

KNOWLEDGE COMMENDED

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A SERMON

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*“But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.
And they that understand among the people shall instruct many.”
Daniel 11:32-33.*

THE uninspired book of the Maccabees is perhaps the best interpreter of this passage in Daniel. The prophet, we think, refers to the great persecution under Antiochus, when the followers of Judas Maccabees, knowing their God and keeping close to Him amidst general defection, refused to bow before the idols of Syria. These were strong, by God’s grace and did great exploits—wonders of valor we read of in the history of Judas and his brethren, and wonders of heroic suffering never surpassed are recounted of the mother and sons, and those other martyrs who, under tortures of the most amazing character, held fast their faith even to the end.

In that age, there were some who were stoned, who were sawn asunder, who felt the violence of fire, and yet were not separated from their God by all that the foe could do. We have a lesson to learn from the text before us, and we therefore leave the historical references and proceed to enter into the teaching of the text. It appears that the people who did all this were a knowing people and an understanding people. Those by whom the exploits were performed were not ignorant, but a people who did know their God. And those who helped to keep up the light of Israel in the midst of the thick darkness were not uninstructed themselves, but were a people who did understand.

Our subject this morning is *knowledge* and especially the knowledge of the things of God. The matter is very urgent and important at this season when we are receiving so many young converts into the church, many of whom need much teaching in the things of God. It lies heavily on my heart that it is my bounden duty to urge these young ones, since they know the elements of the Christian faith, to strive with diligence to learn more and more of the higher truths. And if they have received some insight into the wondrous revelation of divine love, to press forward till they comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

The question is often put to us in a very general and vague manner, “Is knowledge a good thing or not?” We are expected to give an answer promptly and without reserve. And if we do so we shall very likely be caught in a trap. “Knowledge—is it a good thing in itself or not?” That depends upon several things. You might as well ask me whether air is a good thing. Why, of course, speaking loosely, *it is*. But then, there is much bad air in old wells and cellars and so on, which will destroy life, and therefore you cannot expect me to say at once, if I know you are on the catch, either “Yes,” or “No.”

Air is a good thing as a general rule. The lungs require it, man must have it—it is a good thing. So is knowledge. Knowledge heaves the intellectual lungs—it *is* a good thing. But then, there is noxious knowledge, which it were infinitely better for us never to receive, just as there is pestilential air. Is food a good thing? Yes, but if you are alluding to the decayed meat which was seized in the market, or to adulterated drinks, I am not in such a hurry to answer you.

I want to know what sort of food you are alluding to. Food, in the abstract, is a good thing, but not food universally—for putrid meats will engender disease and bring on ten thousand maladies, and destroy the life which food is meant to sustain. So is it with knowledge. It is the food of the mind. And yet there is a knowledge which is deadly, poisonous, infectious, full of all manner of mischief, and they who know nothing of it are wise.

Is water a good thing? Again I answer, “Yes,” in the abstract. So many watery particles are absolutely necessary to the building up and sustenance of the human frame, that every thirsty man knows that water is good. Yet there is bad water. There have been poisoned wells—water stagnates and becomes putrid and injurious to life—water is good taken abstractedly. But there is a knowledge which, like stagnant or poisoned water, may destroy the soul. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil stood in paradise—mark that—but it ruined paradise, mark that too!

A man may know much and he may still stand in his integrity, but the chances are that, while men are what they are, there will be a serpent in the tree of knowledge, seeking the ruin of souls. If you want to judge concerning the good or evil of knowledge, you must ask yourself, *what is its source?* To have one’s lips touched with a live coal is a choice blessing if the seraph brings that coal from off the altar. But there are tongues which are set on fire in hell—and who desires to feel such accursed flame? You must know from where the coal comes before you may consent that it shall touch your lips.

Knowledge may be tested by considering its character. Some knowledge is like the light of the moon—clear, cold, barren, if not injurious to health. But heavenly knowledge is fructifying, healthful, and genial, chasing away disease like the warm rays of the sun. You may make knowledge good or evil by the way in which you use it. If it be a torch, you may carry it with you to kindle the flame of Tophet’s fire. Or on the other hand, by that heaven-lit torch you may, through grace, find your way to the gates of paradise.

Judge knowledge, therefore, ever with discretion, and while you seek it as in the abstract an eminently good thing, yet be not in haste to plunge yourself into every abyss to find its bottom, nor into every burning crater to fathom its depth. I know enough of poison without drinking it and enough of sin without running into it. This much by way of introduction—we come now to the text.

Here we have *knowledge of a peculiar kind referred to*. Then *its happy influence*—it makes men strong to do great exploits. Next, we shall consider *the means of its attainment*. Fourthly, just *a hint as to its danger*. And fifthly, *the duty of spreading it*, contained in the thirty-third verse, “They that understand among the people shall instruct many.”

I. First, then, there is A SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE REFERRED TO, “The people who *do know their God*.”

To know God is the highest and best form of knowledge. But what can we know of God? Nothing but what He has been pleased to reveal to us. He has revealed something of Himself in the book of nature and much more in the book of Revelation. And He has been pleased to cast a vivid light upon the book of Revelation by manifesting Himself unto His people as He does not unto the world.

Those who know the Lord should believe in *the unity of His essence and subsistence*. “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD.” There should be no mistaken notions here—the unity of the Godhead is fundamental and mistakes here are fatal. We should know the Lord in *the plurality of His persons*. God said, “Let us make man in our *own* image.” Let not man be content until he knows something of the “us” from whom his being was derived.

Endeavor to know the Father. Bury your head in His bosom in deep repentance and confess that you are not worthy to be called His son. Receive the kiss of His love. Let the ring which is the token of His eternal faithfulness be on your finger. Sit at His table and let your heart make merry in His grace.

Seek to know much of the Son of God who is the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person, and yet in unspeakable condescension of grace became man for our sakes. Know Him in the singular complexity of His nature—eternal God, and yet suffering, finite man. Follow Him as He walks the waters with the tread of deity and as He sits upon the well in the weariness of humanity. Be not satisfied unless you know something of Jesus Christ as your friend, your brother, your husband your all.

Forget not the Holy Spirit—endeavor to get as clear a view as you can of His nature and character, His attributes, and His works. Behold that Spirit of the Lord who first of all moved upon chaos and brought forth order—who now visits the chaos of your soul and makes order there. Behold Him as the

Lord and giver of spiritual life, the Illuminator, the Instructor, the Comforter, and the Sanctifier. Behold Him as, like holy unction, He descends upon the head of Jesus, and then afterwards rests upon *you* who are as the skirts of His garments. Get a clear idea, then, of the Trinity in unity.

Do not reason about it. do not try to understand it—remember, it is not your duty to comprehend, but to apprehend such truths as these—you are to believe, rather than to reason. One God in the Trinity of His persons, let us know and worship. For remember that those who do not know this, very seldom know much else about divine things. For a very remarkable fact it is, that when the doctrine of the Trinity is given up, the other doctrines of the evangelical system are pretty sure to be cast to the winds. This doctrine of the Trinity in unity seems to be the place of standing or falling with public teachers and private believers.

Let us study to be well instructed in the *divine attributes*, and ask for grace to know them all. Be not like those who dream of a God who is all love, and nothing else. These persons talk in maudlin sentences, as if they believed in an effeminate God who winks at sin, and is utterly destitute of one single atom of integrity or holiness. Believe God to be what He most certainly is—a God terrible, as well as benevolent, who will by no means spare the guilty—and yet passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin. See God in the suffering body and soul of Christ Jesus upon Calvary, and you will understand how He is severely just in punishing sin in Him upon whom sin was made to meet, and yet supremely gracious in providing such a way of escape for guilty souls.

Do not be content with a maimed and distorted view of God's attributes. Feel Him to be omnipresent—let it be your delight to know that you have not to call upon Him as one who is afar off, but ever near at hand. Recognize Him as omnipotent—know that there is nothing which He cannot do, and therefore doubt Him not. Forget not His absolute sovereignty, but meekly submit to it.

The failure of many men, in their ideas about God, is that they imagine Him to be *subject* to law, instead of being the source and fountain of all law. They arraign His actions at their bar and forget His terrible reply. “Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?” They have not heard the solemn voice, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

Although to perfection, you cannot find out God, yet do not worship Him as did the Athenians under the title of “The unknown God.” Endeavor to understand how love unbounded meets with justice unlimited, and sovereignty without control—how “Holiness becomes his house,” and yet how tender-hearted affection towards His creatures ever dwells in Him. Do not worship ignorantly. Whatever else you do not know, do know the character of your God. “They that know your name will put their trust in You.”

Then labor to know God in His *actions*. Study well the past. Do not be ignorant of the great work of creation. If you have the skill, look at that creation in the light of modern science so far as that light is really derived from facts and not from conjectures. Pry into God's great works in providence—begin your pilgrimage of study at the gates of Eden and travel onward to the present time. Float safely in your meditations with Noah in the ark. Study the wonderful justice of God in thus sweeping away the race of men. I have not time to linger on any one particular spot this morning—if I might, I should have selected the Red Sea.

Remember what JEHOVAH did at the Red Sea and by the brooks of Arnon! Tell how He made bare His arm, and swept away His foes! Take Miriam's timbrel and sing unto the Lord who triumphed gloriously! Or if that contents you not, remember Og and Sihon, or exult over Sisera in Deborah's song, “Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.” Think of the deeds of God in later times when He smote Sennacherib, and laid His hosts dead at midnight. Tell how He brought forth His people from the land of captivity with rejoicing and built up the walls of Jerusalem once more.

Let, especially, the actions of God concerning Christ be very dear to you. Fly back to the eternal council—you will not be intruding if your faith can enter that great council chamber of eternity. Think of the covenant, the suretyship, the provision, the almighty decree. See Jesus Christ coming forth from the bosom of the Father, amid the song of angels, to hang upon a woman's breast. Trace the history of your incarnate God—make the life of Christ be with you a household study—know every corner of it. Never let a question be asked of the youngest of you, concerning the life of Jesus, which you cannot answer. The rhetorician studies the classics. The old Roman orators were familiar with Demosthenes, and the Greek poets—so let the Christian make the life of Jesus his first study, and with every single passage in it let him be familiar. Know the Savior from the weakness of the cradle to the triumph of His ascension, when, leading captivity captive, He mounted the Father's throne to reign forever.

If you have mastered all this, seek to know something of *the teaching of the Spirit of God concerning the plan of salvation*. Do not be content to be saved in the dark. Try to find out how it is that you are saved. You are on a rock, but look at the rock and understand why it is a rock, and how you came to be standing on it. I believe that very much of current Arminianism is simply ignorance of gospel doctrine. And if people began to study their Bibles, and to take the Word of God as they find it, they must inevitably, if believers, rise up to rejoice in the doctrines of grace. Bolingbroke was far gone in infidelity, and yet when he met Mr. Whitefield one morning, he said to him, “Sir, if the Bible be true, Calvinistic doctrines such as you preach are most certainly taught in it. And though I neither receive the Bible nor Calvinistic doctrines, at any time my pen is very much at your service, if you want to have these doctrines proved from the Bible.” I am persuaded it is so.

Dear friends, I would not have you merely unite with the Christian church, and say, “Yes, I believe in Christ,” but I want you—and here I speak to you who are lately added to the church—I want you to know where this great scheme began. I want you to know how it is that the blood of Christ takes away sins. To know the fact is very precious, but to understand the reason of that fact is so comforting, so establishing, so every way to be desired, that I would have you study much the Word of God till you get a clear view of the whole scheme, from election onward to final perseverance, and from final perseverance to the second advent, the resurrection, and the glories which shall follow, world without end.

I have thus brought out what I think is the idea of the text about the people *knowing their God*. But we must not overlook that little word *their*, “They that know *their* God.” It is not, “They that know God,” but “*their* God.” To know anything of Him aright, you must get a firm hold of God. He must be *your* God. “There is no praying,” said one old man who used to be much in prayer, “till you come to a close grip.” There must be a blessed familiarity with God. You must know Him to be yours, because He gave Himself to you in the eternal covenant. Yours, because He has promised Himself to you in His Word. Yours, because you take Him by an act of simple faith. Yours, because every day you put yourself beneath His guidance and desire to be a soldier under His command. Yours to have and to hold through life, in death and in eternity, because He has laid hold of you, and will hold you even to the end.

“The people that do know their God.” Ah! that is one of the choicest things a human tongue can ever say, “*My* God! *My* God!” Ah! Thomas, you had learned a great lesson when with your hand in Jesus' side, you could say not only, “Lord, God,” but “*My* Lord, and *my* God!” O, may you all be among the people who know *their* God.

II. THE HAPPY INFLUENCE OF THIS KIND OF KNOWLEDGE next requires our notice.

The text shows that it strengthens, gives courage, energy, vigor, resolution, daring, success. They who know their God are strong and do exploits. The Romish church thinks a great deal of implicit faith, of the faith which cannot apprehend what it believes. Now, we agree with Romanists in this—that we are to believe what we cannot *comprehend*, but we do not agree with them in the other—that we are to believe what we cannot *apprehend*.

You remember the faith of the coal miner? “What do you believe?” “I believe what the church believes.” “But what does the church believe?” “Oh, the church believes as I believe.” “Well, but what

do you and the church believe?” “Why, we both believe the same thing.” Now, Romanists may set great store by that kind of faith, and they go the right way to induce it very often by denying the Bible to the common people, or by neglecting education so that the masses are unable to read the Word when they *can* get it. If you say, “You believe as I believe, and I believe as you believe, and we both believe the same thing,” I tell you that you are no credit to your teacher, and the sooner you give up your faith the better.

A man cannot believe what he does not apprehend. He may say, “I am prepared to believe it when I do apprehend it,” but as to believing what he has never been told, it is quite impossible. If there are any dogmas of Mother Church which I have not heard of, I do not believe them, and if I stand up and say I do, I am talking nonsense. If I say I am prepared to believe when I shall have been told, that may be—but I cannot already believe them, for belief must be parallel with apprehension. A man must apprehend a thing or he cannot believe it.

Knowledge strengthens the spiritual man because, in the first place, *it is that on which faith has to feed*. Where there is faith, knowledge is a great gain. This will be clear to all of you who read attentively your Bible, because the words, “to know,” and “to believe,” are frequently used in Scripture almost synonymously. If you turn to the tenth chapter of St. John’s gospel, you will find there at the thirty-eighth verse, that the Savior said, “But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works: that you may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.”

And then, in the first epistle of St. John, in the second chapter, at the third verse, we have an expression which is tantamount to the one I have already referred to. “And hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments.” We are sure of our faith and of our knowledge by walking in obedience to Him. The source from which Christian faith comes proves the importance of knowledge.

How does faith come to the Christian? By sitting still and looking at fifty or a hundred wax candles? By admiringly gazing upon a impassive Madonna at the corner of the street? By hearing language which I cannot comprehend repeated by men in a peculiar dress? Never, according to Scripture. How then? “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” There is the whole history of faith—the Word of God gives the teaching which blesses us with knowledge, and then comes faith. The sight of the eyes, religious awe, impressions of dread, emotions of wonder—these do not give faith—but hearing something which I can apprehend is the means of my believing.

Believers are constantly spoken of in the Scriptures as being people who are enlightened and taught of the Lord. They are said to, “have an unction from the Holy One,” and it is the Spirit’s peculiar office to lead them into all truth, and all this for the increase and the fostering of their faith. They are not kept in darkness that they may believe, but put into the light that they may believe. Here is the difference between the religion of Christ, and the religion of antichrist.

Moreover, there is provided in the church of God an agency which proves that knowledge is to be the food of faith. To what end is the ministry ordained but this, “For the edification of the saints.” Are we not called teachers? That preacher who does nothing but excite the people, who teaches nothing and declares no definite doctrine, had better lay aside his office and take to some honest employment where he may do no more mischief. *Teaching* is what we want—a true minister is a teacher to his people, a steward of God bringing forth things, “both new and old.”

You see, then, that if knowledge be under God the Holy Ghost, truly the food of faith, then, in order to be strong, since faith is the very sinew of human strength, we must get much knowledge of the things of God. The people who do know their God shall be strong in faith and shall do great exploits.

Think again, dear friends, *of the influence of faith upon all the other graces of God*. Love is the sweetest of all. But how can I love till knowledge gives me a view of Christ? Knowledge opens the door, and then through that door I see my Savior. Or I may use another expression—knowledge takes the portrait of Christ, and when I see that portrait then I love Him. I cannot love a Christ I do not know, at least, in some degree. And if I know nothing about the excellencies of Christ—what He has done for

me and what He is doing now—I cannot love Him. In Christ’s case, to know is to love, and the more I know, the more I shall love.

Look at *hope* again. How can I hope for a thing if I do not know of its existence? Hope may be the telescope, but then till I get knowledge there is something in front of the glass, I can see nothing whatever. But knowledge takes away the impediment, and then when I look through the optic glass, I can see the glory to be revealed. But I cannot hope for that of which I know nothing whatever. I must know there is a heaven or I cannot hope for it.

Then, take *patience*. How shall I have patience unless I have heard, as James says, of the patience of Job. unless I know something of the sympathy of Christ, and understand the good which is to come out of the correction which my heavenly Father gives me? Knowledge gives me reasons for patience. I cannot stop on this point, but there is no one single grace of the Christian which, under God, will not be fostered and brought to perfection by holy knowledge. Knowledge becomes, then, of the highest importance.

Again, from the connection of the text, it appears that many were led astray in the days of Antiochus. “Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong,” and so on. It seems, then, that to know God is *a means of steadfastness*. Who are the people that are greatly troubled by new systems of philosophy and infidelity which are constantly springing up? Why, the people who do not know their God.

Certain young folks say to me, “O sir, I have read a new book—there is a great discovery made about development. Animals were not created separately, but grew out of one another by degrees of gradual improvement.” Go and ask your grandmother about it. And what does she say as she takes off her spectacles? “Why,” she says, “I was reading ‘There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.’” Say to her, “Do you not feel alarmed about your faith?” “No,” she says, “if they were to discover fifty thousand things, it would not trouble me, for, ‘I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.’”

You think she is a simpleton, perhaps—she might far more properly think you the same. Every now and then, there comes up a heresy—some woman turns “prophetess” and raves, or some lunatic gets the idea that God has inspired him, and there are always fools ready to follow any impostor. Who are those that go after them? Those who do not know God. For those who do know Him, say—

***“Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I’d call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”***

Brethren, if a truly godly minister has for six or seven years been teaching a people, and he gives them the good, solid truth, and they receive it and understand it, I should not like to see the wolf come in. But I do not believe he would do much mischief, for many strong men will be found to slay the intruder. But if there be a ministry which only consists of preaching up moral duties, and creating the titillation of excitement, then, if the wolf comes, he may just glut himself with the blood of professors, for there is no strength in them to resist him. We want sound doctrine to give us stability. May God grant that we may be rooted and grounded in Christ, that we may know the things which are revealed to us of God.

Only once more, and then we leave the second point. Knowledge will clearly be seen by you to be a great means for enabling you to do great exploits, if you think of *its bearing upon usefulness*. A Christian without knowledge, for instance, is an admirable man in the holiness of his life. But to what other end, to what other purpose can you put him? He must not enter the pulpit—if he be already there, he had better retire. He must not be a church officer. It would be foolish to choose the feeblest among us to be our leaders. He is scarcely of any use in the Sunday school class—he may manage to hear the

children read, and to wile away the time. But if he were a true Christian instructor, he would open up the Scriptures and explain them.

Do not, any of you, feel grieved at what I am saying? I am speaking to those who have been lately converted. You are believers—I am rejoicing in it—rejoicing that you are converted, however little your knowledge. But I want you to feel dissatisfied with your ignorance, and to seek, in order to your usefulness, to know the ground and the reason for the things you believe, and to understand as far as you *can*, the deep things of God. Do not be content to be always children—you will never be men unless you are children first. Do not be content to be stunted in your understanding, but ask to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for the sake of your own usefulness.

III. We come, in the third place, TO NOTICE HOW THIS KNOWLEDGE MAY BE OBTAINED.

Time has fled, and therefore we will not enlarge, but just give the outline. *Search the Scriptures*. Do not merely *read* them—search them. Look out the parallel passages. Collate them. Try to get the meaning of the Spirit upon any one truth by looking at all the texts which refer to it. Read the Bible consecutively—do not merely read a verse here and there—that is not fair. You would never know anything about John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* if you opened it every morning and read six lines in any part and then shut it up again. You must read it all through if you want to know anything about it.

Get those books, say Mark or John. Read Mark right through from beginning to end. Do not stop with two or three verses, or a chapter, but try to know what Mark is aiming at. It is not fair to Paul to take his epistle to the Romans and read one chapter—we are obliged to do it in public service. But if you want to get at Paul’s meaning, read the whole epistle through as you would another letter.

Read the Bible in a common-sense way. Do not read it on your knees, as I have known some people do—it is an awkward posture—get into an easy chair and read it in comfort. Pray after you have read it as much as you like, but do not make a penance of what ought to be a pleasure. And when you are reading it, if you come to a knotty point, do not skip it. You all have some Christian friend who knows more than you do—go to him and try to get the thing explained. Above all, when you have read any passage and do understand it, act it out, and ask the Spirit of God to burn the meaning into your conscience till it is written on the fleshy tables of your heart.

Next, *use good helps to your Bible*. I do not know better helps for the common mass of people than, “The Confession of Faith,” or the little Catechism. With the little Catechism and texts of Scripture, any believer, however ignorant, can in a very short time get a good view of the things of God. I believe that the Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism has more divinity in it than nine out of ten of the modern book printings. And if any person would know and understand that, he need not be afraid but what he will be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him, provided the hope is in him.

Next, *be sure to attend a teaching ministry*. Do not be always after sweets. Do not be running after prophesying and novelties. Try to see the whole range of Scripture. Believe in Calvinism—but if there is a single truth which only the Arminians hold, believe that too. Do not put your feet into Chinese shoes to be squeezed after the current fashion into an orthodox shape. Be willing to have a broad understanding—receive anything which God has revealed, and be content to take the whole of God’s truth, whether you can make it into a system or not.

Then I should say, if you want to understand much, *be much in prayer*. Prayer cuts many a Gordian knot. *Be much in communion with God*. You cannot know God at a distance. Get close to Him—come to Him in the name of Jesus Christ—come very close to Him. The other night, in prayer, I remember, by mistake, quoting an old Scripture—that we might weep, like the priests, “between the porch and the altar”—and I was corrected by a brother for it. He said, “We do not need to stand between the porch and the altar, because, in prayer, the proper place for a Christian is further in *beyond* the altar. The sacrifice is *finished*, and we are to go through the court of the priests, and enter into the most holy place—into that which is within the veil, where our forerunner is for us entered.”

Endeavor, therefore, to get a good view of the types of Scripture. When you have made a mistake about them, be willing to be corrected, but try to understand the types by getting the substance in your

own experience—that is the best way of knowing them. And remember, there is one school to which you can all go, where you will all learn. Our Savior says, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” Practical holiness is a grammar school in which we may learn the doctrines of grace.

IV. And now, I want to say ONE WORD BY WAY OF CAUTION and it shall be scarcely more than a word.

Remember that knowledge of itself—with all its excellencies and virtues when God blesses it—has a danger in it to you. “Knowledge,” says the apostle, “puffs up.” So it does. You may get proud of what you know, and then, God forgive you, and deliver you from it! And moreover, you may get so positive about what you know that you may have made up your mind never to know any more. I know some of that kind—they know everything—every doctrine which is brought forward that they have not received already must be rejected, because they have made up their minds that they have the whole of revelation by heart. They have “meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure,” and think they know wisdom to perfection.

Do not get into that state. Your knowledge may even make you haughty to the people of God. You may look down with contempt on some who do not know so much as you, and yet they may have twice your holiness and be doing more service to God. For knowledge is after all but a talent, and grace is always better than gifts. Try to get grace to make the gift right, and as you grow in knowledge, which may prove to be the sails, humility will prove an admirable ballast. To this end, I ask the help of the Holy Spirit that what you know may be rightly known, for then it will not exalt you, but make you lie at the foot of the cross. O that God might thus teach and thus instruct us all.

V. And now to close—here is THE DUTY OF SPREADING THIS KNOWLEDGE WHEN WE HAVE IT. “They that understand among the people shall instruct many.”

It is a prophecy which is fulfilled, but it is also a suggestion of a duty which we have to carry out. Are we instructing many, those of us who know the Lord? “Well,” says one, “I am. I am endeavoring to do my best in the Sabbath school, in the catechumen class, and so on.” God speed you, dear friend. God speed you in your good work! God speed you a thousand-fold more than you have yet learned to ask or even think!

But there must be some here who are not teaching others. Of course, our business is to begin with teaching our own children. When the services used to be in the morning and afternoon in the olden times, the evening was generally spent with the children in teaching and catechizing. I do not think we in London could go back to the old plan. But I am not sure that the present one is an improvement, whether the children might not learn much more if the parents did give the Sabbath evening constantly to their instruction. At any rate, no mother, no father—especially no mother—should allow a Sabbath to pass over her head, if she knows the things of God, without having her little ones around her, and teaching them what she herself knows. The Sunday school teacher does well, but he cannot relieve parents from the responsibility of teaching their own children.

Others might take a wider range. Might you not get up Bible-readings at your house? If God has taught you a truth which others do not know, could you not find others in your neighborhood who might be willing to come to your house and understand the things of God from you or someone else? If they will not come, have you not the instinct to get at them some other way? Cannot you so weave the common events of life into a means of Christian instruction that you are truly “all things to all men”?

Put in words edgewise, so as to instruct casual visitors. We have not a system of class meetings as among our Wesleyan friends. It would be a great mercy if we had something like them. And it would be a good thing if the elders of this church would constantly look after the younger ones. Get seven, eight, or nine to meet you as a class. get a textbook and study it by the light of the Word of God. We have some admirable teachers here, but I believe we have some who might teach a great deal more, who are not doing it.

Some of you are living at a distance—your work cannot be very well carried on in connection with this place. What does that matter? I would as soon you taught elsewhere. So long as you are working for God, it does not matter whether it is here or there. If you are Christian people belonging to this church, your first duty is here. But if from any other circumstance, you cannot throw in your strength with us, why, do it elsewhere. If you want to go elsewhere, of course we are sorry to lose you, but we say, go by all means if you can serve God better. If you feel you *must* attend our ministry because it suits your mind, why come among us, and aid our efforts to do good. Do, at any rate, teach what God has told you! If God has lit your candle, try to shine and let other candles be lit by you.

I have said much on this point, and I close with this remark—there are some here who cannot be exhorted to learn and know much of God, because they have not yet begun to know themselves. They do not know this simple truth, “That Christ came into the world to save sinners.” They know it from theory, but that is of very little use. May they know it in their heart by saying, “Jesu, I am a sinner. Since You came to save sinners, I give myself to You. O save me. I trust You to save me.” God bring you to this state, and when you have received Christ, then endeavor, as much as lies in you—

*“To teach to sinners round,
What a dear Savior you have found.”*

May the Master bless these words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. 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.