

Gift of God

#0577

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

Let us turn to His words in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel and the 10th verse. These are the words of Christ as He's at Jacob's well at Sychar in Samaria. He's on His way from Jerusalem to Galilee. He stopped at noon, weary, hungry, thirsty. The disciples have gone into the village to buy food. He rests by the well.

Although He's Lord of creation and has made all the water springs, having taken the form of humanity, He has made Himself dependent as we are. And though the well is there and the water in it, He has no way to get it.

But presently, a woman of Samaria comes, lowers her water pot, and is about to return with it filled to the village, and Jesus asks her for a drink. In doing so, He cut across the race prejudice of His time, for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.

Startled, she asked the question why He would ask for a drink from a Samaritan. And in the 10th verse, Jesus answered her, and here we have our text for tonight:

"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've been meditating on these words of the Savior. And I know that the Holy Spirit is here this evening to bless us all as we share together this wonderful statement. Jesus is speaking not merely to that woman at Sychar but to you and me tonight:

"...If thou knewest the gift of God..." John 4:10.

"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 life, the water of salvation. Salvation, my dear friends, is not something we do for God. It is something He does for us.

"If you knew the gift, the present, that has been provided for you, oh," Jesus says, "you would ask for it."

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

Now, this evening, I would like to study with you three ways *not* to get it. And my purpose in studying with you the three ways *not* to get it is so that our minds can be clear and focused concerning the *one* way *how* to get it. The one way to get it, Jesus points out. What is it? Ask for it. That's always the way to get a gift. But men have various ways. For 6,000 years from that altar that Cain sacrificed on at the garden gate, a religion of works has appealed to the human heart.

Let's turn to Ephesians the second chapter verses 8–9, and note this same expression “the gift of God.” This is the refrain which will come again and again to us in our vesper study tonight—“the gift of God.”

I think I'll read back beginning with the fourth verse to get the setting. It's so beautiful:

“But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins...” Ephesians 2:4–5.

Did God love us even when we were dead in sins? Oh, yes. Now, what's He done?

“...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” Ephesians 2:5–8.

Here we have that expression again.

“Not of works, lest any man should boast” Ephesians 2:9.

Here he not only tells us what it *is*; He tells us what it *isn't*. He tells us not only how to get it; He tells us how we can *never* get it. How is it that we can get it?

“...It is the *gift* of God” Ephesians 2:8.

How is it that we cannot get it?

“Not of works, lest any man should boast” Ephesians 2:9.

Do you know what people get for works? They get wages.

Turn to Romans the 6th chapter, the 23rd verse. If you're interested in collecting wages, take a look—the paycheck.

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

What's the wages? Death. Why? Because, my dear friends, a sinful man does sinful works. And the end of sin is what? Death.

"...Sin is the transgression of the law" 1 John 3:4.

And:

"...The wages of sin is death..." Romans 6:23.

But now comes our expression again:

"...but..." Romans 6:23.

What?

"...the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" Romans 6:23.

Which would you rather have, your wages or a gift? Which do you want?

Ah, my dear friends, how people have toiled down through the ages seeking to pile up some merit on which they could collect something from God.

Think of Luther in his cell there, seeking by painful penance, by weary vigils, by earnest study, by long prayers to find peace with God. Think of him toiling up those stairs and then, in thunder tones that word from Scripture ringing in his ears:

"...The just shall live by faith" Romans 1:17.

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.

"Not of works, lest any man should boast" Ephesians 2:9.

"...It is the *gift* of God" Ephesians 2:8.

And I ask again, how do you get a gift? You ask for it.

Think of Wesley, an earnest, faithful member of the Church of England, zealous in his efforts to help others, self-denying, seeking in such a methodical way to carry out what the Bible says, that he and his fellows were named Methodists. But oh, 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.

...even the river of salvation. And thank God, there came a day when the light broke into Wesley's soul, as it will break into every soul that really wants to please God, my friends. And oh, what a relief came to his weary heart.

Ah, is there a tired one here tonight? Is there someone who has tried and tried and tried to please God, and you feel that you make so little headway? Are there those that have sought to keep His commandments, and it seems that you fail again and again, and you're weary and worn? Jesus is speaking to you:

"...If thou knewest the gift of God..." John 4:10.

And:

"...The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" Romans 6:23.

"...If thou knewest the gift of God... thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water" John 4:10.

Let's ask. What do you say?

"Ah but," someone says, "is there no place for works?"

Turn back to Ephesians 2. You know, for ages, the world has had a proverb about getting the cart before the horse. I guess we haven't been in an automobile age so long that we've forgotten what that means. Where does the horse belong? In front of the cart. What's he doing with the cart? He's pulling it.

And I want to tell you something, my friends. 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.

Now, I'm going to read it here, Ephesians the second chapter verses 8–10:

"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, the grace, the righteousness, to be right with God and to get power to do His will, that's a what? A gift, 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. A good tree bears good fruit [a paraphrase of Matthew 7:17].

And so, the secret of successful, 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. And then, accepting that gift and believing His promise, 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?

“...If thou knewest the gift of God...” John 4:10.

“...If thou knewest... thou wouldest have asked of Him,
and He would have given thee living water” John 4:10.

I ask again, what do you want? Wages for your works? The wages is what? Death.

“...But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ
our Lord” Romans 6:23.

Now, I want to study over in Acts 8 another way that men have sought to get this wonderful blessing. The verse we’re going to read is the 20th verse, but let’s get the setting.

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

But there was a man there by the name of Simon, who had practiced sorcery for many years and bewitched the people. Before this, they’d been in awe of him, but now a greater work had come along as Philip preached the faith of Jesus Christ. And Simon, the sorcerer, accepted the message and was baptized.

And my dear friends, it takes more than baptism sometimes, and we need to remember that. Here was a man that went through all the motions, and he was baptized, but it takes time for character to be developed, and never forget it.

Now, Simon reveals his utter lack of understanding of what this is all about, the 18th verse:

“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”
Acts 8:18–19.

How did he want to get it? He wanted to buy it. Listen:

“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 8:20–22.

What was the matter with Simon? He thought he could buy it. But, my dear friends, how do you go about to buy a gift? If you buy it, it isn't a gift, and if it's a gift you don't buy it. Am I correct?

And Peter says:

“...Thy money perish with thee...” Acts 8:2.

You know, that's an interesting way for a preacher to talk, isn't it? Too many preachers have got their hands out for money. And don't misunderstand me. God has a plan of tithes and offerings. And He wants us all to get the joy and the blessing of returning to God His own.

But I want to tell you something. We can't *buy* salvation with our tithes and offerings. That's the point. And all the gifts and all the tithes of the richest millionaire in this world will not buy him the lowliest seat in the kingdom of heaven. Not a bit of it. And Peter was interested in something besides money. He'd settled the money question long before.

And you remember he said to that cripple at the gate:

“...Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee...” Acts 3:6.

Now, here was a chance for a preacher that didn't have very much money; here was a rich man coming forward and offering to buy his way. I don't know how much he offered, it doesn't make any difference, whether it was \$10, \$100, \$1,000, \$10,000, doesn't make that much difference, friend.

Peter said:

“...Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money” Acts 8:2.

Why do you put your tithe in the envelope? Why do you put your offering in the Sabbath school? In the church service? Why do you help the poor? Why do you take part in these various experiences of giving? Ah, my dear friends, 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.

And down through the years from this experience has come the word “simony,” “simony.” Oh friends, remember what I said about the works, the horse and the cart. Giving our tithes and offerings is the cart; it's not the horse. The horse is what? The gift of God. And the giving will follow naturally.

If we receive the gift of God as a free gift, our hearts will so overflow with love and gratitude that we will long to press our offerings into His treasury. There won't need to be any pressure, any 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, when we have received this wonderful gift, the treasury will be full and overflowing with ample funds for the carrying on of the work.

Never, never think that one offering or a million offerings can merit you some place, not in heaven and not in the church either, if it's the church of Christ with Jesus operating through the members.

You remember in our Sabbath school lesson, James has been telling us that we should avoid giving some special attention to a rich man just because he's rich. We need to remember that, friends. God loves the rich man, and He wants to save him. But He doesn't love him a bit more than He does the poor man. Is that right?

“...Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money” Acts 8:2.

“...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.

Now friends, I want to ask you a question, and I want you to think of this very carefully. And you may be surprised where your thoughts will be led if you'll just let the Holy Spirit work with you right now. This is my question. If it's a mistake to try to work for the gift of God, if it's an error to try to buy it with money, what would it be to try to steal it, to try to steal it, to steal the gift of God?

“Oh,” you say, “nobody would do anything like that.”

Paul tells us in Romans 15:4:

“...Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” Romans 15:4.

I'd just like to recall to your mind one of the experiences of Old Testament days. You remember there came a time when Isaac was getting old.

He said to Esau, his son, “Son, I'm getting old, and I don't know when I'm going to die, and I must bless you with the blessing of the firstborn before I die.”

Do you remember? Do you remember the experience? Yes.

“So,” he said, “Esau, take your bow and arrows and get out there in the forest, find a deer and kill it and bring it in, and we'll have a feast, and I'll bless you before I die.”

But Isaac's wife, Rebecca, heard it. And do you remember what she did? She called Jacob. Now, Esau and Jacob, you remember, were twins, but Esau was the firstborn, so he was the one that was supposed to inherit. But God had told Rebecca that Jacob was the one that was really to get the blessing.

Now, don't miss this! Who was to get the blessing? Jacob. Who said so? God said so. Did Isaac and Rebecca both know this? Yes, they both knew it. They both knew it. But Isaac had his heart set on Esau, anyway.

Now, Rebecca was all worried. And as many another soul before or since, she decided that she had to do *something* to make God's plans work out. Couldn't rest and leave it with God. She got into it.

So, she called Jacob. She said, "Jacob, your father has called your brother and sent him out to get venison. He's going to give him the blessing, and you know that can't be. We've got to do something."

"Now, you get busy, get a kid and kill it, and I'll cook it up before Esau ever gets back."

But Jacob was a little reluctant about this.

He thought, "My, my, what'll my father think about this?"

Rebecca said, "Well, we'll fix it up all right. I'll take some of the hair, some of the skin of the kids that we kill for this venison, substitute venison, and I'll put it on your arms and around your wrists and around your neck. And your father's old and he's blind, but he'll feel you."

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

Now, when Jacob first went into the thing, he didn't intend to actually tell a lie. But before he got through, if you'll read the story there in Genesis, he told one lie after the other. That's the way the Devil works, my dear friend. Because after he got in there, his father asked him plainly more than once, and he just had to tell a bare-faced, bald lie. My point is he got the blessing, but he lied and cheated to get it, his mother helping him. That made it all right, didn't it? Didn't it? It didn't? He had parental help in the matter. Didn't that make it all right? No.

Now, he got the blessing, friends, if you'll read the story there. He got it all right, but oh, at what a cost. And he had to leave his father's house. He never saw his mother again. He was a stranger, a wanderer over there at his Uncle Labin's. And he got fooled and cheated again and again, just as he'd cheated his brother and lied to his father.

Now, there's something good about it, friends, and here's the wonderful love and mercy of God. God knew that deep down in his heart Jacob really wanted the blessing. It's too bad to want something so bad that you'll cheat to get it, isn't it?

“And... if thou knewest the gift of God, and... wouldest have asked of Him...” John 4:10.

“...He would have given it to you. You wouldn't have had to cheat. You wouldn't have had to break God's law to get God's blessing.”

No, you wouldn't have to. Do you see, friends?

And through long years, the curse of it all hung over Jacob. But finally, years later in that wrestling with God, in that night encounter 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 necks and wept. There was confession. There was restitution. There was reconciliation. Oh, the long years of sorrow and pain and woe because somebody thought they *had* to help God fulfill His promise and break His law to do it.

“...If thou knewest the gift of God... thou wouldest have asked of Him...” John 4:10.

You know, if Rebecca and Jacob had had a prayer band that morning instead of what they did, how different the whole thing would have worked out.

You say, “How would it have worked out?”

I don't have to figure that 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 blessing, my friend, never!

God in His mercy rules and overrules, as He did in this case of David. But every time that men depart from the path and take a detour, oh, the thorns, the piercing thorns that they must encounter day after day and year after year, many times all through their lives.

But if we've done it, friends, let's let the thorns teach us a lesson. What do you say? Let's get back on the trail as quickly as possible. What do you say?

And remember now, these three things. You cannot work for a gift. If you do, you get what? Wages. You cannot buy a gift. If you've bought something, it wouldn't *be* a gift. It would be a what? A purchase. And certainly, my friends, you cannot steal a gift.

You know, I was thinking about it this morning as I was meditating on these precious verses, these precious thoughts. I was thinking about it. Suppose I had a friend, we'll say a rich uncle. And I visit him from time to time. And he's a lover of horses; he has several fine horses. And there's one of them I notice that he's training and he's teaching him many things.

And there's something that comes into my heart that I think, “Oh, I wish I had that horse.”

And every time I go to see him, I see that horse and, “Oh, I wish I had that horse.”

And finally, the desire—watch the point!—the desire wells up in my soul so much that I go one night and steal that horse out of the corral, and I take it far away where I live.

The days go by, but I meet my uncle one day, this rich uncle.

And he says, “Bill, you know, a great sorrow has come to me. For a long time I’ve been planning to give you a wonderful gift. I’ve been training one of my best horses for you, and I’ve never told you about it, for I intended it to be a surprise. But somebody has stolen it. But I wanted to tell you so you could know what was in my heart.”

Tell me, friends, how would I feel? How would I feel?

“If thou knewest the gift of God...” John 4:10.

Oh, if you only knew what wonderful things God was planning for you, you’d wait His time, you’d wait His time.

“If thou knewest the gift of God...” John 4:10.

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.”
Church Hymnal (1941), #300, third stanza (partial).

“Dear Jesus, give me all that you see I need. Give me what Your heart has been longing to give me, lo these many years. Give me a heart like Thine. Oh, Lord, I see that I cannot work for it and earn it as wages. I see that I cannot buy it with money. And Lord, forgive me if I’ve ever thought I could shortcut and somehow scheme and steal it. Oh, Lord, take those things all away forever. There’s just one thing I want. It’s that living water.”

“Rest, weary soul!
The penalty is borne, the ransom paid,
For all thy sins full satisfaction made;
Strive not thyself to do 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!”
“Rest, Weary Soul, The Penalty is Borne,”
by Jane L. Borthwick, first stanza.

“If thou knewest the gift of God... thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee...” John 4:10.

...more than your heart could ever desire.

“...Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...” Ephesians 3:20.

Is there somebody here tonight that says in your deepest heart's thought, “This message tonight is for me; as if I were the only one here, God I know has given this message for me, and my heart responds. I want this living water. I want full salvation. I want to know that I am His and He is mine. And God helping me, I'm asking for it just as a gift, not because I deserve it, not with any thought that I can work to merit it, but as a free gift through Jesus Christ our Lord”?

If there's somebody that Jesus has impressed that this is for you tonight and your heart is responding, would you like to just stand where you are with bowed head, and let the blessed Savior give you the blessing?

Oh, I know that He wants to. I know He wants to.

“...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.

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”
Seventh-Day Adventist Hymnal, #314.

Precious Lord, as we stand here in Thy presence, we thank Thee that:

“...The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” Romans 6:23.

And in simple faith, we reach up our hands to take the proffered gift.

We thank Thee in that wonderful name. Amen.

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