

"You Have Taken Away the Key of Knowledge"
(Luke 11:52)

Introduction: To whom much is given, much is required. This is true in any area, but especially in the things of God. And if in the things of God, especially in that most precious and important area of teaching biblical truth. James wrote, "LET NOT MANY OF YOU BECOME TEACHERS, MY BRETHREN, KNOWING THAT SUCH AS WE SHALL INCUR A STRICTER JUDGMENT" (3:1). The teacher knows more than the pupil, and therefore is more culpable because of his greater light. But he also sits in the seat of the instructor and seeks to guide others into the will of God. For that reason, any error on his part will have consequences not only for himself, but also for those who sit under his teaching. It is important, therefore, that those who would teach be well instructed in the truth, as well as be able to clearly teach that truth. The general weakness of the church today is that many do not have the truth, or having it, have abandoned it. They have adopted teachings which are more palatable to the hearer, in order to get more people to come into their fold. Success is measured by numbers, and not by the genuineness of the conversions, or the quality of the disciples. They have hidden the true cost of discipleship. They do not tell them that they must give up all their own possessions (Luke 14:25-33). They do not tell them that if they are to follow Christ, they must deny themselves, and die to themselves, and follow after Him wherever He may lead them (Luke 9:23). Therefore, those coming in do not count the cost to see if they are willing to pay the price. And thinking that they are safe in the arms of Christ, they give up seeking Him, and rest easy in their carnal security. But these teachers will incur a stricter judgment, for they have taken away the truth and substituted a lie which cannot save. It can only give them and their disciples a sense of security and peace, where there is no security and peace.

Such was also true to some extent at the time of Christ. The Pharisees were the leaders of the church, and the lawyers were the experts in the Law. They should have been leading the people into all the truth, and yet they were hiding the truth from them. Christ rebukes them because of the wickedness of their hearts and their works. The Pharisees were being scrupulous in their keeping of the minor points of religion, and yet were overlooking the most important things. They were looking for the applause of the people, and not for the praise which comes from God. The lawyers too were weighing the people down with burdens too hard to bear, but they themselves were not willing to help them or to put themselves under that burden. They had taken away the heart of true religion and substituted a man-centered works religion which could not save. They had closed the kingdom of heaven up to themselves and were seeking to do that to others. The important lesson which this text teaches you this morning is,

You should be careful that you have the true Gospel and that you represent it truthfully to others as well.

First, I want to exhort you to seek the key of knowledge which is able to open the door of salvation; and secondly, I want to exhort you not to let anyone take this key away from you, nor for you to take it away from anyone else.

- I. *First, Jesus Tells Us that There Is a Key of Knowledge Which You Need to Have That Opens the Door to the Kingdom of God.*
 - A. *First, You Should Know What This Key Is.*
 1. *That there is a key which we should be concerned about is plainly told us by Jesus.*
 - a. *He says to the Lawyers, "YOU HAVE TAKEN AWAY THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE."*

- b. Because He pronounces a curse upon them for doing this, "WOE TO YOU LAWYERS!" it must be something which Christ considered to be vitally important.
 - c. And because it was so important to Christ, it must also be important to you.
2. But what is "THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE"?
- a. A key is something which is able to lock or unlock something.
 - (i) It can be a literal key which is used to unlock a literal door. You have a key to your house or to your car which allows you access to those things, but keeps others out. You also have a key code for the alarm system in the church which gives you the ability to go into the building without setting off the alarm, while it denies access to others.
 - (ii) But the word "key" is also used as a figure of speech to refer to that which opens for us something besides literal locks. For instance, when you teach someone how to learn something, you are said to have given him the key of understanding. When you are working on a difficult problem that you can't solve, and someone gives you some direction or a hint as to how to solve it, he is said to give you "the key to the solution."
 - (iii) It is in this figurative sense that the word is used here. It is not a literal key which opens a literal door, but a spiritual key which opens a spiritual door.
 - b. It is a certain knowledge which is the key to something very very important. And it is called "the" key because without it, no one may unlock that which it is made for.

B. Secondly, You Should Know What This Key Does.

- 1. It opens a very special door.
 - a. We see that it is a special door which the Lawyers should have entered and did not.
 - b. We also see that the Lawyers were cursed by Christ because they also hindered those who were entering it.
- 2. I believe that the key is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and the door which it opens is the door of salvation.
 - a. Why else would Jesus have been so concerned?
 - b. The whole thrust of Jesus' message was that men should repent and believe the Gospel for the Kingdom of heaven was at hand.
 - c. He spoke of only two paths: the path of righteousness which leads to life, and the broad road of destruction which leads to hell.
 - d. That which the religious leaders had done at that time was to keep the truth about Christ and His Gospel away from the people.
 - e. In a parallel verse in Matthew, Jesus says it outright. He says, "BUT WOE TO YOU, SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, HYPOCRITES, BECAUSE YOU SHUT OFF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN FROM MEN; FOR YOU DO NOT ENTER IN YOURSELVES, NOR DO YOU ALLOW THOSE WHO ARE ENTERING TO GO IN" (23:13).
 - f. To get into this kingdom, you need a key. The only key which the Lord has given to open this door is the Gospel. It is the simple message of repentance from your sins and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- g. But though it is simple, it is also complex. God did not give us a book which contains only the words, "BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND YOU SHALL BE SAVED" (Acts 16:31). The Bible is a big book and tells us many things.
- h. You need to know who this Christ is. He is the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Triune God who took upon Himself our nature, having been born of the virgin.
- i. You need to know what this Christ has done. He has kept the righteous requirements of the Law perfectly to merit a perfect righteousness for His people, and He has died on the cross to atone for their sins.
- j. You need to know why it is that you need a Savior. "FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD" (Romans 3:23). "FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH" (Rom. 6:23).
- k. You need to know what you must do to become a partaker of Christ's work. "THAT IF YOU CONFESS WITH YOUR MOUTH JESUS AS LORD, AND BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, YOU SHALL BE SAVED" (Rom. 10:9).
- l. You need to know what Christ calls all of His people to do, what it is that He has saved them for. "THEREFORE YOU ARE TO BE PERFECT, AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT" (Matt. 5:48). "FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS FOR GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREPARED BEFOREHAND, THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM" (Eph. 2:10).
- m. Apart from the knowledge of the Gospel, you cannot be saved, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Paul wrote, "FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES, TO THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GREEK" (Rom. 1:16), and, "HOW THEN SHALL THEY CALL UPON HIM IN WHOM THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED? AND HOW SHALL THEY BELIEVE IN HIM WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD? AND HOW SHALL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER?" (10:14).
- n. The key is the Gospel, and the door is the door of eternal life. And so you should strive to know this Gospel. You should strive to know all that God requires of you in His Word. And you should strive by all your might to enter into that door of salvation.

C. But Thirdly, You Should Know How It Is That This Key Works.

- 1. It does not work automatically as if knowing the Gospel is enough. It isn't.
 - a. Not everyone who hears the Gospel will be saved.
 - b. It does not work like the Roman Catholics believe concerning their sacraments, merely by administering them.
 - c. Something more is needed.
- 2. You must actually trust in the One whom it reveals.
 - a. When the Gospel is believed, and Christ is rested in fully for salvation, then it opens the door.
 - b. And it is important to see that this believing is not a work which earns salvation.
 - c. This believing, this faith, is an act of looking entirely away from yourself to Christ and a trusting in Him to save you. It is a looking away from all of your works, to rest in His works alone.
 - d. And this faith, as we saw last week, is the gift of God. It is His supernatural work, given by His Spirit to His elect, to His chosen ones. It is only given by God, and if you do not possess it, He is the only one ~~that~~ you may go to receive it.

to whom

- e. And so first this morning, I want you to see that the key of knowledge is the Gospel, which unlocks the door of Paradise to those who will place their trust in Christ and turn from all of their sins.
- f. Secondly, this key is already in many of your hands here this morning, and if you came ~~without~~ here without it, now you have it.
- g. There are those here who have entered the kingdom with this key, and there are those who have not.
- h. If you have not, I would encourage you to strive with all your might to do so while there is still time!
- i. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!
- j. Seek for His grace, seek for His mercy to change your heart and make you willing to come. "STRIVE TO ENTER BY THE NARROW DOOR," Jesus says to you, "FOR MANY, I TELL YOU, WILL SEEK TO ENTER AND WILL NOT BE ABLE" (Luke 13:24).

II. Secondly, There Is Also a Warning Implied In This Passage. Jesus Tells Us that It Is Possible for This Key to Be Taken Away.

- A. In Jesus' Day the Lawyers Had Taken It Away from the People of Israel.
 - 1. Remember, the Lawyers were those who knew the law. They were the experts in the Mosaic code.
 - 2. They had all that they needed to recognize Christ when He came, for the whole Old Testament pointed to Him. Jesus said to His disciples, "THESE ARE MY WORDS WHICH I SPOKE TO YOU WHILE I WAS STILL WITH YOU, THAT ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN ABOUT ME IN THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE PROPHETS AND THE PSALMS MUST BE FULFILLED" (Luke 24:44).
 - 3. The lawyers knew from the Scriptures that the time was fulfilled. They saw the fulfillment of the prophecies. They had no excuse. Jesus said, "YOU SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES, BECAUSE YOU THINK THAT IN THEM YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE; AND IT IS THESE THAT BEAR WITNESS OF ME; AND YOU ARE UNWILLING TO COME TO ME, THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE" (John 5:39-40).
 - 4. It was not for lack of knowledge that they would perish. It was because they were unwilling. They didn't see the beauty of holiness, or desire it.
 - 5. But not only were they unwilling to benefit from this themselves, they were also unwilling that the people should benefit from it.
 - 6. They were the teachers of the people, but they had hid this key from them lest they should recognize the Messiah, and they should lose their place of prominence.
 - 7. They had shut up the kingdom.
- B. As a Result, They Had Not Entered into the Kingdom Themselves, and They Also Hindered Those Who Were Trying to Enter It.
 - 1. Their hardness of heart and their pride would not allow them to acknowledge Jesus as the Lord. And so they kept their pride and stayed outside of the Kingdom.
 - 2. But they were not content with this. They also tried to stop those who were persuaded by the things that they saw and heard.
 - a. There were those who did not lean on the wisdom of their elders. They were convinced that they did not have the truth. And so they sought to enter through the way which Jesus prescribed.
 - b. But the leaders of the Jews were jealous, and they threatened to excommunicate from the church all who professed Jesus to be the Christ (John 9:22).

- c. It was evil of them not to enter, and it was even more evil to hinder others from entering. Jesus said, "IT IS INEVITABLE THAT STUMBLING BLOCKS SHOULD COME, BUT WOE TO HIM THROUGH WHOM THEY COME! IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR HIM IF A MILLSTONE WERE HUNG AROUND HIS NECK AND HE WERE THROWN INTO THE SEA, THAN THAT HE SHOULD CAUSE ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES TO STUMBLE" (Luke 17:1-2).
- d. Upon these, Jesus pronounced a curse, "WOE TO YOU LAWYERS." Anyone who would seek to lead any of the flock of God astray is a cursed child of the devil. And he is only storing up wrath for himself in the day of God's wrath.

III. In Closing, I Would Ask You These Questions Based Upon What We Have Seen.

- A. First, Do You Possess the Key of Knowledge?
 - 1. Are you clear on what the Gospel is? Do you understand that it is only through faith in Christ and repentance from all of your sins that you may enter the kingdom?
 - 2. Do you understand that there is salvation in none else but Christ?
 - 3. Do you realize that although salvation is free, it will cost you everything? Do you recognize that Christ has set you free from all sin in order to live according to His righteous requirements?
 - 4. Or has someone hidden the key of knowledge from you? Do you have the remnants of another Gospel from another source of teaching floating around in your head causing you not to fully embrace the biblical Gospel?
 - a. Do you think that you can receive Jesus as Savior without receiving Him as Lord?
 - b. Do you think that the Gospel does not require a radical change of life?
 - c. Are you not fully convinced that what Jesus said He requires is what He really requires, that it really won't cost you everything, and that you can live the way that you want and still go to heaven?
 - d. Make sure that you have the true knowledge, the key that will open the lock, and not a counterfeit. A lie will not save you no matter how sincerely you believe it.
- B. Secondly, Have You Entered by This Key into the Kingdom?
 - 1. Have you accepted Christ on His terms?
 - 2. Are you living according to all of His commandments, and turning away from all of your sins?
 - 3. Have you not only counted the cost, but are you in the process of paying what you owe by way of obedience?
 - 4. Brethren, there are many today in the church who profess Christ, but who are strangers to His grace. They have deceived themselves into thinking that Christ is theirs, but they have not died to themselves to follow Him.
 - 5. Make sure that you are on that narrow road. Make sure that your foundation of assurance is a sound one.
- C. Lastly, Are You Properly Representing Christ and the Way of Salvation to Others? Are You Guilty of Hiding the Key?
 - 1. If there is anything worse than deceiving ourselves into thinking that we can have the world and heaven too, it is deceiving others into believing the same thing. Make sure that you are not deceiving anyone.

2. Make sure that the message that you give others, and the life that you live are in accord with the Scriptures.
 - a. Represent Christ and His demands accurately.
 - b. And live what you preach. There is nothing which turns people away from Christ ~~faster~~ ^{more easily} than a person who says one thing, but does another.
3. The faith that you have was handed down by your brethren before you both in word and in the power of a godly life.
4. Make sure that you properly represent Christ to others, and that you do not hide the key of knowledge, by not entering the kingdom on Christ's terms, and persuading others not to enter by that narrow gate as well.
5. In light of this the warning of James comes forth with even more force, "LET NOT MANY OF YOU BECOME TEACHERS, MY BRETHREN, KNOWING THAT AS SUCH WE SHALL INCUR A STRICTER JUDGMENT" (James 3:1).
6. May God grant to us that we might receive His grace to hear His Word, may He grant that our entrance into His kingdom might be abundantly supplied, and may He grant us His Spirit in great measure to strengthen us in holiness and purity of life, Amen.
that others may find the truth in us.