

Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 13

CHRIST AT SYCHAR'S WELL (CONTINUED)

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

Exposition of the Gospel of John

CHAPTER 13

CHRIST AT SYCHAR'S WELL (CONTINUED)

John 4:11-19

In viewing the Savior's conversation with this Samaritan woman as a sample case of God's gracious dealings with a sinner, we have seen, thus far: First, that the Lord took the initiative, being the first to speak. Second, that His first word to her was "Give"—directing her thoughts at once to grace; and that His next was "me" leading her to be occupied with Himself. Third, that He brings her face to face with her helplessness by asking her for a "drink," which in its deeper meaning, signified that He was seeking her faith and confidence to refresh His spirit. Fourth, this was met by an exhibition of the woman's prejudice, which, in principle, illustrated the enmity of the carnal mind against God. Fifth, Christ then affirmed that she was ignorant of the way of salvation and of His own Divine glory. Sixth, He referred to eternal life under the expressive figure of "living water." Seventh, He assured her that this living water was offered to her as a "gift," on the condition that she was to "ask" for it, and thus take the place of a receiver. This brief summary brings us to the end of verse 10, and from that point we will now proceed, first presenting an Analysis of the verses which immediately follow:— 1. The Woman's Ignorance, verse 11. 2. The Woman's Insolence, verse 12. 3. The Savior's Gracious Promise, verses 13, 14. 4. The Woman's Prejudice Overcome, verse 15. 5. The Savior's Arrow for the Conscience, verse 16. 6. The Savior's Omniscience Displayed, verses 17, 18. 7. The Woman's Dawning Perception, verse 19. As we read the first section of this blessed narrative we were struck with the amazing condescension of the Lord of Glory, who so humbled Himself as to converse with this fallen woman of Samaria. Now, as we turn to consider the section which follows, we cannot fail to be impressed with the wondrous patience of the Savior. He had invited this wretched creature to ask from Him, and He promised to give her living water; but instead of promptly closing with His gracious offer, the woman continued to raise objections. But Christ did not turn away in disgust, and leave her to suffer the merited results of her waywardness and stubbornness; He bore with her stupidity, and with Divine long-sufferance wore down her opposition, and won her to Himself. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?" (John 4:11). Four things are brought out by this statement. First, her

continued blindness to the glory of Him who addressed her. Second, her occupation with material things. Third, her concentration on the means rather than the end. Fourth, her ignorance of the Source of the "living water." Let us briefly consider each of these separately. In verse 9 we find that this woman referred to Christ as "a Jew." In replying, the Savior reproached her for her ignorance by saying, "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" (verse 10). It is true she had never before met the Lord Jesus, but this did not excuse her. It was because she was blind that she saw in Him no beauty that she should desire Him. And it is only unbelief which prevents the sinner today from recognizing in that One who died upon the cross the Son of God, and the only One who could save him from his sins. And unbelief is not a thing to be pitied, but blamed. But now that Christ had revealed Himself as the One who dispensed the "gift" of God, the Samaritan woman only answered, "Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with!" Poor woman, how little she knew as yet the Divine dignity of that One who had come to seek and to save that which was lost. How complete was her blindness. And how accurately does she picture our state by nature. Exactly the same was our condition when God, in infinite mercy, began His dealings with us—our eyes were closed to the perfections of His beloved Son, and "we hid as it were our faces from him." "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with." How this shows the trend of her thoughts. Her mind was centered upon wells and buckets! And this, again, illustrates a principle of general application. This woman is still to be viewed as a representative character. Behold in her an accurate portrayal of the sinner, as we see her mind concentrated upon material things. Her mind was occupied with the world—its duties and employments—and hence she could not rise to any higher thoughts: she could not discern who it was that addressed her, nor what He was offering. And thus it is with all who are of the world: they are kept away from the things of Christ by the things of time and sense. The Devil uses just such things to keep the soul from the Savior. "Let it be what it may, let it be only a waterpot, he cares not, so long as it occupies the mind to the exclusion of the knowledge of Christ. He cares not for the instrument, so long as he gains his own ends, to draw the mind away from the apprehension of spiritual things. It may be pleasure, it may be amusement, gain, reputation, family duties, lawful employments, so that it keeps the soul from fixing on Christ. This is all he wants. A water-pot will serve his purpose, just as well as a palace, so that he can blind them, 'lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them'" (J. N. Darby, from whom we have extracted other thoughts, embodied in our exposition above and below). Ah! dear friend, Is there anything which has thus been keeping you away from Christ—from seeking His great salvation, and obtaining from Him the "living water?" That thing may be quite innocent and harmless, yea, it may be something praise worthy in itself. Even lawful employments, family duties, may keep a soul from the Savior, and hinder you from receiving His priceless gift. Satan is very subtle in the means he employs to blind the mind. Did you ever notice that in the Parable of the Sower the Lord tells us that the things which "choke the Word" are "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22)? Should an unsaved soul read these lines we ask you to see yourself in the case of this woman, as far as we have yet considered it. Her thoughts were on the purpose which had brought her to the well—a lawful and necessary purpose, no doubt, but one which occupied her mind to the exclusion of the things of Christ! She could think of nothing but wells and buckets—she was, therefore, unable to discern the love, the grace, the winsomeness of that blessed One who sought her salvation. And how many a man there is today so busily occupied with making a living for his family, and how many a woman so concerned with the duties of the home—lawful and necessary things—that Christ and His salvation are crowded out! So it Was with this Samaritan woman. She thought only of her bodily need: her mind was centered on the common round of daily tasks. And thus it is with many another now. They are too busy to take time to study the things of God. They are too much occupied with their "waterpots" to listen to the still small voice of God. "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with." These words

illustrate another principle which, in its outworkings, stands between many a sinner and salvation. The woman's mind was centered on means, rather than the end. She was occupied with something to "draw with," rather than with Christ. And how many today are concerned far more with their own efforts and doings than with the Savior Himself. And even where their eyes are not upon their own works, they are frequently turned to the evangelist, or to the 'inquiry room,' or 'the mourner's bench.' And where this is not the case, the Devil will get them occupied with their own repentance and faith. Anything, so long as he can keep the poor sinner from looking to Christ alone. And, too, we may observe how this woman was limiting Christ to the use of means. She supposed He could not provide the "living water" unless He had something to "draw with." And how many imagine they cannot be saved except in some 'Revival Meetings,' or at least in a church-house. But when it pleases God to do so, He acts independently of all means (the Word excepted). When He desires to create a world, He speaks and it is done! He rains manna from heaven; furnishes water out of the rock, and supplies honey from the carcass of the lion! "The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?" She continues to raise objections, and press her questions. No sooner had the Lord answered one than she brings forward another. The Lord had replied to her "How?" by telling of the "gift" of God, the "living water." Now she asks "Whence?" this was to be obtained. She knew not the Source from whence this "living water" proceeded. All she knew was that the well was deep. "The well is deep." And there is a deep meaning in these words. The well is deep—far deeper than our hands can reach down to. From whence then shall man obtain the "living water?" How shall he procure "eternal life?" By keeping the Law? Nay, verily, for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified" (Rom. 3:20). Is it by cultivating the best that is within us by nature? No, for "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Is it by living up to the light we have, and doing the best we know how? No, for we are "without strength" (Rom. 5:6). What then? Ah! dear reader, listen: This "living water" is not a wage to be earned, a prize to be sought, a crown to be won. No; it is a gift, God's free gift in Christ: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23); yes; the well is deep. Into awful depths of suffering had the Savior to descend before the life-giving Water could be furnished to sinners. "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" (John 4:12). As another has said, "How little she knew, as yet, of the One she was addressing. The well might be deep, but there is something deeper still, even her soul's deep need; and something deeper than that again, even the grace that had brought Him down from heaven to meet her need. But so little did she know of Him, that she could ask, 'Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well?' She knew not that she was speaking to Jacob's God—to the One who had formed Jacob and given him all that he ever possessed. She knew nothing of this. Her eyes were yet closed, and this was the true secret of her 'How?' and 'Whence?'" How much this explains! When we find people asking questions, unbelieving questions, concerning the things of God, it is a sure sign that they need to have their eyes opened. The rationalist, the critic, and the infidel are blind. It is their very blindness that causes them to ask questions, raise difficulties, and create doubts. They deem themselves very clever, but they do only exhibit their folly. However, in the case of this Samaritan woman her questions proceeded not from a bold infidelity, but from nature's blindness and ignorance, and therefore the Lord dealt patiently with her. He knew how to silence a rationalist, and oftentimes He dismissed a carping critic in a summary manner. But there were also occasions when, in marvelous condescension and gracious patience, He waited on an ignorant inquirer for the purpose of resolving his difficulties and removing his fears. And thus it was at the well at Sychar. He was not to be put off with her quibbling, nor could He be wearied by her dullness. He bore with her (as He did with each of us) in marvelous longsufferance, and left her not until He had fully met the deep need of her soul by the revelation of Himself. "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well,

and drank thereof himself?" Once again we may discover here a deeper significance than what appears on the surface. Attention is called to the antiquity of the well from which Jacob and his children drank. Beautiful is the underlying spiritual lesson. The "well" is as old as man the sinner. The salvation of which the "water" of this "well" speaks, had refreshed the hearts of Abel and Enoch, Noah and Abraham, and all the Old Testament saints. God has had but one way of salvation since sin entered the world. Salvation has always been by grace, through faith, altogether apart from human works. The Gospel is no novelty: it was "preached before unto Abraham" (Gal. 3:8). Yea, it was preached to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, when, clothing our fallen first parents with coats of skins (Gen. 3:21), God made known the fact "without shedding of blood is no remission," and that through the death of an innocent substitute a covering was provided which fitted the guilty and the defiled to stand unabashed in the presence of the thrice holy One, because "accepted in the Beloved." "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again" (John 4:13). The Lord Jesus was not to be put off. He was determined to reveal Himself to this sin-sick soul. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." The seat of the "thirst" within man lies too deep for the waters of this earth to quench. The "thirst" of man's soul is a spiritual one, and that is why material things are unable to slake it. Earth's deepest well may be fathomed and drained, and the needy soul remain thirsty after all. Men and women may take their fill of pleasure, yet will it fail to satisfy. They may surround themselves with every comfort and luxury that wealth can provide, and the heart still be empty. They may court the honors of the world, and climb to the highest pinnacle of human fame, but the plaudits of men will leave an aching void behind them. They may explore the whole realm of philosophy and science, until they become as wise as Solomon, but like Israel's king of old, they will discover that all under the sun is only "vanity and vexation of spirit." Over all the wells of this world's providing must be written, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." This is true not only of the material, the mental, and the social realms, but of the religious, too. Man may awaken within us certain desires, but he cannot satisfy them. Man may exhort and persuade, and we may make resolutions, amend our lives, become very religious, and yet "thirst again." The religious systems of human manufacture hold not the Water of Life. They do but disappoint. Nothing but the "living water" can quench our thirst and satisfy our hearts, and only Christ can give this. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." What an awful illustration of this is furnished in Luke 16. There the Savior sets before us a man clothed in purple and fine linen, who fared sumptuously every day. He drank deeply of the wells of this passing world; but he thirsted again. O see him, as the Son of God lifts the veil which hides the unseen; see him lifting up his eyes in hell-torments, craving, but craving in vain, a single drop of water to cool his parched tongue. There is not as much as a drop of water in hell! There he thirsts, and the unspeakably dreadful thing is that he will thirst. Fearfully solemn is this for all; but perfectly appalling for the children of ease and luxury, and they who spend their time going from well to well of this world, and giving no serious thought to an eternity of burning in the lake of fire. O that it may please God to cause some such to give these lines a thoughtful consideration, and arrest their attention, and lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Giver of that living water of which whosoever drinketh shall never thirst. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4:14). Here is satisfaction to the soul. The one who has asked and received is now satisfied. The Lord goes on to say, "but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The believer now has a well of living water within, ever fresh, ever flowing, ever springing up toward its native source, for water always seeks its own level. But let us weigh each expression. "Whosoever drinketh." What is drinking? It is ministering to a felt need. It is a personal act of appropriation. It is a taking into myself that which was, previously, without me. "Of the water that I shall give him." This "water" is "eternal life," and this is not bought or won, but is received as a "gift," for the "gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Shall never thirst:" here the

Lord speaks according to the fulness of the gift bestowed: as to our enjoyment of it, that is conditioned upon the way in which faith maintains us in fellowship with the Giver. "Never thirst" denotes a satisfying portion. "Never thirst" argues the eternal security of the recipient. Were it possible for a believer to forfeit salvation through unworthiness, this verse would not be true, for every lost soul will "thirst," thirst forever in hell. "Shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life": this "gift," this "living water," is a present possession, imparted by grace, and is something within the believer. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." To borrow again the language of the eloquent Puritan: "Here we labor, but receive no benefit; we sow many times, and reap not; we reap, and we do not gather in; or gather in, and do not possess; or possess and do not enjoy; or if we enjoy, we are still unsatisfied: it is with anguish of spirit and circumstances of vexation. A great heap of riches makes neither our clothes more warm, our meat more nutritive, nor our beverage more palatable. It feeds the eye but never fills it. Like drink to a person suffering from dropsy, it increases the thirst and promotes the torment. But the grace of God fills the furrows of the heart; and, as the capacity increases, it grows itself in equal degrees, and never suffers any emptiness or dissatisfaction, but carries contentment and fulness all the way; and the degrees of augmentation are not steps and near approaches to satisfaction, but increasings of the capacity. The soul is satisfied all the way, and receives more, not because it wanted any, but that it can now hold the more, being become more receptive of felicity; and in every minute of sanctification, there is so excellent a condition of joy that the very calamities, afflictions, and persecutions of the world, are turned into felicities by the activity of the prevailing ingredient: like a drop of water falling into a tun of wine, it is ascribed into a new form, losing its own nature by a conversion in one more noble. These were the waters which were given us to drink, when, with the rod of God, the Rock, Christ Jesus, was smitten. The Spirit of God moves forever upon these waters; and, when the angel of the covenant had stirred the pool, whosoever descends hither shall find health and peace, joys spiritual, and the satisfaction of eternity" (Jeremy Taylor). "The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (John 4:15). She is still more or less in the dark. The natural mind is occupied with natural things, and it contemplates everything through that medium; it is confined to its own little circle of feelings and ideas; and can neither see nor feel anything beyond it; it lives in its own cramped realm, finds there its own enjoyment and employment, and if left to itself, will live and die there. Poor woman! The Savior of sinners was before her, but she knew Him not. He was speaking words of grace to her, but as yet, she did not fully comprehend. He had asked for a drink, and she had replied with a "How?" He had told her of God's gift, and she had replied with a "Whence?" He had spoken of an everlasting well, and she seeks only to be spared the trouble of coming hither to draw. And yet while all that we have just said above is no doubt true, nevertheless, as we take a closer look at this last statement of the woman, we may detect signs more hopeful. Her words afford evidence that the patient dealing of Christ with her was not in vain, yea, that light was beginning to illumine her darkened understanding. Note, she now appropriates His word, and says, "Sir, give me to drink." Relief from daily toil was, no doubt, the thought uppermost in her mind; yet, and mark it well, she was now willing to be indebted to a "Jew" for that! There was still much ignorance; but her prejudice was being overcome; her heart was being won. What, then, is the next step? Why, her conscience must be reached. A sense of need must be created. And how is this accomplished? By a conviction of sin. The first thought in connection with salvation, the prime meaning of the word itself, is that of deliverance from something. Salvation implies danger, and the sinner will not flee to Christ as a Refuge from the wrath to come until a due sense (not merely of wretchedness, but) of guilt is upon him. There can be no blessing till there is conviction and confession of sin. It is not until we discover our case to be truly desperate that we betake ourselves to Christ—until then, we attempt to prescribe for ourselves. Herein lies the force of the Savior's next word. "Jesus said unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither" (John

4:16). It is strange that so many have missed the point of this. A little meditation will surely discern not only the solemnity, but the blessedness, of this word from the Savior, to the woman whose heart was slowly opening to receive Him. It is mainly a matter of finding the proper emphasis. Two things the Lord bade her do: the first was solemn and searching; the second gracious and precious. "Go," He said, "call thy husband"—that was a word addressed to her conscience. "And come hither"—that was a word for her heart. The force of what He said was this: If you really want this living water of which I have been telling you, you can obtain it only as a poor, convicted, contrite sinner. But not only did He say "Go," but He added "Come." She was not only to go and call her husband, but she was to come back to Christ in her true character. It was a marvelous mingling of "grace" and "truth." Truth for her conscience; grace for her heart. Truth which required her to come out into the light of her proper character, as a self-confessed sinner; grace which invited her to return to the Savior's side. Well may we admire the wonderful ways of Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). "The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou hast well said I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands: and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly" (John 4:17, 18). How this exhibits the Deity of Christ! He revealed His omniscience. He knew all about this woman—her heart, her life, her very thoughts; nothing could be hid from Him. She might be a complete stranger to Him in the flesh, yet was He thoroughly acquainted with her. It was the same with Peter: the Savior knew him thoroughly the first time they met, see John 1:42 and our comments thereon. So, too, He saw Nathanael under the fig tree before he came to Him. And so, dear reader, He knows all about you. Nothing can be concealed from His all-seeing eye. But this will not trouble you if everything has been brought out into the light, and confessed before Him. "The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet" (John 4:19). A "prophet" is God's spokesman. This poor soul now recognized the voice of God. He had spoken more deeply than any man to her soul. The Divine arrow of conviction had pierced her conscience, and the effect is striking: "I perceive." Her eyes were beginning to open: she sees something. She discovers herself to be in the presence of some mysterious personage whom she owns as God's spokesman. It was through her conscience the light began to enter! And it is ever thus. O dear reader, have you experienced this for yourself? Has your conscience been in the presence of that Light which makes all things manifest? Have you seen yourself as guilty, undone, lost, Christless, hell-deserving? Has the arrow ever entered your conscience? Christ has various arrows in His quiver. He had an arrow for Nicodemus, and He had an arrow for this adulteress. They were different arrows, but they did their work. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest" (John 3:21) was the arrow for the master in Israel. "Go, call thy husband" was His arrow for this Samaritan woman. The question of sin and righteousness must be settled in the presence of God. Has, then, this vital and all-important matter been settled between your soul and God? If so, you will be able to appreciate the sequel—the remainder of this wonderful and blessed narrative. There is a principle here of great importance to the believer. An exercised conscience precedes intelligence in the things of God. Spiritual illumination comes through the heart more than through the mind. They who are most anxious to have a better understanding of the Holy Oracles need to pray earnestly for God to put His fear upon them, that they may be more careful in avoiding the things that displease Him. One of our deepest needs is a more sensitive conscience. In Hebrews 5:11-13 we read of those who were "dull of hearing" and incapacitated to receive the deeper things of God. "Dullness of hearing" does not mean they were suffering from a stupefied mind, but rather from a calloused conscience. The last verse of Hebrews 5 speaks of those who were qualified to receive the deeper truths: "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Thus, it was for our learning that we are shown that perception spiritual things came to the Samaritan woman through, and as the result of, a conscience

active in the presence of God. As preparation for the next lesson we ask the interested reader to ponder the following questions:— 1. What is signified by "salvation is of the Jews"? verse 22. 2. What is meant by worshipping "in spirit and in truth"? verse 24. 3. Make a careful study of passages both in the Old and New Testaments which speak of "worship." 4. What is implied by the woman's words in verse 25? 5. What constrained the disciples to remain silent? verse 27. 6. What is the force of the "then" in verse 28? 7. What principle is illustrated by the woman leaving her waterpot?

Source:

<https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/exposition-of-the-gospel-of-john-chapter-13-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