

Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 12 CHRIST AT SYCHAR'S WELL (CONTINUED)

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

Exposition of the Gospel of John

CHAPTER 12

CHRIST AT SYCHAR'S WELL (CONTINUED)

John 4:7-10

First, a brief Analysis of the passage which is to be before us:— 1. The Woman of Samaria, verse 7. 2. The Savior's request, verse 7. 3. The Savior's solitariness, verse 8. 4. The Woman's surprise, verse 9. 5. The Woman's prejudice, verse 9. 6. The Savior's rebuke, verse 10. 7. The Savior's appeal, verse 10. In the last chapter we pointed out the deep significance underlying the words of John 4:4—"He must needs go through Samaria." It was the constraint of sovereign grace. From all eternity it had been foreordained that the Savior should go through Samaria. The performing of God's eternal decree required it. The Son, incarnate, had come there to do the Father's will—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." And God's will was that these hated Samaritans should hear the Gospel of His grace from the lips of His own dear Son. Hence, "He must needs go through Samaria." There were elect souls there, which had been given to Him by the Father, and these also He "must bring" (see John 10:16). "Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well" (John 4:6). Observe, particularly, that the Lord Jesus was beforehand with this woman. He was at the well first! "I am found of them that sought me not" (Isa. 65:1) is the language of the Messiah in the prophetic word centuries before He made His appearance among men, and this oracle has been frequently verified. His salvation is not only altogether unmerited by those to whom it comes, but at first, it is always unsought (see Romans 3:11), and of every one who is numbered among His peculiar people it may be as truly said, as of the apostles, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). When we were pursuing our mad course of sin, when we were utterly indifferent to the claims and superlative excellency of the Savior, when we had no serious thought at all about our souls, He—to use the apostle's peculiarly appropriate word—"apprehended" us (Phil. 3:12). He "laid hold of" us, aroused our attention, illumined our darkened understanding, that we might receive the truth and be saved by it. A beautiful illustration of this is before us here in John 4. Yes, the Lord was beforehand with this woman. He was found of one who sought Him not. It was so with the idolatrous Abraham (Josh. 24) in the land of Chaldea: the Lord of glory appeared to him while he was yet in Mesopotamia (Acts 7:2). It was so with the worm Jacob, as he fled to escape from his brother's anger

(Gen. 28:10, 13). It was so with Moses, as he went about his shepherd duties (Ex. 3:1, 2). In each instance the Lord was found by those who sought Him not. It was so with Zacchaeus, hidden away amid the boughs of the trees—"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down," was the peremptory command, for, saith the Lord, "to day, I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5). It was so with Saul of Tarsus, as he went on his way to persecute the followers of the Lamb. It was so with Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14). And, let us add, to the praise of the glory of God's grace, but to our own unutterable shame, it was so with the writer, when Christ "apprehended" him; apprehended him when he was altogether unconscious of his deep need, and had no desire whatever for a Savior. Ah, blessed be His name, "We love him, because he first loved us!" But let not the false conclusion be drawn that the sinner is, therefore, irresponsible. Not so. God has placed within man a moral faculty, which discerns between right and wrong. Men know that they are sinners, and if so they need a Savior. God now commands all men everywhere to "repent," and woe be to the one who disobeys. And again we read, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 3:23), and if men refuse to "believe" their blood is on their own heads. Christ receives all who come to Him. The Gospel announces eternal life to "whosoever believeth." The door of mercy stands wide open. But, notwithstanding, it remains that men love darkness rather than light, and so strong is their love for the darkness and so deep-rooted is their antipathy against the light, that, as the Lord declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Here, again, is the Divine side, and it is this we are now pressing. "And it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water" (John 4:6, 7). This means it was the sixth hour after sunrise, and would be, therefore, midday. It was at the time the sun was at its greatest height and heat. Under the glare of the oriental sun, at the time when those exposed to its strong rays were most weary and thirsty, came this woman to draw water. The hour corresponded with her spiritual condition—wearied and parched in her soul. "The sixth hour." What a significant line is this in the picture! Six invariably speaks of man in the flesh. "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water" (verse 7). This was no accident. She chose this hour because she expected the well would be deserted. But, in fact, she went to the well that day, at that time, because God's hour had struck when she was to meet the Savior. Ah, our least movements are directed and over-ruled by Divine providence. It was no accident that the Midianites were passing by when Joseph's brethren had made up their minds to slay him (Gen. 37:28), nor was it merely a coincidence that these Midianites were journeying to Egypt. It was no accident that Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river to bathe, nor that she "saw" the ark, which contained the infant Moses, "among the flags" (Ex. 2:5). It was no accident that at the very time Mordecai and the Jews were in imminent danger of being killed, that Ahasuerus could not sleep, and that he occupied himself with reading the court records, which told of how, aforetime, Mordecai had befriended the king; and which led to the deliverance of God's people. No; there are no accidents in the world that is presided over by a living, reigning God! "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water." To "draw water" was her object. She had no thought of anything else, save that she should not be seen. She stole forth at this hour of the midday sun because a woman of her character—shunned by other women—did not care to meet any one. The woman was unacquainted with the Savior. She had no expectation of meeting Him. She had no idea she would be converted that day—that was the last thing she would expect. Probably she said to herself, as she set forth, "No one will be at the well at this hour." Poor desolate soul. But there was One there! One who was waiting for her—"sitting thus on the well." He knew all about her. He knew her deep need, and He was there to minister to it. He was there to overcome her prejudices, there to subdue her rebellious will, there to invite Himself into her heart. "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink" (John 4:7). Link together these two statements: "Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey... Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink."

There was everything to make Him "weary." Here was the One who had been the center of Heaven's glory, now dwelling in a world of sin and suffering. Here was the One in whom the Father delighted, now enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself. He had, in matchless grace, come "unto his own," but with base indifference they "received him not." He was not wanted here. The ingratitude and rebellion He met with, the jealousy and opposition of the Pharisees, the spiritual dullness of His own disciples—yes, there was everything to make Him "weary." But, all praise to His peerless name, He never wearied in His ministry of grace. There was never any love of ease with Him: never the slightest selfishness: instead, nothing but one unbroken ministry of love. Fatigued in body He might be, sick at heart He must have been, but not too weary to seek out and save this sin-sick soul. "Jesus said unto her." How striking is the contrast between what we have here and what is found in the previous chapter! There we are shown Nicodemus coming to Christ "by night," under cover of the darkness, so that he might guard his reputation. Here we behold the Lord Jesus speaking to this harlot in the full light of day—it was midday. Verily, He "made himself of no reputation!" "Jesus said unto her, Give me to drink." The picture presented is unspeakably lovely. Christ seated on the well, and what do we find Him doing? Sitting alone with this poor outcast, to settle with her the great question of eternity. He shows her herself, and reveals Himself! This is exactly what He does with every soul that He calls to Himself. He takes us apart from the maddening world, exposes to us our desperate condition, and then makes known to us in whose Presence we are, leading us to ask from Him that precious "gift" which He alone can impart. Thus did He deal here with this Samaritan adulteress. And how this incident makes manifest the wondrous grace and infinite patience of the Savior in His dealings with sinners! Tenderly and patiently He led this woman, step by step, touching her heart, searching her conscience, awakening her soul to a consciousness of her deep need. And how this incident also brings out the depravity of the sinner—his spiritual blindness and obstinacy; his lack of capacity to understand and respond to the Savior's advance; yea, his slowness of heart to believe! "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." The first thing the Savior did (note that He took the initiative) was to ask this woman for a drink of cold water—considered the very cheapest gift which this world contains. How the Son of God humbled Himself! Among the Jews it was considered the depth of degradation even to hold converse with the Samaritans; to be beholden to them for a favor would not be tolerated at all. But here we find the Lord of glory asking for a drink of water from one of the worst in this city of Samaritans! Such was His condescension that the woman herself was made to marvel. "Give me to drink." Here was the starting point for the Divine work of grace which was to be wrought in her. Every word in this brief sentence is profoundly significant. Here was no "ye must be." The very first word the Savior uttered to this poor soul, was "give." It was to grace He would direct her thoughts. "Give me," He said. He immediately calls the attention of the sinner to Himself—"Give me." But what was meant by "Give me to drink?" To what did the Savior refer? Surely there can be no doubt that His mind was on something other than literal water, though, doubtless, the first and local significance of His words had reference to literal water. Just as the "weariness" of the previous verse has a deeper meaning than physical fatigue, so this "Give me to drink" signifies more than slaking His thirst. This world was a dry and thirsty land to the Savior, and the only refreshment He found here was in ministering His grace to poor needy sinners, and receiving from them their faith and gratitude in return. This is fully borne out in the sequel, for when the disciples returned and begged Him to eat, He said unto them, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (verse 32). When, then, the Savior said to this woman, "Give me to drink," it was refreshment of spirit He sought. "Give me to drink." But how could she, a poor, despised and blinded sinner, "give" to Him? Ah, she could not. She must first ask of Him. She had to receive herself before she could give. In her natural state she had nothing. Spiritually she was Poverty-stricken; a bankrupt. And this it was that the Savior would press upon her, in order that she might be led to ask of Him. When, then, the Savior said, "Give me to drink," He was

making a demand of her with which, at this time, she was unable to comply. In other words, He was bringing her face to face with her helplessness. We are often told that God never commands us to do what we have no ability to perform, but He does, and that for two very good reasons: first, to awaken us to a sense of our impotency; second, that we might seek from Him the grace and strength we need to do that which is pleasing in His sight. What was the Law—that Law that was "holy, just and good"—given for? Its summarized requirements were, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart... and thy neighbor as thyself." But what man ever did this? What man could do it? Only one—the God-man. Why, then, was the Law given? On purpose to reveal man's impotency. And why was that? To bring man to cast himself at the foot of God's omnipotency: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). This is the first lesson in the school of God. This is what Christ would first teach this needy woman, verse 10 establishes that beyond a doubt—"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." But it was the moral impossibility which Christ put before this woman that aroused her curiosity and interest. "For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat" (John 4:8). This was no mere coincidence, but graciously ordered by the providence of God. Christ desired this poor soul to be alone with Himself! This Gospel of John presents Christ in the very highest aspect in which we can contemplate Him, namely, as God manifest in the flesh, as the eternal Word, as Creator of all things, as the Revealer of the Father. And yet there is none of the four Gospels in which this glorious Person is so frequently seen alone with sinners as here in John. Surely there is Divine design in this. We see Him alone with Nicodemus; alone with this Samaritan woman; alone with the convicted adulteress in John 8; alone with the man whose eyes He had opened, and who was afterwards put out of the synagogue (John 9:35). Alone with God is where the sinner needs to get—with none between and none around him. This is one reason why the writer, during the course of four pastorates, never made use of an "inquiry room," or "penitent form." Another reason was, because he could find nothing resembling them in the Word of God. They are human inventions. No priest, no intermediary, is necessary. Bid the sinner retire by himself, and get alone with God and His Word. "For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat." The word "buy" here points a contrast. Occurring just where it does it brings into relief the "gift" of God to which the Savior referred, see verses 10 and 14. Another has suggested to the writer that the action of the disciples here furnishes a striking illustration of 3 John 7: "taking nothing of the Gentiles." These disciples of Christ did not beg, they bought. "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). The Savior's request struck this woman with surprise. She knew the extreme dislike which Jews cherished towards Samaritans. It was accounted a sin for them to have any friendly intercourse with that people. The general tendency of this antipathy may be judged from the following extracts from the Jewish rabbins by Bishop Lightfoot:—It is prohibited to eat the bread, and to drink the wine of the Samaritan." "If any one receives a Samaritan into his house, and ministers to him, he will cause his children to be carried into captivity." "He who eats the bread of a Samaritan, is as if he ate swine's flesh." Aware of this extreme antipathy, the Samaritan woman expresses her amazement that a person, whom, from His dress and dialect, she perceived to be a Jew, should deign to ask, much less receive a favor from a Samaritan—"How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" Ah, "little did she think," to borrow the words of one of the Puritans, "of the glories of Him who sat there before her. He who sat on the well owned a Throne that was placed high above the head of the cherubim; in His arms, who then rested Himself, was the sanctuary of peace, where weary souls could lay their heads and dispose their cares, and then turn them to joys, and to guild their thorns with glory; and from that holy tongue, which was parched with heat, should stream forth rivulets of heavenly doctrine, which were to water all the world, and

turn deserts into a paradise" (Jeremy Taylor). "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me?" In a previous chapter we have pointed out the sevenfold contrast which exists between the cases of Nicodemus and this Samaritan woman. Here we call attention to a striking analogy. The very first word uttered by Nicodemus in response to the Savior's initial statements was "How?" (John 3:4); and the very first word of this woman in reply to Christ's request was "How?" Both of them met the advances of the Savior with a sceptical "How:" there were many points of dissimilarity between them, but in this particular they concurred. In His dealings with Nicodemus Christ manifests Himself as the "truth;" here in John 4 we behold the "grace" that came by Jesus Christ. "Truth" to break down the religious prejudices of a proud Pharisee; "grace" to meet the deep need of this Samaritan adulteress. "We are full of 'how's.' The truth of God, in all its majesty and authority, is put before us; we meet it with a how! The grace of God, in all its sweetness and tenderness, is unfolded to our view; we reply with a how? It may be a theological 'how,' or a rationalistic 'how,' it matters not, the poor heart will reason instead of believing the truth, and receiving the grace of God. The will is active, and hence, although the conscience may be ill at ease, and the heart be dissatisfied with itself, and all around, still the unbelieving 'how' breaks forth in one form or another. Nicodemus says, 'How can a man be born when he is old?' The Samaritan says, 'How canst thou ask drink of me?'" (C. H. M., from whom we have taken several helpful thoughts). Thus it is ever. When the Word of God declares to us the utter worthlessness of nature, the heart, instead of bowing to the holy record, sends up its unholy reasonings. When the same truth sets forth the boundless grace of God, and the free salvation which is in Christ Jesus, the heart, instead of receiving the grace, and rejoicing in the salvation, begins to reason as to how it can be. The fact is, the human heart is closed against God—against the truth of His Word, and against the grace of His heart. The Devil may speak and the heart will give its ready credence. Man may speak and the heart will greedily swallow what he says. Lies from Satan and nonsense from men all meet with a ready reception by the foolish sinner; but the moment God speaks, whether it be in the authoritative language of truth, or in the winsome accents of grace, all the return the heart will make is an unbelieving, rationalistic, infidelistic "How?" Anything and everything for the natural heart save the truth and grace of God. How deeply humbling all this is! How it ought to make us hide our faces with shame! How it should make us heed that solemn word in Ezekiel 16:62, 63, "And thou shalt know that I am the Lord: That thou mayest remember, and be confounded . . . Because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" How completely this manifested the blindness of the natural heart—"thou being a Jew." She failed to discern the excellency of the One talking to her. She knew not that it was the Lord of glory. She saw in Him nothing but a "Jew." She was altogether ignorant of the fact that He who had humbled Himself to take upon Him the form of a servant, was none other than the Christ of God. And Christian readers, it was thus with each of us before the Holy Spirit quickened us. Until we were brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, we "saw in him no beauty that we should desire him." All that this poor woman could think of was the old prejudice—"thou a Jew... me a woman of Samaria." So it was with you and me. When the sinner first comes into the presence of God the latent enmity of the carnal mind is stirred up, and, until Divine grace has subdued us, all we could do was to prevaricate and raise objections. "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). Our Lord was not to be put off with her "how?" He had answered the "how" of Nicodemus, and He would now answer the "how" of this woman of Sychar. He replies to Nicodemus, eventually, by pointing to Himself as the great antitype of the brazen serpent, and by telling him of the love of God in sending His Son into the world. He replies to the woman, likewise, by telling her of "the gift of

God?' It is beautiful to observe the spirit in which the Savior answered this poor outcast. He did not enter into an argument with her about the prejudices of the Samaritans, nor did He seek to defend the Jews for their heartless treatment of them. Nor did He deal roughly with her and reproach her for her woeful ignorance and stupidity. No; He was seeking her salvation, and with infinite patience He bore with her slowness of heart to believe. "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." There is where the root of the trouble lay. Man neither knows his need, nor the One who can minister to it. This woman was ignorant of "the gift of God." The language of grace was an unknown tongue. Like every other sinner in his natural state, this Samaritan thought she was the one who must do the giving. But salvation does not come to us in return for our giving. God is the Giver; all we have to do is receive. "If thou knewest the gift of God." What is this? It is salvation: it is eternal life: it is the "living water" spoken of by Christ at the end of the verse. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink." But this woman did not know Who it was that spoke to her, nor of the marvelous condescension of this One who had asked her for a "drink." Had she done so, she, in turn, would have "asked of Him." He was ready to give, if she would but take the place of a receiver, and thus make Him the Giver; instead of her wanting to take the place of a giver and make Him the Receiver. "Thou wouldest have asked of him." It is blessedly true that the only thing between the sinner and eternal life is an "ask." But asking proceeds from knowing. "If thou knewest... thou wouldest have asked." But O how reluctant the sinner is to take this place. God has to do much for him and in him before he is ready to really "ask." The sinner has to be brought to a realization of his awful condition and terrible danger: he must see himself as lost, undone, and bound for the lake of fire. He has to be made to see his desperate need of a Savior. Again, God has to show him the utter vanity and worthlessness of everything of this world, so that he experiences an acute "thirst" for the Water of Life. He has to be driven to despair, until he is made to wonder whether God can possibly save such a wretch as he. He has to be stripped of the filthy rags of his own self-righteousness, and be made willing to come to God just as he is, as an empty-handed beggar ready to receive Divine charity. He has to really come into the presence of Christ and have personal dealings with Him. He has to make definite request for himself. This, in part, is what is involved, before the sinner will "ask." Before we ask, God has to deal with the conscience, enlighten the understanding, subdue the rebellious will, and open the heart, the door of which is fast closed against Himself. All of this is what Christ did with this woman of our lesson. We are not saved because of our seeking; we have to be sought. "And who it is that saith to thee:" notice, particularly, this "who it is," not "what it is"—it is not doctrine any more than doing. It is personal dealings with Christ that is needed; with Him who is the Source and Giver of "life." Attention has often been called to the striking contrast in the manner of our Lord's speech with Nicodemus and His method of dealing with this poor Samaritan adulteress. The Lord did not deal with souls in any mechanical, stereotyped way, as it is to be feared many Christian-workers do today. No; He dealt with each according to the condition of heart they were in. Christ did not begin with the Gospel when dealing with Nicodemus. Instead, He said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." There is no good news in a "ye must be." If a man must be born again, what is he going to do in order that he may be? What does all his past life amount to?—no matter how full of deeds of benevolence, acts of kindness, and religious performances. Just nothing: a new beginning has to be made. But not only is an entirely different order of life imperative, but man has to be "born from above." What, then, can the poor sinner do in the matter?' Nothing, absolutely nothing. To tell a man he "must be born again" is simply a shut door in the face of all fleshly pretensions; and that is precisely what Christ intended with Nicodemus. But why shut the door before Nicodemus? It was because he belonged to the Pharisees. He was a member of that class, one of whom Christ portrayed as standing in the Temple and saying to God, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust,

adulterers," etc. (Luke 18:11). Nicodemus was not only a highly respectable and moral man, but he was deeply religious. And what he most needed was just what he heard, for the Lord Jesus never made any mistakes. Nicodemus prided himself upon his respectability and religious standing: evidence of this is seen in his coming to Jesus "by night"—he was conscious of how much he risked by this coming; he feared he was endangering his reputation among the people by visiting this Nazarene. Therefore his self-righteousness must be smashed up; his religious pride must be broken down. The force, then, of what our Lord said to this ruler of the Jews was, "Nicodemus, with all your education and reformation, morality and religion, you have not begun to live that life which is pleasing to God, for that you must be born again." And this was simply to prepare the way for the Gospel; to prepare a self-righteous man to receive it. How entirely different was our Lord's speech with this woman at the well! To her He never so much as mentions the need for the new birth; instead, He tells her at once of the "gift of God." In the case of this woman there was no legalistic and religious pattern to be swept away. Her moral character and religious standing were already gone. But it was far otherwise with Nicodemus. It is very evident that he felt he had something to stand upon and glory in. What he needed to know was that all of this in which he prided himself was worthless before God. Even though a master of Israel, he was utterly unfit to enter God's kingdom, and nothing could show him this quicker than for the Lord to say unto him "Ye must be born again." Do what you will with nature, educate, cultivate, sublimate it as much as you please; raise it to the loftiest pinnacle of the temple of science and philosophy; summon to your aid all the ornaments and ordinances of the legal system, and all the appliances of man's religion; make vows and resolutions of moral reform; weary yourself out with the monotonous round of religious duties; betake yourself to vigils, fastings, prayers, and alms, and the entire range of "dead works," and after all, yonder Samaritan adulteress is as near to the kingdom of God as you, seeing that you as well as she "must be born again." Neither you nor she has one jot or tittle to present to God, either in the way of title to the kingdom, or of capacity to enjoy it. It is, and must be, all of grace, from beginning to end. What, then, is the remedy? That to which Christ, at the close, pointed out to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15). But for whom was this brazen serpent intended? Why, for any bitten creature, just because he was bitten. The wound was the title. The title to what? To look at the serpent. And what then? He that looked, lived. Blessed Gospel, "look and live." True for Nicodemus: true for the woman of Sychar: true for every sinbitten son and daughter of Adam. There is no limit, no restriction. The Son of Man has been lifted up, that whosoever looks to Him, in simple faith, might have what Adam in innocency never possessed, and what the law of Moses never proposed, even "everlasting life." The Gospel meets men on a common platform. Nicodemus had moral character, social standing, religious reputation; the woman at the well had nothing. Nicodemus was at the top of the social ladder; she was at the bottom. You could hardly get anything higher than a "Master of Israel," and you could scarcely get anything lower than a Samaritan adulteress; yet so far as standing before God, fitness for His holy presence, title to heaven was concerned, they were both on one common level. But how few understand this! So far as standing before God was concerned there was "no difference" between this learned and religious Nicodemus and the wretched woman of Sychar. To Nicodemus Christ said, "Ye must be born again;" this brief statement completely swept away the foundation from under his feet. Nothing less than a new nature was required from him; and nothing more was needed for her. Uncleanliness could not enter heaven, nor could Phariseism. Each must be born again. True, there was a great difference morally and socially between Nicodemus and this woman—that goes without saying. No sensible person needs to be told that morality is better than vice, that sobriety is preferable to drunkenness, that it is better to be an honorable man than a thief. But none of these will save, or contribute anything toward the salvation of a sinner. None of these will secure

admittance into the kingdom of God. Both Nicodemus and the Samaritan adulteress were dead; there was no more spiritual life in the one than in the other. "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." There are some who regard the "living water" here as the Holy Spirit, and there is something to be said in favor of this view; but personally, while not dissenting from it, we think that more is included within the scope of our Lord's words. We believe the "living water" has reference to salvation, salvation in its widest sense, with all that it embraces. The figure of "water" is most suggestive, and like all others which are found in Scripture calls for prayerful and prolonged meditation in order to discover its fulness and beauty. At least seven lines of thought appear to be suggested by "water"—living water—as a figure of the salvation which Christ gives. 1. Water is a gift from God. It is something which man, despite all his boasted wisdom, is quite unable to create. For water we are absolutely dependent upon God. It is equally so with His salvation, of which water is here a figure. 2. Water is something which is indispensable to man. It is not a luxury, but a vital necessity. It is that without which man cannot live. It is equally so with God's salvation—apart from it men are eternally lost. 3. Water is that which meets a universal need; it is not merely a local requirement, but a general one. All are in need of water. It is so with God's salvation. It is not merely some particular class of people, who are more wicked than their fellows, for all who are outside of Christ are lost. 4. Water is that which first descends from the heavens. It is not a product of the earth, but comes down from above. So is it with salvation: it is "of the Lord." 5. Water is a blessed boon: it cools the fevered brow, slakes the thirst, refreshes and satisfies. And so does the salvation which is to be found in Christ. 6. Water is something of which we never tire. Other things satiate us, but not so with water. It is equally true of God's salvation to the heart of every one who has really received it. 7. Water is strangely and unevenly distributed by God. In some places there is an abundance; in others very little; in others none at all. It is so with God's salvation. In some nations there are many who have been visited by the Dayspring from on high; in others there are few who have passed from death unto life; while in others there seem to be none at all. "He would have given thee living water." How blessed this is! The living water is without money and without price: it is a "gift." This gift can be obtained from Christ alone. This gift can be procured from Christ only by asking Him for it. How blessed the gift! How worldrous the Giver! How simple the terms! Here, then, was the Christ of God preaching to this poor fallen woman the Gospel of His grace. Here was the Messiah in Israel winning to Himself a despised Samaritan. This is hardly what we would have looked for. And how the unexpected meets us again and again in these Gospels! How vastly different were things from what We had imagined them! Here was the Son of God, incarnate, born into this world; and where would we expect to find His cradle? Why, surely in Jerusalem, the "city of the great king." Instead, He was born in Bethlehem, which was "little among the thousands in Judah." Yes, born in Bethlehem, and cradled in a manger—the very last place we had looked for Him! And for what purpose has He visited this earth? To offer Himself as a sacrifice for sins. To whom shall we go to learn more about this? Surely, to the priests and Levites. Ah, and what do we learn about them in this Gospel? Why, they were the very ones who knew not the One who stood in their midst (John 1:26). No, if we would learn about Him who had come to be the great sacrifice, we must turn away from the priests and Levites, and go yonder into the "wilderness"—the last place, again, we would think of—and listen to that strange character clad in raiment of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins; and he would tell us about the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Once more: suppose it had been worship we had desired to learn about, whither had we betaken ourselves? Why, surely, to the Temple—that, of all places, must be where the Lord God is worshipped in the truest form. But again would our quest have been in vain, for the Father's house was now but "a house of merchandise." Whom had we sought out if instruction in the things of God had been our desire? Why,

surely, one of those best qualified to teach us would be Nicodemus, "a Master of Israel." But again would we have met with disappointment. Now if we would have gone to Nicodemus to learn of the things of God, who among us would have imagined these very truths being revealed by a weary Traveller by one of Samaria's wells, to an audience of one! Who were the Samaritans to be privileged thus? Should we not expect to find this much—favored woman, and a people so highly honored, as being the descendants of some race of age-long seekers after God? Would we not conclude they must be the offspring of men who for long centuries had lived in one continued and supreme endeavor to purge their thoughts and ceremonies from every false and impure admixture? But read again 2 Kings 17 for the inspired account of the unlovely origin of the Samaritans. They were two-thirds heathen! Ah! after reading this chapter would we not have expected to find worship in Jerusalem and idolatry in Samaria! Instead of which, we find idolatry in Jerusalem, and (before we are through with John 4) the true worship in Samaria. And what does all this go to prove? It shows that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. It demonstrates how utterly incompetent we are for drawing conclusions and reasoning about spiritual things. It exemplifies what was said long ago through Isaiah: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8). How foolish are man's reasonings; how wise God's "foolishness!" And here we must stop. In the next lesson we shall continue our study of this wondrous and blessed chapter. In the meantime, let the students prayerfully ponder the following questions:— 1. What particular trait of the sinner's heart is manifested by the woman in the next statement? verse 11.—we do not mean her blindness or stupidity. 2. What spiritual truth did she unconsciously voice when she said, "the well is deep"? verse 11. 3. What God-dishonoring principle was enunciated by her in verse 12? 4. To what was Christ referring when He said, "this water"? verse 13. 5. How does verse 14 bring out the eternal security of the believer? 6. What did the woman mean by her words in verse 15? 7. Why did Christ say to her, "Go, call thy husband?" verse 16.

Source:

<https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/exposition-of-the-gospel-of-john-chapter-12-christ-at-sychar-well-continued/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net