before you.

In the text, knowledge is put with the gift, “If thou knewest the gift of God.” Yonder woman in the wilderness is sorely vexed, her heart is ready to break. She has left the abode of her master and journeyed far. She is faint herself, but a far greater trouble depresses her. Her child, her only boy, lies under yonder shrubs to die for want of a drop of water.

Do you see the anguish depicted on her face? Do you hear her bitter cries? Ah, woman, you may well wipe your eyes, your distress is causeless. You have room for thanksgiving and not for sorrow. Yonder is a spring of water, dip your pitcher and refresh your child. But beloved, what was the use of the spring of water to her if she could not see it? Till her eyes were opened, Hagar could not see that God had provided for her—she must suffer and her child must die till she could perceive the supply.

It is so with the gift of God. Beloved, until we know Christ, we famish for Him, but we find no relief. A sense of need is a very blessed work of grace, but it will not save you. You must get beyond knowing your need, you must perceive, accept, and enjoy the supply, or else assuredly you will perish, none the less because of your knowledge of your need.

Now, a knowledge of Christ is the gift of God. No man ever knew Christ experientially and truly, except by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon his heart. It is in vain for those who are the advocates of free agency and human power to talk, but wherever you meet with a gracious spirit, you will be sure to find the confession that it was as much the work and gift of God to give us faith as to give us the object of faith—

*“Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perish’d in our sin.”*

If God did nothing more for men than provide a Savior, and leave it for them to accept, if He never operated upon their souls and affections by His Holy Spirit, not one of Adam’s race would ever enter into eternal life. If you would have a knowledge of Christ, you must have it through the Holy Spirit, for this comes not by the works of the law, nor by the efforts of the flesh. That which is born of the flesh is still flesh, and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and can make you acquainted with spiritual truth.

A saving knowledge of Christ is always personal. The man does not take it at second hand, he does not catch it up from what his mother told him. She may be the instrument, the happy instrument, but the man learns for himself or else he does not know savingly. Beware, beloved, of copying your religion out of other men’s books. It must be written with the pen of the Holy Spirit upon the fleshy tablet of your own heart or else you know nothing aright.

Observe also, that as this knowledge is spiritual, so, as it is spoken of in the text, it immediately concerns Christ. All other knowledge, whatever it may be, will fail to save unless we know the gift of God, unless we are clearly acquainted with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I say, with the person, for let me insist upon it, it is necessary for you and me to rest wholly upon the person, work, and righteousness of Jesus.

You may know a great deal about His offices, you may have read much about what He did, but you must pass through all these, and get to Himself, “Come unto ME,” says He, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” At His feet your soul must cast itself down, kissing the Son lest He be angry. Before Him, the Great High Priest, you must present yourselves, desiring to be sprinkled with His precious blood, and to be saved in Him.

Remember He is a man like yourselves. Though “God over all, blessed for ever,” yet is He man of the substance of His mother. Let your soul advance to Him in thought this morning, lay hold upon Him! If you cannot put your finger into the print of the nails, and your hand into His side literally, with Thomas, yet do it spiritually.

Remember, it is to know Christ and His cross, which is the saving knowledge, and everything short of this will leave you short of eternal life. Brethren, it must be spiritual knowledge. Any acquaintance with Christ that can be derived from pictures, or that may come to us through the use of outward symbols, will be all valueless.

We must know Christ, not after the flesh, by the eye and ear, we must comprehend Him by our inmost souls being acquainted with Him. Our heart must trust Him. Put away the crucifix! Let your soul wear the cross, not your body. Hang not up the image of Christ on the wall, hang it upon the walls of your heart, there let His image be stored.

Bear about you the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life and character, and let your contemplations and thoughts be continually exercised about Him. This is the kind of knowledge of Christ—heart knowledge, spiritual fellowship, the knowledge of the most vital part of the man, his soul, his newborn spirit.

Now, such knowledge as this, when God has once given it to us, becomes very operative upon the entire man. He has found the great secret, and he feels inclined to tell it. He has learned a great mystery, and it at once affects all the parts and passions of his nature, making a new man of him. This knowledge he never loses—he may forget much, but he never can forget Christ if he has once known Him.

Like the dying saint who had forgotten his wife, forgotten his children, forgotten his own name, and yet smiled sweetly when they asked him if he remembered Christ Jesus. This is printed on the believer's heart—the warp and woof of his being bears this, like a golden thread, right through its center.

Jesus, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and let my right hand forget its cunning, but never shall my heart forget You who has given Yourself for me! This is the knowledge which we should desire, the knowledge spoken of in the text. Desire it, I beseech you, above gold, yea, seek it above much fine gold.

O you who have it not, open your mouths and pant after it! Hunger and thirst to know Christ, and take no rest, and get no satisfaction till you do know Him! If you ask me how this can be, I remind you that God alone can reveal Him to you, but yet you are to use the means. “Search the Scriptures, for in them you think ye have eternal life,” and these are they which testify of Christ.

Attend a Christ-honoring ministry! If you have been sitting under any minister who does not extol Christ, and lift Him up before you, however eloquent and intelligent he may be, leave his ministry, it is not fit for poor dying souls to listen to. You that need salvation can only find it in Christ. Seek, therefore, a ministry that is full of Christ. Christ the first, and Christ the midst, and Christ the last, and without end.

Depend upon it, as men would think it folly to deal at a shop where the bread (so called) was not bread, where the food that was given was so adulterated as to yield no nutriment, so is it a sin on our part if we do not seek out the pure unadulterated milk of the Word and endeavor to grow thereby. Oh, how many souls are poisoned by listening to a ministry that is not full of Christ!

But oh, if you do get a ministry that savors of the Lord Jesus, hear with both your ears, drink it in. Be like the thirsty furrows that do not refuse a single drop of heaven's rain. Receive with meekness the living word. Add to this an earnest prayer for illumination. Wait upon God each day, and say, “Show me Thy Son. Lo, I would know Christ. I would know Him so as to be saved by Him.”

And remember, “He that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened,” “Ask and it shall be given you.” They that seek the Lord shall in due time be found of Him. “He that calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

II. The first word of the text is “If.” “If thou knewest the gift of God.” “IF,” AND WHAT THEN?

The “if” seems to me to wear a black side. It supposes that there are many who do not know “the gift of God.” Alas! no supposition, but a fearful fact. Dear hearer, may I ask you to look to your own soul now! You are a church member. You have been considered to be a Christian from your youth till the present time. At least, you have reckoned yourself to be so.

But ask yourself if you know now the gift of God. Is Jesus Christ all in all to you? Do you rest on Him as the unbuttressed pillar of your confidence? Do you love Him? Is He your Master? Are you conformed unto His image? Have you ever spoken to Him? Has He ever had communion with you—supping with you and you with Him?

As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if you know not Christ, your high profession is but a painted pageant to go to hell in. Your fancied experience is a will-o'-the-wisp leading you to destruction, and all your fond hopes shall come tumbling about your ears, like a house that is founded on sand, which totters in the day of storm. I pray you, then, dear hearers, as you would be right at the last, make heart-searching inquiries now, and let this be the question, Whether you know the gift of God in your soul or no?

But we will deal better with the bright side, knowing that there are many here who do not know the gift of God at all, it is a mercy to think that they may know it, for the “If thou knewest” implies that some who do not know it yet may know it before they die. And thank God, some of you shall know it, and glorious results will follow at once.

“If thou knewest the gift of God,” my dear hearer, you who are not yet converted, what a change would come over you! Let me single you out. You are here, this morning, quite uninterested in religion. You have come here this morning out of curiosity to look at the large assembly and hear the strange preacher, but religion has no interest in it for you.

Life and death, and all the problems that connect themselves with time and eternity, are nothing to you. You are a butterfly, flying from flower to flower. You have no deeper sense of things than a man of the world, who thinks to live and die, and so to come to his end. Ah! but if thou knewest Christ, it would soon be different with you.

That vain mind of yours would soon be full of thoughts. These worldly toys which are now so engrossing would then be put into their proper places. You would become thoughtful, and let me tell you, you would become infinitely happier than you are now, for your present ease is a hollow thing. You are afraid to try it. You dare not sit down and think for an hour of your own state and future—you know you dare not.

But oh! “if thou knewest the gift of God,” you could endure sober thought, yea, it would be your delight. And as for the future, you would dare to look into it. Yea, it would be your greatest comfort to anticipate the glories which God has prepared for them that love Him.

As I think on some of you indifferent ones, I could fain weep over you, not merely because of the hell which will be your portion, but because of the heaven which you are losing even now. A heaven below is to know Christ, and you are missing this. Man of pleasure! Christ is pleasure. Men who would have ease and peace! Christ is the true ease, and if thou knew Him, you would find true peace.

Possibly there may be some few in this assembly to whom religion is not even a matter of indifference, but worse—they have persecuted it. They are accustomed to vent their sharpest wit upon anything religious. To them, godliness is always known by the name of cant, and if a man be known to be a professor of religion, he is at once the butt of every sneer.

Ah, but if thou knewest Christ, you would not do this. Saul of Tarsus sought much the destruction of the people of God, but when once Christ had said to Him, “Why persecutest thou me?” and he understood that Christ was no other than God over all, the Redeemer of men, than he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me do?”

Ah, persecutor! you would be just as warm for the cause as you are hot against it if you did but know Christ. Man, you would not have the heart to spit into the face of the Crucified. You would never crucify Him afresh who died for His enemies. You would never be so cruel and barbarous as to trample on the members of Christ when you know that Christ, out of pure love, suffered for the sons of men. “If thou knewest the gift of God,” persecutor, it would be otherwise with you than it is now.

Ay, and there are some here who would never persecute, but nevertheless they trifle with religion. Many more belong to this class than to the two I have just mentioned. I know many of you are impressed when we are delivering truth earnestly, and you vow what you do not pay, and you promise reformations which are never made.

Ah, you triflers, you who halt between two opinions, who, like Felix, would wait for a more convenient season, “if thou knewest the gift of God,” this morning would be the convenient season. Oh, if God did but give you an understanding of the preciousness and sweetness of Christ, you would not delay.

Who delays to be crowned when the time has come for him to receive a kingdom? What heir would ever postpone the day in which he should enter into the heritage? Does the bridegroom put off the hour of his marriage? Do men wish their happiness to be removed far away? Oh, no! and if thou knew what Christ would be to your soul, and what joy and blessedness you would have in receiving Him, you

would say, "Now is my time as it is God's time. O God, I give myself to You!" Trifler, may you yet know the gift of God!

Alas! there are some here who are not exactly triflers. They have serious thoughts, but they have some sin which they cannot give up. I cannot particularize cases, but there are such here. There are men here who would be Christ's, but the habit of taking intoxicating drink to excess clings hard to them. Have I not talked to some of you, who have with tears confessed the sin, and longed to be delivered from the snare, but you could not? Your besetting sins are too dear to you for you to give them up.

With some it may be filthier vices still. With others it is the thought, "Religion is too severe. To follow Christ is to give up so much. I must have a little more indulgence. I must for a little time at any rate drink of the wine of Satan's banquet." Ah, "if thou knewest the gift of God," you would give up the sweetest thing earth ever knew, to know the greater sweetness of Christ.

What! will you put my Lord and Master in comparison with the painted harlot of this wicked world? Will you put the solid gold of heaven's kingdom in contrast with the filthy draff and dross of this world's merchandise? O my Master, You are no more to be compared to the riches and enjoyments of life, than the sun is to be likened to a glowworm.

Let Christ arise in your soul and all your starry joys will be gone. You will find this one great joy fills your spirit to the brim and overflows, so that there is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory too great for your spirit to be able to compass. If you knew the grace of God, voluptuary, you would turn from your tables to feed on Him. You would leave your gilded couches of pomp and vanity, and everything else the world calls good or great. You would leave it all, turning from ashes to feed upon angels' food, even upon Christ the Lord and the Redeemer of men.

There is another class here present, represented by some few, who would fain be saved, but they fear they are too bad. They think that they could never be saved after delaying so long and sinning so foully. "If thou knewest the gift of God," you would never think that, for my Lord Jesus loves great sinners. "This man," it is said, "receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

When the woman that had been a sinner washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, He did not utter an upbraiding word. The Lord is gentle, and full of compassion and tenderness and truth. He came not with a sword to slay, but He came to be slain Himself, that we might not die.

You have only to come to Him and let this encourage you. He has said it, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He cannot cast you out. He must receive you. His word binds Him to it. He cannot deny Himself and therefore He cannot refuse you.

If it were proper for us to prolong this addressing of separate characters, I think there would be in this suggestion, "If thou knewest the gift of God," something for everyone. I am sure if any of us who are now at enmity to God did but know what Christ is, if they could but know, as with the knowledge I have before described, the person of the Lord Jesus, faith would follow immediately.

We should trust our souls to God and feel safe in the hands of God's appointed propitiation. Faith would be sure to be followed by prayer—we should cry to Him whom we now know, and prayer would be followed by His blessing. At the heels of that would come holy love to Him. And holy love would prompt us to serve.

Service would be followed by increasing strength, and increasing strength would augment daily joy, till we should go up Jacob's ladder, gaining virtue after virtue by the power of the Son of God, till we were meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Each point in Christ's character, if known, would work good to us. For instance, "if thou knewest the gift of God," that He came to save the vilest of the vile, how could you doubt or despair because of your sins? If thou knewest that the salvation of Christ is finished by Himself, and not by us, how could you dream of adding thereto, or think it necessary to bring your own feelings, and frames, and doings, to make the salvation complete which Christ has finished altogether apart from you?

If thou knewest that Christ never forsook His people, would you be trembling and fearing lest in the hour of temptation He should fail you? If thou knewest how suitable Christ is to you, how ready He is to receive you, how full of love He is to all His people, how He feels in His heart all your pains and all your groans, how His honor is bound up in your salvation, how He has pledged Himself to bring every one of the saints to the Father's right hand—if thou knewest all this, Christian, you would live above your doubts, and fears, and frames, and feelings. You would live a heavenly life, like one who has seen Christ, and then has been made like unto Him.

Beloved, if we were to take a walk, this morning, through the streets of London, how many cases we would see where we might say sorrowfully of the persons we looked upon, "Alas for you! if you knew the grace of God, what a difference would come over you!"

Perhaps at this very hour you will find the great mass of the working men in London in their shirt sleeves. It has not struck them at all that going to a place of worship is desirable. They will be lounging about. The penny paper has been taken and they have begun to read that, but as yet the public house is not open. They feel as if there is nothing in the world to do but just lounge about and let the time run on.

Ah! stepping into such a house you might say, "If thou knewest the gift of God, your Sabbaths would assume quite a different appearance. You would not talk about Pharisaic Sabbatarians, and the strictness of shutting up the house of drink, and only opening the house of worship, but you would feel the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord honorable. Instead of wasting your time, it would seem to you as though Sabbaths were too short, and opportunities and means of grace too few. If thou knewest the gift of God, it would be otherwise with you, working man."

Step into the next church or chapel, I do not care which, and observe the multitudes of the people going through the worship with mere formality, confessing what they never felt, and professing to believe what they know nothing of. Ah, we might look into the face of each worshipper and say, "If thou knewest the gift of God, you would give up this formalism, and worship God in spirit and in truth." We need not go far. There are many of you here in that state. May you know the gift of God, and forget formalities, and worship God in truth.

At some places you may step into the church or meeting house, and listen to the minister—an eloquent address, but altogether Christless—no care about the souls of men, no dealing with human consciences. Pompous sentences, sounding periods, high flights, climaxes, and I know not what oratorical flower, but nothing concerning the weighty matter of eternity, about the undying soul, and the precious cleansing blood. Ah! preacher, "if thou knewest the gift of God," if you had in your soul any sense of the preciousness of the salvation of Christ, you would preach after another fashion.

Step in where the Ritualist has dressed himself in all his gaudy apparel, flaunting like a peacock before God Himself, and you may well say to him, "If thou knewest the gift of God," you would lay aside these fooleries and come before God sooner in sackcloth than in your tag-rags, humbling yourself before the Most High as a poor, guilty sinner, most accursed of all the human race for having dared to call yourself a priest.

For priest you are not for your fellow men, for One is Priest, even Christ Jesus, and no other is priest, save only that all saints have a common priesthood which some cannot usurp to themselves alone, unless they dare to bring upon themselves the vengeance of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who called themselves priests and were not. "If thou knewest the gift of God," poor simpleton that you are, you would doff that priestly array, and bow before the great High Priest of our profession, and worship Him alone.

I might knock at that door yonder going down the street, after leaving that ritualistic mass house, and might find the merchant in his counting house. He looks a little disconcerted that I should call upon him on the Sabbath morning and find him with his pen behind his ear. But he says he has no time to cast up his accounts at any other period. Ah, but "if thou knewest the gift of God," you would find other time, and find another occupation for this time than spending upon yourself what God claims to be His own.

I pass on into the chamber of sickness, and I see on the bed of death a sinner full of fears and dread about the world which lies before him. Listen to his groans. He has no hope. He has lived without

Christ. The world has been his portion, and now he has to leave it, and he is unprepared to meet his Judge.

All is dark as the pit of hell whither he is going. How miserable his state as he feels he is parting with all he has loved, and for which he has lived, and that there is nothing before him but a dread unknown existence in another world. Ah! if he only knew the gift of God, what a change there would be at once!

What light, joy, and peace would come into that chamber! All its gloom would pass away, and in the place of it would come such rapture as would lead men to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

I shall not detain you longer. We might go down one street and up another for many a day, and we should find thousands to whom we could say, "If thou knewest the gift of God, you would be another and different man from what you are."

III. And now, lastly—THE "IF" OF OUR TEXT AND HOW DOES IT CONCERN BELIEVERS?

It seems to me to concern believers this way. Evidently there are tens of thousands who do not know the gift of God. Inquiry, then, of the most solemn kind should at once be made, Has this ignorance of theirs been my fault? These men know not the gift of God—how can they know it unless there is someone to teach them? How shall they hear without a preacher? Is this ignorance to be laid at my door?

Beloved, in the name of Jesus Christ, I ask you seat-holders and members of this place who know Christ yourselves, is there a person sitting next to you in the pew who does not know Christ and have you done your best to tell him about Christ? I pause, that conscience may give its reply. And you who do often speak about Christ in the school or in the street, preaching or not preaching, let me ask you, do you so talk about Christ that people can understand you?

Believe me, I do try to use very simple words, but I often hear of words I have uttered which have not been understood by people present. I am always grieved when such is the case. God knows I would speak the most vulgar words I could find if people could understand them better. To me the finery of language is less than nothing. I would sooner preach Christ's cross in the tongue of Billingsgate, if all would understand, than speak in the most polished tongue so that the poor could not comprehend me.

My dear brethren, that a soul should go to hell lost through our fine sentences, who shall be accountable for this? The watchman is not to speak in Greek to those who only know English, or even in good English to those who do not understand the language if it be well-spoken. Augustine, I believe, frequently preached in exceedingly bad Latin, because it was the common talk of the people, and if he had spoken classic Latin he would not have been understood.

And so must we do. If any man does not know Christ, have you told it to him in all the ways which you can find out of making it plain and clear? If you have not, then some responsibility lies with you. Then next, suppose you have not, will you, my brethren, for the future resolve in God's strength that if any man perishes for lack of knowledge, it shall not in the future be your fault?

Make no rash vows, but do solemnly put it to your heart. But if you cannot speak as you would, yet you will distribute such publications, and give away such tracts as may tell the Gospel simply. If you cannot do what you would, O resolve, dear brethren, to do what you can, that none here may be without the knowledge of Christ.

But though a professor, I shall venture to say to you, that the text does seem to say to you, Do you know the gift of God yourself? When I asked you whether you told others about it, I think a question might have been raised—if you have not told others, it is very questionable whether you know it yourself.

If you never weep for other men's sins and never desire their salvation, you are not a saved soul. One of the first instincts of the saved soul is to say, "What can I do that others may be saved also?" Now, if you have done nothing, let a suspicion arise. And to us all, I think, there may be this query put—judging by my efforts, judging by my actions, judging by my inward feelings, may I not often ask

myself, Do I know this gift of God? And may I not come, this morning, just as I did at the first, as a sinner, and look up to the wounds of Jesus, and cast myself again upon Him?

If I never did believe before, Lord Jesus, I trust You now. Up till now if I have been a deceived one, here I am—

*“My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine:
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
Oh let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.”*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.