

Gift of God

#0577

Study given by W. D. Frazee—September 13, 1968

Jesus is at Jacob's well at Sychar. He is weary and hungry and thirsty. He is resting by the well. Although He is Lord of all creation, having taken the form of humanity He is as dependent as we are. And though there is water in the well, He has no way to get it.

Presently a woman of Samaria comes and lowers her water pot, and is about to return to her village when Jesus asks her for a drink. In doing so He cut across the race prejudice of His time, for the Jews had no dealing with the Samaritans. Startled she asked why He would ask for a drink from a Samaritan.

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

My soul has been greatly blessed as I have been meditating on these words of the Savior. I know that the Holy Spirit is here to bless us as we share this wonderful statement. Jesus is speaking to you and to me. If thou knewest the gift of God. If you could get acquainted with the wonderful present that God has for you, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.

This is the water of salvation. Salvation is not something we do for God. It is something He does for us. If you knew the gift that has been provided for you, Jesus says you would ask for it.

Is that the way to get it? Yes. That is the way you get a gift.

I want to study with you how not to get this gift. And my purpose is to focus on the one way to get it. The one way to get it is to ask for it. That is always the way to get a gift. But six thousand years ago at the altar that Cain sacrificed on at the garden gate, a religion of works has appealed to the human heart.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” Ephesians 2:4-9.

Jesus tells us not only what it is, but what it isn't. He not only tells us how to get it, but how not to get it. It is the gift of God. It is not of works, lest any man should boast.

What do men get for works? Wages.

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” Romans 6:23.

Why? Because a sinful man does sinful works, and the end of sin is death. Sin is the transgression of the law, and the wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Which would you rather have, your wages or a gift? Which do you want? How people have toiled down through the ages seeking to pile up some merit on which they can collect something from God.

Think of Luther in his cell seeking by painful penitence and earnest studies and long prayers to find peace with God. Think of him toiling up those stairs and in thunder tones the word of Scripture ringing in his ears, “The just shall live by faith.” Oh, thank God he saw that what he had been trying to get through long and weary and painful struggles was given to him as a gift by the free mercy and love of God through Jesus Christ.

Think of Wesley, an earnest and faithful member of the Church of England. He was jealous in his efforts to help others. He was self-denying. He was seeking in such a methodical way to carry out what the Bible says that he and his fellows were named Methodists. But he still lacked peace in his soul. What was the matter? He was seeking in doing right things to become righteous. He was seeking through works to obtain the favor of God. But what does Jesus say?

“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water” John 4:10.

Thank God; there came a day when the light broke into Wesley's soul as it will break into every soul who really wants to please God. And what a relief came to his weary heart.

How do you get a gift? You ask for it.

Is there a tired one here tonight? Is there someone who has tried and tried to please God, and felt you have made so little headway? Are those who have sought to keep His commandments, and it seems you fail again and again, and you are weary and worn? Jesus is speaking to you. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And if you knew the gift of God, you would ask of Him, and He would give you the living water. Let's ask. What do you say?

Someone says, “But is there no place for works?”

For ages the world has had a proverb about getting the cart before the horse. Where does the horse belong? In front of the cart. What is he doing with the cart?

He is pulling it. And the horse is the gift of God in our study tonight. It is the righteousness, the faith, the salvation which Jesus gives to those who ask. And the works are the cart that the horse pulls.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” Ephesians 2:8-10.

Will the works come? Yes, but they follow, you see. The horse pulls the cart. The faith and grace and righteousness to get right with God, and to get the power to do His will, are the gift of God. And if we accept that gift, then we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The works will follow. They always do.

So the secret of successful and victorious Christian living is to seek God for His gift the gift of forgiveness: the gift of righteousness, the gift of grace, the gift of faith. Accepting that gift, and believing His promise, we start in to walk in the commandments of God. Not as the basis of acceptance, but as the fruit of acceptance. Oh, I thank God for simple faith in Jesus Christ. What do you say?

What do you want? Wages for your works? Wages is death, but the gift of life is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Philip, one of the seven deacons, had gone down from Jerusalem to Samaria, the very place where Jesus had given that message to the woman at the well. All the area was a stir with the gospel message. Hundreds were accepting it. Finally Peter and John came down from Jerusalem to join with Philip in the work and pray for these new converts that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

There was a man there by the name of Simon who had practiced sorcery for many years. Before this men had been in awe of him, but now a greater work had come along as Philip preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Simon accepted the message and was baptized. But friends, it takes more than baptism. We need to remember that. It takes time for character to be developed.

“And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” Acts 8:18-22.

Simon thought he could get the Holy Spirit by buying it. But how do you go about buying a gift? It isn’t a gift if you buy it, and you don’t buy it if it is a gift. Peter said, “Thy money perish with thee.”

Too many preachers have their hands out for money. Don't misunderstand me. God has a plan of tithes and offerings. He wants us all to get the joy and blessing in returning to Him His own. But we can't buy salvation with our tithes and offerings. All the gifts and all the tithes of all the rich men in this world will not buy the lowliest seat in the kingdom of heaven. Not a bit.

Peter was interested in something besides money. He had settled the money question long before. To the cripple at the gate he said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee." But here was a rich man coming forward and offering to buy his way. Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

Why do you put your tithe in an envelope? Why do you put your offering in the Sabbath School? Why do you help the poor? Why do you take part in these various experiences of giving? If it is in any sense to buy the favor of God, to earn salvation, to merit something from God, then you are a part of Simon's group.

Remember what I said about the horse and the cart. Giving our tithes and offerings is the cart, not the horse. The horse is the gift of God, and the giving will naturally follow. If we receive the gift of God, our hearts will so overflow with gratitude that we will long to press our offerings into His treasure. There will not need to be any pressure or contests, any inventions of the Gentiles to milk money out of the saints. Oh, no. When our hearts have been touched with the love of Jesus, and we have received this wonderful gift, the treasury will be overflowing with ample funds for the carrying on of the work.

James tells us that we should avoid giving some special attention to a rich man just because he is rich. God loves the rich man, and wants to save him. But He doesn't love the rich man anymore than He loves the poor man.

If it is a mistake to try to work for the gift of God, if it is an error to try to buy it with money, what would it be to try to steal it?

You say, "Nobody would do anything like that."

There came a time when Isaac was getting old. He said to Esau, Son, I am getting old. I don't know when I am going to die, and I must bless you with the blessing of the firstborn before I die. Take your bow and arrows and find a deer in the forest. Kill it and bring it in, and we will have a feast and I will bless you before I die.

Rebecca heard it. She called Jacob. Esau and Jacob were twins. Esau was the firstborn, so he was the one who was supposed to inherit the birthright. But God had told Rebecca that Jacob was the one who was to get the blessing. God knew it. Isaac and Rebecca both knew it. But Isaac had his heart set on Esau.

Rebecca was worried. She decided that she had to do something to make God's plans work out. She couldn't rest and leave it with God. She called Jacob and said, Jacob, your father has called your brother and he is going to give him the blessing. You know that can't be. We have to do something. Get a kid and kill it,

and I will cook it before Esau gets back. I will take some of the hair and skin of the kid and put it on your arms and neck. Your father is old and blind. He will feel you.

What a strange thing to find a wrong way to get the right thing done. Do you see what I mean?

When Jacob went into this thing he actually didn't intend to tell a lie. But before he got through he told one lie after the other. That's the way the Devil works. After Jacob got in with his father, his father asked him more than once, and he had to tell a barefaced lie. He got the blessing, but he lied and cheated to get it. His mother helped him, but did that make it all right? He had parental help in the matter. But that didn't make it all right.

He got the blessing, but oh, at what a cost. He had to leave his father's house. He never saw his mother again. He was a stranger and a wanderer. He got cheated again and again just as he had cheated his brother and lied to his father.

There is something good about it, and here is the wonderful mercy of God. God knew that deep down in Jacob's heart he really wanted the blessing. It is too bad to want something so bad that you will cheat to get it. And if you knew the gift of God you wouldn't have to cheat. You wouldn't have to break God's law to get God's blessing. Oh, no.

Through long years the curse of it hung over Jacob. But finally in that wrestling with God by the brook Jabbok Jacob got the final victory over this whole business. He met Esau the next morning, and they fell on each other's neck and wept. There was confession. There was restitution. There was reconciliation. Oh, the long years of sorrow and pain and woe because someone thought they had to help God to fulfill His promise, and break His law to do it.

If Rebecca and Jacob had a prayer band that morning instead of what they did, how different the whole thing would have worked out. We don't know how it would have worked out. We don't have to figure it out. God is on His throne. It is never necessary to go contrary to God's instructions in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy in order to get God's blessings, my friends. Never.

God, in His mercy, rules and overrules as He did in the case of David. But every time men depart from the path and take a detour, the piercing thorns they must encounter day after day and all through their lives. But if we have done it, let's let the thorns teach us a lesson. Let's get back on the trail as quickly as possible.

And remember. You cannot work for a gift. If you do you get wages. You cannot buy a gift. If you bought something it wouldn't be a gift. It would be a purchase. And certainly you cannot steal a gift.

Suppose I had a friend, a rich uncle. I visit him from time to time. He is a lover of horses, and has several fine ones. One of them he is training and teaching him many things. I think, Oh, I wish I had that horse. Every time I go to see my uncle I wish I had that horse.

Finally the desire wells up in my soul so much that I go in the night and steal that horse and take it to where I live.

The days go by and I meet my uncle one day. He says, Bill, a great sorrow has come to me. For a long time I have been planning to give you a wonderful gift. I have been training one of my best horses for you, and I never told you about it for I intended it to be a surprise. But someone has stolen it. I want to tell you so you can know what was in my heart.

How would I feel?

Oh, if you only knew the gift of God. If you only knew the things that God is planning for you, you would wait His time. You wouldn't try to help Him out by cheating or fudging. No. You wouldn't try to roll up human works and schemes. You wouldn't try to buy it with money. You would in simple faith kneel at the cross and say, "In my hand no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling. Dear Jesus, give me all that You see I need. Give me what Your heart has been longing to give me these many years. Give me a heart like Thine. I cannot work for it and earn it. I cannot buy it with money. Take those things all away forever. There is one thing I want—the living water."

Rest weary soul, the penalty is born, the ransom paid,
For all thy sins full satisfaction made,
Think not to do thyself what Christ has done.

Claim the free gift and make the joy thine own,
No more by pangs of guilt and fear distress,
Rest, sweetly rest

If you knew the gift of God you would have asked of Him, and He would have given thee more than your heart could ever desire. Exceeding abundantly above all we might ask.

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