

KNOWLEDGE IS NOT POWER.

BY S. J. B. C.



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“ And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God ? ” (Rom. ii. 3.)

ON the tombstone of one of the most talented and popular poets of the past century are engraved the following pathetic lines :

Is there a man whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs himself life's mad career
Wild as the wave ?

Here pause—and through the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

Now, observe three points in the dying lament of this brilliant but unfortunate man :

- (1) He knew *what was right*.
- (2) He had *the ability to communicate his knowledge* to others. But

(3) He was *destitute of the power to practise* what he preached.

The world has produced many such examples—men who could descant on the highest principles of refinement and truth, but who were themselves the living contradiction of their own teaching.

Even in the old pagan age, of which the opening chapters of Romans treat, there were philosophers and religious guides whose glimmer of light from God revealed and rebuked the deeds of darkness around; but, alas! such wiseacres were in their everyday lives as bad as the rest of men. Plato and Aristippus were time-serving flatterers. Aristotle, Zeno, and Socrates, the wisest of his fellows, were vicious and basely incontinent. And Cato was spoken of as a philosopher by day, but a drunkard by night. These men had knowledge, but no moral power.

Knowledge of good and evil gives the sinner a conscience, but it bestows nothing else. Like a finger-post, it points him to the right road, and silently reproves him for not taking it, but it does not, it cannot, impart strength to walk therein. Knowledge is not power, because knowledge by itself does not give us the ability to enjoy that which it enables us to perceive.

A man may know all about gold, He may know perfectly how the precious metal is found in alluvium or in quartz. He may know how it is "cradled" and "panned out", or how it is crushed by the stampers in the battery, caught by quicksilver and blanket, refined, and made into merchandise, or converted into bullion. He may know all this, and yet be without a coin.

A man may know all about water, how it is sucked by the sun from the mighty deep, distilled by the

clouds, and mysteriously formed into springs and rivers. He may be an authority on the subject of irrigation, and lecture learnedly on water conservation. Yet this same man may pine miserably on some sandy, inland waste, and, with parched and swollen tongue, perish of thirst.

A man may know all about the human body. He may be a tried and expert surgeon and anatomist, and conversant with every malady. Moreover, he may be successful in his treatment of disease, and patients whom he cures may spread abroad his fame. Yet he himself may be assailed by a complaint which he can diagnose and describe, but which baffles all his powers, and—kills him.

And so a man may know about the things of God. He may be able to read the Bible in Hebrew, Greek and Latin; and may have prayer-book and rubric at his finger tips. Yea, he may be cradled and cul-

tured in gospel truth ; yet, with all his christian knowledge, he may die without power.

Balaam's remarkable knowledge, as disclosed in his sublime parables, did not save him ; neither did the Jews' close acquaintance with the scriptures ; nor did the intimate connection of Judas with Christ. The twentieth century boasts, and not without cause, of its knowledge, but the present century proves what past ages affirm : that mere knowledge is a minus quantity.

"Knowledge is power," said Bacon ; but his own private life proved how false was the saying which his lips coined. In the soul's relation to God, Christ, appropriated by the Spirit, and He alone, is "the power of God." (1 Cor. i.) Apart from Him, and faith in Him, none can please God. Penal correction, moral suasion, christian science, socialism, hypnotism, and other hu-

man means may be tried, and for a time such things may restrain or reform man's criminal propensities; but in the end the sinner finds out that "Jesus alone can save"—and well for him if he makes the discovery before it is too late.

Every one who reads these lines knows, more or less, about the gospel. But permit me to ask, Has your knowledge of Christ led you to receive Him as your Saviour? If not, how strangely sad! You know that the fire-escape is at your window, yet you tarry in the burning house. You know that the life-boat is alongside, yet you cling to the sinking vessel. You know that the prison door is open, and that the royal proclamation of deliverance for every rebel sinner has gone forth, yet you hug your chains.

Oh! avail yourself of your knowledge of Christ by *knowing Him!* appropriate Him by faith, and prove

Him to be “the power of God unto salvation”—your own present and powerful and perfect Saviour.

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