

# The Life of Christ, for Family Devotions - February

by F. L. Mortimer

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*The sermon explores the persistence of Satan, the character of the kingdoms of the world, and the importance of sincerity and the miraculous power of Jesus.*

**Scripture:** John 4:42

**Topics:** "Jesus' Ministry", "Faith And Healing"

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## Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about Jesus' encounters with the Samaritan woman at the well and the nobleman seeking healing for his son. Through these interactions, Jesus demonstrates his compassion, willingness to engage with all people regardless of social status or background, and the power of faith in receiving blessings and healing. The Samaritans' belief in Jesus as the Savior of the world highlights the universal nature of Christ's salvation. The nobleman's faith in Jesus' ability to heal his son from a distance showcases the importance of trusting in Jesus' power and authority.

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## Transcript

A Devotional Commentary on the Gospels

Arranged for family devotions, for every day in the year.

By Favell Lee Mortimer (1802--1878)

FEBRUARY 1

Matthew 4:8-11. The third temptation of Christ.

Though Jesus had resisted two temptations, Satan was not dismayed. Here we have an instance of the persistence of our great enemy. Though he may have failed in one attempt to injure us, he will make another, and sometimes he succeeds better the second time than he did the first.

Balaam resisted the first temptation, and refused to go with Balak's messengers; but he was tempted a second time, and then he yielded. The man of God from Judah refused the invitation of Jeroboam, but was enticed by the solicitation of the old prophet. Satan was not discouraged when Job was patient under his first trials--he asked God to permit him to assault him again; but that second time he still failed to tempt

Job to curse his God. We ought to learn, from these facts, to be very watchful after we have overcome one temptation, and to be ready for another attack.

There is one circumstance in the third temptation which may surprise us. Satan proposed a more glaring sin to our Lord than he had proposed before; for it is a much more glaring sin to fall down and worship Satan than to turn stones into bread, or to run unnecessarily into danger. How could Satan suppose that when Jesus had refused to commit those sins, he would consent to so flagrant a transgression as worshipping the devil? Perhaps he saw that it was vain to try to deceive our Savior; therefore he declared his purpose, and hoped to persuade by the greatness of the bribe. He had not offered him such a reward before, as the kingdoms of the world--he had ruined the first Adam by promising him a reward for disobedience, and he hoped to ruin the second Adam by the same means.

What is that character of the kingdoms of the world which Satan displayed before our Lord?

It may be divided into three principal points--pleasure, profit, and praise--these tempt men to forsake God's service. It is not true that Satan can give them to whom he will. When Satan offered them to Christ, he offered what it was not in his power to bestow. In saying that he could bestow them, he acted in his own character of a liar and the father of lies. It is, however, true, that God often permits the servants of Satan to enjoy the vain delights of this world--thus we read in the Psalms, that the wicked are often in prosperity.

How did Jesus overcome the last temptation? By the word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit. He spoke openly to Satan, and declared that God had commanded that men should worship him alone. He did not dispute with the tempter, or tell him that the world was not his to bestow, or that it was a perishing portion, but he simply appealed to the command of God. Thus we are taught how to meet Satan's temptations. We ought not to stand questioning; but we should remember the command of God, and not take any step in life, or follow any course which will lead us into sin. How many warnings are there in the Scriptures against the love of the world, its pleasures, its profit, and its praise! This is what the Scripture says of worldly pleasure, (1 Tim. 5:6,) "She that lives in pleasure, is dead while she lives."

One of our most faithful female missionaries, Mrs. Judson, was first awakened when a vain and worldly girl, by reading this sentence. Afterwards she went to the East, and suffered great persecution for the truth's sake, and now she is with God, drinking rivers of pleasure at his right hand. And what does the Scripture say against the love of profit, or of money? 1 Tim. 6:10. "Which, (that is, money,) while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Now hear what is said of those who seek human praise. We read in John 12:42, 43, of some who believed in Christ, and yet would not confess him, lest they would be put out of the synagogue; "for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Satan will offer these things to our acceptance, (not all of them, but little portions of them,) upon condition that we worship him, that is, do his will in some respect; for he cares not for knee-worship; he knows that we are really the servants of him whom we obey, and not of him whom we call Master. May the Lord give us grace to resist, through our Captain, who has overcome, and has sat down upon his throne.

How soon the blessed Savior found obedience to be sweet! The angels came, and fed him. Thus God will more than make up to us, even in this life, all we give up for his sake. When he has filled our hearts with the peace which passes all understanding, we shall not regret the loss of any earthly thing!

February 2

John 1:19-34. The record of John concerning Christ.

During the time of the Lord's temptation, John was preaching in the wilderness. Many supposed he was the promised Savior; for though he did no miracle, (John 10:41,) he was evidently a very wonderful prophet. There were in Jerusalem seventy chief men, who met together to consult about public matters, and who were called the council, or the Sanhedrin. These Jews were proud and unbelieving. They sent a company of priests and Levites to ask John who he was, probably supposing that he would readily answer people who filled holy offices, especially as he himself was a priest. But he did not wish men to honor him, and he plainly told these priests he was not the Christ. Then they wanted to know whether he was Elijah; for Malachi the prophet had declared that Elijah would come before Christ came, (4:5, 6.) But though John had come in the spirit and power of Elijah, he was not Elijah himself. The priests then asked him whether he was that prophet. What prophet did they mean? They meant to ask whether John was any one of the old prophets risen from the dead. He declared that he was not, and then told them who he was--A voice crying in the wilderness. But these priests were not satisfied with the answer--they wanted to know why he baptized, as if he were some great person, and had great authority. As they were of the sect of the Pharisees--those formal self-righteous people--they must have been much offended with John for having once called them a generation of vipers. John took this occasion to praise the Lord Jesus, and to speak of his greatness. He even told them that he stood among them, though they knew him not.

The next day John was able to point out the unknown Savior to the people who surrounded him; but we are not told whether these priests were still near or not. How remarkable is the name by which he called his Lord! "The Lamb of God." Why did he give him this name? Was it because he was meek and gentle? Not chiefly for that reason; but because he was to be sacrificed for the sins of men. A lamb was offered up at the temple every morning and evening; its blood could not take away sin; but there was a Lamb whose blood could take away the sins of the world!

Consider how immense the sum of the sins of the world must be! The sins that one of us commits in one day are very numerous. If all our proud thoughts could be known, and all our rebellious feelings against God could be exposed, how vast would be the amount! But consider what millions of millions of men have lived on this earth; what treachery, what blasphemy, what murders, what idolatry, have defiled it in every place, at every moment. Yet all these multiplied crimes Jesus can take away; so great is the power of his blood. O that all the world would come to the Lamb of God, that they might all be cleansed from their innumerable transgressions.

February 3

John 1:35-42. Andrew leads Simon to Christ.

It was with great delight that John the Baptist pointed sinners to the Savior. He had no greater joy than to see men leave him to follow Christ. On one occasion he saw the Lord, probably at some distance from the place where he stood, and he pointed him out to two of his disciples; for John had disciples, or people who followed him to learn his doctrine. He was more pleased that they would follow the great Master, than that they would stay with him. Behold in John the spirit of true religion! The faithful minister does not wish to be admired himself, but tries to persuade all to admire Christ.

Who were these two disciples? One of them was called Andrew--but we are not informed of the name of the other. Perhaps the other was that John who was afterwards called the disciple whom Jesus loved. One reason for thinking so is, that he wrote this account, and it is usual with him not to mention his own name, when he refers to himself.

It signifies little, however, to us, what were the names of these disciples. Let us imitate their blessed examples. See them following Jesus. At first his back was towards them; but he knew well they were following him, and soon gave them kind encouragement. He said, "What do you seek?" They replied, "Master, where are you staying?" It was not from curiosity they desired to see his abode, but that they might know him and converse with him. How sweet were the hours which they spent with their Savior in his lowly dwelling, his cottage in the wilderness!

Would he welcome us, as he did those disciples? Yes; he says to us, as he did to them, "Come and see." Are we willing to go? Do we desire to know him, and to taste his grace? He will meet us in secret prayer, and make himself known to our hearts. But does he ever find us in prayer? or are we so taken up with the world, that we have no time to seek the Lord?

Let us observe the conduct of one of these disciples after he had found the Savior. "He first found his own brother Simon." How anxious he was to bring his dear brother to the knowledge of his precious friend! He tells him what a treasure he himself has found, and invites his brother to share it. Are we acting thus? Are we trying to persuade our family and our friends to come to Christ? What pains some have taken to bring brothers or sisters to Christ! they have sent them letter after letter--they have visited them in sickness; have persuaded them to hear faithful ministers--have prayed without ceasing to bless their efforts. David Nasmith, the founder of town-missions, sent a letter every week to his ungodly brother, until at length he brought him to Christ.

As soon as Simon approached the Savior, he received encouragement. Jesus gave him a new name, to describe the new character he would bear. He called him Cephas, or Peter, which the one in Hebrew, and the other Greek, signifies "a stone."

And why was Simon to be called "a stone?"

The Lord intended to build a great temple of living stones, that is, of believers, and he chose Simon to be one of the foundation-stones. He purposed to make him a great preacher, so that many would believe through his word, and thus be built upon him; therefore he compared him to a "stone."

The scriptures declare that the saints "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord."--Eph. 2:20, 21.

Jesus knows each of us as well as he knew Simon. He knows whether we are living stones in this glorious temple, or whether we are like the rubbish lying round the building, to be swept away when it is finished.

February 4

John 1:43 to 51. Philip leads Nathanael to Christ.

It is very interesting to know how holy men were brought to the knowledge of Christ. In this passage we have an account of the means by which Philip and Nathanael were first led to their Savior. Jesus himself

found Philip, and said, "Follow me." Have we heard the voice of Jesus thus speaking to our hearts? He does thus call to us from heaven. May we have grace to reply, "Lord, I will follow you." When David heard the Lord say, "Seek my face," he replied, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." (Ps. 27.)

Philip acted as Andrew had done before; he endeavored to persuade his friend to come to Jesus. He behaved openly and frankly to Nathanael; he did not conceal from him that the Lord he had found was called Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael was prejudiced against Nazareth because of the bad character of its inhabitants, and naturally exclaimed, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip did not stop to argue with him, but said, "Come and see." He was full of hope that the same word which had such power with him would convince Nathanael also. Philip sets us an example how to behave to our relations and friends. It is better to say, "Come and see," than to argue much with them. Let us try and persuade them to read the Bible which has taught us to pray to that God who has had mercy on us. If we can only induce them "to come and see," to apply to the Lord themselves, we may feel sure that they will be brought to the knowledge of the true Savior.

With what great kindness did the Lord treat Nathanael! He knew that he had doubts, and he removed them. He did this in a very remarkable way. When he saw him coming he described his character. "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit." By saying this, he showed Nathanael he was acquainted with his secret thoughts. He declared that Nathanael was a sincere man--this was great praise. Jesus had seen many hypocrites, but he had seen few sincere people.

It is very uncommon to be sincere. Most people think they are sincere. They will say, "Though I do not pretend to be religious, yet I am not a hypocrite--I am sincere." But these people deceive themselves. Let us consider what it is to be sincere. It is to be really anxious to find out our sins, and to forsake them. The sincere man says, with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart--try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Ps. 139:23, 24. The sincere man desires that every evil thought may be taken away; he longs to have his heart cleansed; therefore he is often in prayer to God, confessing his sins. As soon as he suspects that any of his practices are wrong, he inquires whether they really are sinful; and if he finds they are contrary to God's word, he forsakes them, however much he may lose by giving them up. Is this a common character? Is this our character? Do we thus walk with God? Does Jesus say of you or me, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit?"

Nathanael was surprised to find that Jesus knew him, but he was more astonished still when he discovered that he had seen him under the fig-tree. No doubt he had been confessing his sins beneath the shade of a thick fig-tree, where no human eye could see him. God had answered his prayers, by leading him to the Savior. Nathanael could no longer doubt; he acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Then Jesus promised that the day would come when he would see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man. To what day did he refer? Was it not to the day when he will come again in the glory of his Father with all his holy angels? Both his enemies and his friends will then perceive that he is the Son of God. Every eye shall see Him, (Rev. 1.) Some shall wail when they see Him whom they despised and neglected, sitting on the throne of judgment; but some will rejoice when they behold Him to whom they often prayed under fig-trees or in closets, sitting on his throne of glory amid ten thousand times ten thousand angels. Are there any here who often pray to Christ in secret? Is it not a comfort to you to think that he sees you, and that he will acknowledge you as his children at the great day?

February 5

John 2:1-10. Jesus turns water into wine.

The Lord Jesus began his ministry by a miracle. Several of his disciples beheld this display of his power. It is probable Nathanael was one of them; for though he is not mentioned in the list of the twelve apostles, it is generally supposed that Bartholomew, the apostle, was the same person as Nathanael.

When Jesus had been three days in Galilee he went to a marriage feast. It is plain, therefore, that there are some feasts to which it is not sinful to go. We are sure, however, that Jesus would not have gone to a feast where there was profaneness, drunkenness, or rioting; nor would the newly-married have invited such a holy guest, if they had intended to give an unholy feast. Wine was the common drink of the land of Canaan, and was not so strong as the wine used in this country, which is mixed with brandy. As grapes grew in the fields of Canaan, wine was so cheap that even poor people could afford to drink it. It is probable that the newly-married were poor, because Jesus himself, as well as his disciples, was poor, and he had not yet become celebrated as a prophet. Poverty may have prevented them from providing sufficient wine for the company.

When the supply was exhausted, the mother of Jesus spoke to him as if she expected her son to provide more wine by a miracle; she said, "They have no wine." The Lord's answer may appear disrespectful, but it was not so. In the Eastern countries "woman" is as respectful a title as "madam" would be here; and even princesses are thus addressed. When Jesus said, "Woman, what have I to do with you, my hour has not yet come;" he meant to show his mother, that though he had obeyed her commands in common things, he could not be directed by her in his heavenly Father's business. He had told her this when he was a child, and was found by her in the temple. The Roman Catholics, therefore, much mistake when they entreat Mary to command her Son to bestow blessings on them.

And do not we also mistake when we venture to dictate to Jesus?--when we think he ought to give us any blessing, or remove any affliction? When we thus think in our hearts, let us hear Jesus addressing us in these words--"What have I to do with you; my hour is not yet come." Perhaps He may intend to do what we desire; but we must not hasten him, his own time is the best.

The mother of our Lord still expected that her Son would do some wonderful deed, and she said to the servants, "Whatever he says to you, do it." This was a safe command to give. We may say this to each other at all times. "Whatever he says to you, do it."

You know that the Jews had many customs about purifying or washing themselves--some of these customs were commanded by God, and some were invented by men. They always kept large jars for water in their houses. These jars Jesus desired the servants to fill; they obeyed without questioning, and even drew out the water to hand to the ruler of the feast, without knowing what they presented. The jars were filled to the brim, so that it was certain that no wine could be added secretly to the water.

The ruler of the feast was a man who had the management of it entrusted to him by the bridegroom. He was surprised to taste such excellent wine, and calling the bridegroom, expressed his surprise that he would have kept the good wine until the last, when men usually give the best wine first, as the flavor is most relished at the beginning of a feast. In this speech the ruler bore witness, without intending it, to the excellence of Christ's works, and gave his testimony to the perfection of the miracle.

How benevolent a miracle this was! It showed forth Christ's tender concern for our comfort even in the smallest matters; though he would not turn the stones into bread to satisfy his own hunger, he turned water into wine to supply the guests at the marriage feast. But his chief purpose in working this miracle was to show forth his glory as the Son of God, that his people might believe in him to everlasting life. He can bestow upon us that wine which will make our hearts glad throughout eternity.

All who come to him will find reason to say, "You have kept the good wine until now." It is his method to keep the best things to the last--but it is Satan's method to do the reverse. The children of this world have their best things first. They find life grow darker and darker as they advance; their youthful days are their happiest, (they confess this themselves;) cares soon overcloud them, disappointments depress them, infirmities overtake them; the gloom continually increases, until it ends in the darkness of the grave. Such is the worldling's portion. Satan gives the good wine first, and then that which is worse. What a miserable portion is the world!

Christ deals just in a contrary manner--"The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day." Every truly holy person finds his happiness increase with his age; so that he would not be as he was once, no, not for the sake of again possessing youth, and health, and relations, and comforts, which he may now have lost. The more holy he becomes, the more happy he finds himself. Even upon earth he begins to say, "You have kept the good wine until now." What then will he say in heaven, when he drinks of the fruit of the vine with his Savior; that is, when he partakes of the sweetness of redeeming love in all its perfection! This happiness is offered to us. Shall we reject it, and prefer looking for our happiness from a world which is withering in our grasp?

February 6

John 2:11-17. Christ purifies the temple.

After working his first miracle, the Lord Jesus went to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, but he did not take up his abode there at present. Highly favored city, to be so early and so often visited by the Son of God! Truly she was exalted unto heaven, so great were her privileges. Do not we also enjoy very great privileges--we, who hold the word of God in our hands? May we profit more from our privileges than Capernaum did from hers!

Shortly after visiting this city, the Lord traveled up to Jerusalem, to keep the passover. In the gospel of John, all the passovers from this time until the Lord's death are recorded. It is by counting them, that it has been discovered how long Jesus exercised his ministry, and at what age he died. He became a minister at thirty, his ministry lasted three years and a half; and he died at the age of thirty-three years and a half.

When he was at Jerusalem at the passover, he made a public display of his power and holiness. The courts of the temple (not the very temple itself) were crowded by those who brought beasts and birds for sacrifices, and also by those who changed Roman money for Jewish coins, to be cast into the treasury. No doubt these traders in animals and money excused themselves for making God's house a place of trade by the thought of the holy use for which the animals and money were designed. But this excuse was not sufficient in God's sight. His temple was called a house of prayer, and it was made into a house of merchandise. He was displeased by the disturbance given to his worship, and by the disrespect shown to himself. And may there not be customs common among Christians which are displeasing to God? We may have excuses ready to offer for our conduct; but are they such as will be received at the day of judgment?

It was wonderful that the people selling animals and changing money submitted to the authority of a poor and almost unknown man, armed only with a whip, and unsupported by the rulers. But such divine power accompanied his words and his actions, and such terror from the Lord spread among the multitude, that the traders fled before him. At the same time, Jesus openly declared that he was the Son of God, for he called the temple his "Father's house." The disciples were much struck by their Lord's conduct; they were no doubt astonished to see one usually so meek and gentle, acting with so much boldness and courage. Then they remembered a sentence in the Psalms, describing the character of the expected Messiah--"The zeal for your house has eaten me up." (Ps. 69:9.) What is the meaning of this verse?

Zeal signifies an ardent desire. Jesus was full of zeal, but on what account? For God's house. By "house" we understand not only the temple, but God's service, his people, his commandments, and all that belongs to him. A zeal for God's house means an ardent desire for his glory. Jesus had so strong a zeal that it consumed him. It is common to say, "Such a one is swallowed up of grief." It might be said of Jesus that he was swallowed up with a desire for God's honor. This was his chief desire, his ruling passion.

How different from this zeal is the desire that fills us by nature. By nature, we are eaten up with a zeal, not for God's house, but for our own pleasure, and honor, and interest. This is the reason that we take up so hotly any insult given to ourselves, but are so indifferent respecting insults offered to God. If any person reproach us, or injure us, we turn in our minds how we can prevent his continuing to annoy us. We are uneasy and restless until we can defend ourselves. But how do we feel when we hear of God's commands being broken? Are we anxious to find out some way of stopping the evil? Do we feel as David did, when he said, "My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies keep not your law;" or when he said, "Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because they keep not your law?" O that such a spirit dwelt in us! If we love God, we do feel something of this grief already.

There are some among our magistrates and rulers who openly speak for God, and are ready to bear scorn and hatred for His sake; for all must be prepared for such treatment who endeavor to prevent the commission of sin. Faithful ministers, who oppose plays, fairs, and parties, and other popular amusements, and who speak in the pulpit against sabbath-breaking, intemperance, and all ungodliness, are generally hated on that account. Even Jesus was hated, because he testified of the world, that its works were evil. The reproaches of those who reproached God fell upon him. (Ps. 69:9.) May we hate evil as he did, though men would hate us also. If we sincerely hate sin, we shall hate it most in our own hearts, and ask God to cleanse them, and to render us vessels fit for the Master's use.

February 7

John 2:18 to 25. Christ speaks of the temple of his body.

How could the Jews desire a sign of Christ's right to clear the temple of the traders? What could have enabled him to send out these profane men but the power of God? Was not that a sign of his authority? Yet still the Jews, or the chief men of Jerusalem, desired a sign; but Christ refused to give them any, except that great sign of his own resurrection from the dead. This is God's constant way of dealing--he gives no sign to those who wish not to believe in him, and who only ask for a sign as an excuse for their unbelief.

What a remarkable name Jesus gave to his body!--He called it a temple. What is a temple?--the habitation of God. Christ's body was indeed a temple, for the Godhead dwelt in him. It is true, all real Christians form one great temple; for Paul says to them, "You are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell

in them, and walk in them." (2 Cor. 6:16.) But Christ was a temple in a still higher sense, for he and his Father were one.

When he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," neither his friends nor his enemies understood him. Yet these words were not forgotten; they were brought forward against him by his enemies when he was judged, and they were remembered by his friends after his rising again. No doubt there are many things in scripture which we do not yet understand. Let us look to Christ to teach us what we find to be dark and difficult. In the day of sorrow God often reveals the secret meaning of his words to his children. Some texts, in which we now see little beauty, may be our rod and staff when passing through the valley of the shadow of death.

There were some people at Jerusalem, who, seeing the miracles that Jesus did, felt convinced that he was a true prophet, but they did not love him, nor desire his love. Now observe how Jesus behaved towards these people. "He did not commit himself unto them;" (ver. 24;) that is, he did not place any confidence in them, but was on his guard when before them; he did not open to them his secrets, and tell them all the things that the Father had told him, as he did to his beloved disciples. (John 15:15.) He treated his true disciples as "friends;" but these people he knew still to be his enemies, for their hearts were not made new, and the natural heart of man is enmity against God. (Rom. 8:7.)

It is a solemn thought that Jesus knows the hearts of all men. Men often deceive each other by false professions of piety, but they never can deceive him; he knows what is in them. It is said in the book of Revelation, that his eyes are like a flame of fire. When he writes to the Seven Churches by the hand of his disciple John, (Rev. 2, 3,) he begins each letter with these words, "I know your works." There is a beautiful history contained in a tract called *Jejana*, in which we are told of a little Hottentot maid, who, entering a church for the first time, heard the minister preach from these words, "I know your works." In her ignorance, she thought the preacher himself was God, and tried to hide herself from his sight behind a pillar in the aisle where she was standing; for all the lies she had uttered and the thefts she had committed, rushed to her remembrance as the sentence was uttered, "I know your works." But how light was the guilt of this heathen child, compared to that of a well-instructed person who is yet unconverted! It is not only for having committed such sins as she had committed, that people in a Christian land will be condemned at last, but for having refused to believe in the Son of God, with the heart. Christ knows the heart of every one of us; he knows what is in us; he knows whether we truly love him or not. If we do not love him, we do not believe in him in the right manner, and our faith can only be a dead faith, and such as will not save us.

Let each of us ask himself, "Do I so believe in Christ, that he might commit himself unto me, that he might consider me as a friend if he were upon earth?" Can we say like the apostle Peter, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you?"

February 8

John 3:1-8. Christ's conversation with Nicodemus.

What can be so interesting as to hear how the Savior instructed a person who desired to know the way of salvation! What a privilege Nicodemus enjoyed when he talked alone with the Son of God! What a privilege we enjoy when we read the account of this conversation!

Jesus could suit his conversation exactly to the case of Nicodemus, for he knew the state of his heart, and could tell with certainty what it would be the most profitable to say.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee; one of that sect who placed their trust in the outward observance of the law, and who neglected to purify the heart. He was a chief person, a ruler and teacher. It was not surprising, therefore, that he was ashamed to come to Jesus openly. He came by night for fear of the Jews, as we are afterwards told in John 19:39. Jesus did not refuse to receive him on that account, so compassionate is he to the infirmities of men; but if Nicodemus had not conquered this base fear of man, he could not have become the disciple of Him who has said, "Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven," (Matthew 10:33.) Nicodemus afterwards grew so bold, that when the name of Jesus was held in the greatest contempt, he came forward with Joseph of Arimathea, and asked for his body, that he might give it an honorable burial. But at the time we are reading of, he was still unconverted, and ignorant of his need of conversion; he was, however, desirous of instruction, and did not shrink from a private interview with the Lord. He came to the light, even the light of the world, the Son of God.

He began the conversation by telling the Lord that he believed he was a teacher come from God, because of the miracles he did; but it does not seem that he knew him to be the Lord of glory. Jesus immediately spoke to him of the concerns of his soul. The words "Verily, verily," show that the truth he was going to disclose was very important--"Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." How necessary it is for us well to consider the meaning of this declaration! Do we desire to see the kingdom of God? We must then desire to be born again.

What is it to be born again? Nicodemus did not understand the expression; he thought it related to the body, but it related to the soul. Our souls must be born again; that is, they must undergo a great change. As, when an infant is born, it undergoes a change, enters into a new world, has new desires, and joys, and sorrows; so when our hearts are born again, they have new desires, and joys, and sorrows. This doctrine has offended many people, who, knowing that they themselves were not born again in this manner, have attempted to deny the true meaning of the words. Some have declared that all who have been baptized are born again; but this cannot be true, for we read in Acts 8, of a man called Simon, who was baptized by the apostles, but who yet was not born again; for Peter said to him, "You have neither part nor lot in this matter; your heart is not right in the sight of God."

Water is the sign of the cleansing effects of the Spirit. God has appointed the use of water in baptism, to remind us of the necessity of being purified by his Spirit. No man can bestow saving grace upon another; it is the work of God alone; the apostles could not change the hearts of men; Peter could not change the heart of the wicked Simon, to whom we have just referred.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." What is meant by the term "flesh?" Does it mean the body? It means not only the body, but also the soul. The soul as well as the body is called "flesh," in Scripture, because the unconverted soul loves fleshly things; it only delights in the earth--all its desires are after the things of the world, its pleasures, profits, and honors. But when the Spirit changes a man's fleshly heart, then he has a spiritual nature; then he has desires after spiritual things, after holiness and heaven. By this sign we must examine ourselves. Do we love the things of earth most, or the things of the Spirit? For it is declared in Rom. 8:5, "Those who are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but those who are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

But perhaps you may ask, "How is this change effected?" How does the Holy Spirit enter into the soul? Can a person see him enter in? No! the change is wrought silently and secretly; for this reason the Spirit is compared to the wind which blows where it wills; that is, which seems to blow where it likes, for man cannot control it, or even tell where it comes from. Thus, God sends his Spirit where He wills, and we cannot tell how this holy Spirit changes the wicked heart of man. We cannot see the wind, or understand its course; yet we perceive the effects of the wind; we can also behold the effects of the Spirit. Is it our great happiness to feel these effects in our own soul? Those who have felt the refreshing breeze spring up in the evening of a sultry day, need no argument to convince them that the wind blows.

How refreshing to the soul are the effects of the new birth! Before a soul is born again, it pants for happiness, but pants in vain; but when it knows that its sins are blotted out by the Savior's blood, then it feels satisfied, and like a long-lost child just restored to a parent's arms, cries out, "Abba, Father.

February 9

John 3:9-21. The conversation concluded.

Nicodemus was very ignorant of the meaning of the Scriptures; he knew the words, but not the things spoken of. He had no idea that a change of heart was necessary. He ought to have known it, because he had often read the words of the prophet Ezekiel, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh," (that is, a soft, tender, feeling heart,) Ezek. 36:26. Now this promise of a new heart, refers to the blessing of the new birth.

Nicodemus was a master, or a teacher in Israel, yet he knew not these things. Are there not many things which we ought to know, and which yet we know not? We ought to seek to know the meaning of the Scriptures, inquiring of our minister or our pious friends, reading books they recommend, and, above all, comparing one part with another, while we entreat the Lord to open the eyes of our understandings, to behold the wondrous things in his law.

Jesus did not explain the new birth to Nicodemus; it could not be explained--it must be experienced to be understood; but he told him that he ought to believe in it; for he said, "We speak that we do know." By "we," He meant himself and the prophets, who all spoke of this new birth. How wrong it is in men not to believe heavenly messengers, especially the Son of God! "You receive not our witness." May it never be said of us, that we do not receive the witness of the Lord and his apostles! Nicodemus, however, was willing to be instructed, so Jesus continued to teach him, in spite of his ignorance and unbelief, for He is a patient teacher; he will instruct the foolish and the slow of heart, if they will but listen to his words.

He began next to unfold the wonders of redeeming love. Nicodemus had often heard of the serpent of brass that Moses lifted up on a pole in the wilderness, in order that the Israelites that had been bitten by fiery serpents, might look, and live. This bronze serpent he declared to be a type of himself. He then spoke to Nicodemus of his Father's love to man. O that these words might sink deep into our hearts. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." What a gracious declaration! What a free salvation! "Whoever." No sinner is shut out, however horrible his sins; everyone who believes shall receive pardon and everlasting life.

What can be the reason that all men do not believe? This is the reason, "They love darkness," and why? "Because their deeds are evil." Every sinner's conscience bears witness to this truth. There are many who

say they desire to be religious, who profess to lament that they cannot pray--that they cannot love God. Were they sincere in what they said, they would use the means of becoming religious; they would try to pray; they would read God's word, and seek the company of religious people. If one of you were to lose your precious sight, through an accident, you would not be satisfied by saying, "I wish my eyesight were restored; but I have no skill to restore it myself, and I cannot find my way to an eye doctor; I must therefore remain as I am." O no! you would prevail on some person to lead you to one who had already cured blind people, and then you would follow his directions, however irksome they might be.

Now if you desired to become truly religious, you would act in the same manner--you would use the means of grace--you would ask your pious friends to help you to find the way of life, and you would cry earnestly to God. What excuse shall we give to God at the last day, if we refuse to come to the light? Great will be our condemnation. Has God given us his only Son, and shall we refuse to come to him? Shall we remain unconcerned about him, and occupied with worldly trifles and cares, and then think to escape the just judgment of God? Whatever excuses we may make to ourselves now for such conduct, they will not be accepted at the day of account. The sin and folly of neglecting the way of salvation will then be openly seen, and all those who are condemned will have nothing to say in their own defense.

February 10

John 3:22-36. John's testimony about Jesus.

How little did the Jews understand the character of John the Baptist! Some of them thought that he would be jealous of the Lord Jesus. How was that possible, when he came into the world to bear witness to Him, and to persuade men to believe in Him? Some people came to John, complaining that Jesus baptized, and that all men came to him. John earnestly desired that all men would come to Christ; not come to him only to be baptized with water, but to be washed from their sins, and baptized with the Holy Spirit.

John's answer shows in the most beautiful manner the humility of his heart and the sincerity of his love to Christ. Though he had been much admired as a preacher, he was not lifted up with pride. He knew and declared that "a man can receive nothing, unless it be given him from above." O that we could always keep this truth in our minds! Then we would perceive the folly of pride, as well as its wretchedness. What have we that we have not received? Yet how apt we are to be puffed up, as though we had not received, and even to boast to others of our abilities, our possessions, our numerous friends, and amiable qualities! We ought only to feel thankful to God for his gifts, and to humble ourselves in his sight, because we are unworthy of his notice; this is what the angels do who excel in strength, in wisdom, and in beauty. How dreadful it is when we feel proud of God's spiritual blessings! If he has put grace in our hearts, or enabled us to convert others, how unspeakably thankful we should be! To be proud of such mercies is, indeed, the blackest ingratitude.

John the Baptist was full of love to the Savior; he compared him to a bridegroom, and himself to the bridegroom's friend. The bride is the church, Christ's believing people. It was John's desire to lead all men to love Christ. He had succeeded in persuading some to love him, and now he knew that Jesus was rejoicing over these believers. To hear the bridegroom's voice was his chief joy; he delighted in praising the bridegroom! He called himself earthly, but he declared Jesus to be heavenly, for he came from above. He himself had only received a measure of the Spirit; but Jesus had received the Spirit without measure, that is, in an infinite degree.

He then described the exceeding happiness of believers in Christ, and the miserable condition of unbelievers. These are John's words--"He who believes on the Son has everlasting life, and he who believes not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." It is not said, that he who believes shall have everlasting life, but that he has even now everlasting life. It is not said that he who believes not, shall taste the wrath of God, but that now the wrath of God abides on him. Every person is at this moment in one of these conditions; he either has everlasting life, or he is under the wrath of God. How very happy, or how very miserable every person ought to be! Ought not that person to be miserable, who knows that at any moment he may be snatched away from the scene of his enjoyments? If we were to see a man living in splendor, in a magnificent house, surrounded by luxuries, and were told that he had immense debts, and that numerous creditors might at any moment thrust him into prison, would we count him happy? He could not be happy, if he reflected upon his circumstances. Perhaps he would not reflect; perhaps he would run from one diversion to another, and thus endeavor to keep up his spirits. Now all unbelievers owe an immense debt to the justice of God, and they are in danger at any moment of being thrust into prison, even that prison of hell from where none ever escape. They would not enjoy a moment's peace if they reflected on their condition.

How different is the state of the believer! If you were to see a poor man, coarsely clothed and scantily fed, and if you were to be assured he was the heir of a large estate, you would expect him to bear his present hardships without murmuring. If we believe in the Son of God, we are the heirs of God; we were his debtors, but Christ paid our debt by his blood, and when we believed, we were free from it; and not only so, but we were made the heirs of a heavenly kingdom. Ought we not to rejoice exceedingly, and to reckon nothing of our present losses and disappointments, because of the great inheritance promised to us?

February 11

Luke 3:19, 20. John's imprisonment.

The beautiful discourse that we lately read was the last discourse of John the Baptist that we find in the Scriptures. Soon after delivering it, he was cast into prison. It was Herod who imprisoned him. This Herod was the son of that Herod who slew the babes of Bethlehem, and he resembled his father in wickedness. As he was the governor of a fourth part of the land of Canaan, he is called a tetrarch, (which means the governor of the fourth part of a kingdom.) The Romans had made him governor of Judea. He had heard John preach. We are not informed whether he had gone into the wilderness to hear him, or whether he had sent for John into his palace; but we are told what effect John's preaching produced upon him. If we refer to Mark's gospel, we shall find an account of the sort of impression it made upon him. (Mark 6:20.) "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy." Herod had a reverence for the character of John; though a wicked man, he respected John. This affords us a lesson. Perhaps we feel a respect for some holy men, yet this is not a proof that we are holy ourselves.

Herod did more than this--"He observed John." He took notice of what he said; he remembered it. Unconverted people are often struck with the sermons they hear. But Herod did more still--"He did many things." He reformed many parts of his conduct. Perhaps he showed more kindness to the poor, more attention to public worship, or more justice to his subjects. We are not informed what were the things which he altered; but we know that he altered not a few, but many things. Have we altered many things in our conduct, since we heard the gospel? It is well if we have--it is well if we read the Bible more; if we give away more; if we have left off openly breaking the Sabbath; or using profane language; or partaking of

worldly amusements; but none of these things prove that we are converted.

But Herod did more still; "Herod heard John gladly." He took delight in his instructions. Was not that a good sign? It is a good sign if we take pleasure in listening to a faithful preacher, or to a pious friend, or in reading good books; but it is possible to do so, and yet to love sin; for though Herod heard sermons gladly, when John told him that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife, he was angry. Herod had committed a great crime--he had divorced his own wife, that he might marry Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; he could not bear to part from her. This was the sin he would not give up.

What a faithful preacher John was! though he knew that Herod had power to kill him, he feared not to tell him the truth. How difficult it is to act like John! A minister knows that he shall give offence to sinners, if he speaks to them plainly of their sins. As long as he speaks in general terms, he does not offend them; but as soon as he points out the peculiar sins of each class of people, then he makes them enemies. When he reproves tradesmen for selling on the Sabbath, young people for frequenting places of worldly amusement, the poor for committing secret acts of dishonesty, the rich for living in pride and luxury, then he is hated for his interference. But how wicked it is to be angry with a faithful minister for pointing out our sins! If we do not turn from our favorite sins we shall perish. Herod would not pluck out his right eye, which was Herodias; he would not go with one eye to heaven, he preferred going with two to hell; he preferred his pleasure upon earth to everlasting joy.

See how one sin leads to another. Herod added this above all, that he shut up John in prison. Great as was the crime of marrying his brother's wife, the sin of shutting up John in prison was greater in God's eyes. And why was it greater? Because it was an insult committed directly against God; for God considers his children as himself. Whoever injures one of them, injures Him; for they are as dear to him as the apple of his eye. Besides, by shutting up John in prison, Herod hindered the preaching of the gospel; and thus he murdered men's souls. It is a dreadful sin to hinder the spread of the gospel. How much those will have to answer for, who have discouraged people from hearing the gospel!

Herodias was more bitter against John than Herod himself, and would gladly have prevailed upon the monarch to kill him. But there were two reasons which prevented his committing this crime; the fear of man, and his own conscience. We find in Matthew's gospel, 14:5, the following words--"And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet." The fear of man often prevents people following the commands of God, but it sometimes for a season hinders the wicked from doing bad actions. Herod's own conscience also made him unwilling to kill John, for the conscience of sinners restrains them as well as the fear of man. May we be kept from sin by better motives than those of Herod! The love of God in our hearts would make us hate every sin. Let us inquire whether there is any sin we refuse to part with. If we are not seeking to please God in all things, we cannot have confidence towards him--our own hearts condemn us, and "God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." 1 John 3:20.

February 12

John 4:1-15. Christ's conversation with the woman of Samaria.

Everyone must desire to know what our Savior thought fit to say to a poor ignorant woman, whom he met beside a well. He was always watching for opportunities of doing good to the souls and bodies of men. Though He was weary, and doubtless hungry and thirsty also, he was intent upon his Father's business; while we are continually making excuses for not speaking to people about their souls!

Observe how he begins the conversation--he asks the woman to give him some water to drink. She returns an uncivil, unfeeling reply--"How is it that you, being a Jew, ask for a drink from a woman of Samaria?" It was true that the Samaritans and Jews did live at enmity with each other; but this was very wicked, and our Savior would not follow such wicked customs. However, he did not enter into a dispute on this subject, but passed on to one more important. In talking to people upon religion, we should keep the chief object in view, and not be induced to dispute on less important points.

How soft an answer did our Savior return to the uncourteous woman! He saw her ignorance, and pitied her--he saw she was ruining her own soul by her refusal to have any dealings with him. How majestic and how touching is his reply! (v. 10.) "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says unto you, 'Give me to drink,' you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water."

The woman did not understand this answer; she did not know what the stranger meant by the "gift of God." She did not know that He himself was the gift of God, the Father, to a lost world; neither did she know what he meant by "living water;" she thought he meant running water; she did not know that he spoke of the Holy Spirit. She began, indeed, to suspect that he was some great person, though he appeared a poor man; but she could not believe that he was greater than Jacob who had dug the well in old time. Neither could she imagine that any water could be better than the water of that well, and that water she was sure the stranger could not give to her, as he could not procure it for himself. But though she could allow the blessed Lord to remain parched with thirst, He was willing to supply her with the water of everlasting life.

He continued the conversation by pointing out a defect in the water of Jacob's well. "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again." There is the same defect in all earthly pleasures and comforts; they seem to satisfy us for a little time, but soon the tormenting thirst returns. Have we not often experienced the truth of this? We have partaken of some pleasure, and have felt satisfied; but O how short was our satisfaction? We soon become restless and uneasy again. Thus we continue to thirst until we are made partakers of the Holy Spirit; then we feel satisfied. Then we find within ourselves a source of happiness. What is this source of never-failing delight? It is the sense of pardoned sin, of God's love in Christ, the hope of heaven, and of meeting our Redeemer there. Have you not heard of people racked with pain, who yet enjoyed a peace that passes all understanding? Perhaps you have seen such people, and have wondered at their case. Behold the mystery explained; they drank, indeed, of no stream of earthly comforts, but there was in them a well of water springing up that never could be exhausted, and therefore they thirsted not after the muddy waters of this world.

The Samaritan woman did not understand the Savior's meaning, yet she made the right request, for she said, "Give me of this water." O that we might all make this prayer, understanding for what it is we ask! God would certainly grant it. What! did God give his own Son to die for us, and shall He think anything too great to give us? Who could have thought of such a gift? much less who could have dared to ask for it! that the Judge should give his only Son to die for the criminal! But as God has done this, and slain his beloved Son for us, is it not extreme ingratitude in us not to come to Him for the gifts the Savior purchased with his blood! Jesus laid down his life to procure for us the Holy Spirit, the living water; and shall we neglect to ask for this precious gift? God forbid! Let each of us cry earnestly--constantly to God, "Give me this living water, O you who have so loved the world as to give your only-begotten Son!"

February 13

John 4:16-24. Jesus and the woman of Samaria- continued.

When the Lord said, "Go call your husband and come here," the woman may have thought that he knew nothing about her circumstances; but his next words showed that he was acquainted with her whole history. Why then did he desire her to call her husband? He wished to bring her sins to her remembrance. It is probable that she had been divorced from these husbands, or had left them in a wicked manner. It was painful to her to be reminded of the sins of past years, and to be detected in pursuing even at that time an immoral course. But why did Jesus inflict this pain and this shame? That he might afterwards confer on this unhappy sinful woman everlasting glory and felicity. Let us not turn away from the remembrance of our sins. Everyone must be brought low before he can be lifted up. We naturally shrink from being exposed even to ourselves; this is our folly and our sin.

The Samaritan woman (though now convinced that the stranger was a true prophet) did not like to dwell upon the circumstances of her history. She attempted to turn the conversation, and instead of inquiring how she might obtain forgiveness, referred to the chief points in dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Jews said that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship God, and the Samaritans professed to worship him on a mountain in Samaria. Now Jerusalem was the place where God had commanded men to offer sacrifices; but he permitted them to pray to him everywhere. The Samaritans had done very wrong in building a temple on Mount Gerizim; their excuse was, that the Israelites in ancient times had pronounced blessings from this mountain, (as recorded in Deut. 26.) It was to this the woman referred when she said, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain."

The Samaritans boasted of being descended from the Israelites, though they were chiefly of Assyrian origin. For when the king of Assyria took captive the last king of Israel and his people, he filled the land with Assyrians. At first these Assyrians worshiped idols, but afterwards they left off idolatry. Yet though they did not worship idols, they did not worship God.

Jesus said to the woman, "You worship you know not what." There are many in Christian countries who, like these Samaritans, do not worship the true God, though they think they do. God is a spirit. Do those believe that He is a spirit, who while they feel no love, nor reverence for his name, yet bend the knee and move the lip in mere external worship? If we knew that an earthly sovereign could see into our hearts, and if we felt no love, no reverence for him, would we not be afraid of entering into his presence? Until we love God, we cannot worship him. What then is a sinner to do who is conscious that he does not love God? Let him confess his sins; let him ask for a new heart; let him think of God's love in giving his Son to die for a guilty world.

Though God is surrounded by millions of angels who worship him in spirit and in truth, yet He seeks for other worshipers. He is so condescending, that he delights in the praises of penitent sinners--He even seeks such to worship him. Perhaps last night or this morning He saw you worshiping him alone in your chamber; perhaps your voice was heard by no human creature, but your heart was full of sorrow for past sins, and of gratitude to God for having spared you so long. The Father of your spirit heard that prayer. He will answer it.

February 14

John 4:25-38. The spiritual harvest.

The ignorant Samaritan woman was much struck with the conversation of the stranger sitting by the well. It put her in mind of the promise she had heard of a Messiah, who would come into the world and instruct men. She seems at length to have desired instruction. She said, "When he has come, he will tell us all things." He has come already, and has told us all things. Are there not some here who love his words, and desire to keep them?

What a joyful moment that was when the Lord revealed himself unto the woman, and said, "I who talk unto you am he." In her joy, it is probable, she did not remember that she had refused him a cup of cold water. She was now anxious that others would hear the heavenly stranger, and she ran with haste into the city. She told her countrymen how she had been convinced that Jesus was the Christ. She said, "Come see a man who told me all the things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" Now one great proof that the Bible is the word of God, is, that it tells us all things that ever we did--not that it can tell each person his own life in particular, but it describes such men as we are, shows us the secrets of our hearts, and makes us feel that He who wrote it knew everything concerning us. For this reason some hate the bible; they will not believe that their hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. This woman did not turn away from the Savior's word because it exposed the sins of her life. Had she turned away, what infinite blessings she would have lost!

The disciples were astonished when they returned from the town with food, to find their Master talking in a friendly manner to a Samaritan woman. They thought that he was as prejudiced as themselves; but He who has made of one blood all the nations upon earth, is no respecter of people. There are white people in some countries at the present day, who treat the poor blacks with as much contempt as if they had no souls to be saved; but these people have not the mind of Christ--"He who despises his neighbor sins." When we look down upon another on account of the circumstances of his birth, we sin against God.

The disciples showed both respect and affection for their Master in their conduct on this occasion. They had too much respect to ask him why he talked with the woman; and they had so much affection, that they could not bear to see him refuse the food they brought him. But Jesus was too intent upon the souls he was now going to save, to be able to eat. When we are going to enjoy a great delight, our appetite is taken away, and so it was with Jesus; his food was to do his Father's will, and to finish his work. What was that will? What was that work? To seek and to save those who were lost; to glorify his Father by the salvation of sinners. John 17:4. O what love Christ had, to take delight in saving us, his enemies! Did He thus spend his life in willing labors for us, seeking no other pleasure than that of doing good; and shall we spend ours in doing our own will, and seeking our own glory?

Jesus directed his disciples' attention to the people who were thronging to hear him from the town. He compared their conversion to a harvest he was going to reap. Then he explained to his disciples that God often appointed one person to sow and another to reap. A minister who enters a place where the gospel has never been heard, may be compared to one who sows the good seed. Sometimes he is removed without seeing any fruit of his labor. Another follows him, and meets with great success in converting souls; and this last minister may be compared to a reaper.

Thus it was in Greenland. When Hans Egede first visited that land of ice and snow, he met with neglect and scorn; and though he remained there fifteen years, he could not make an impression upon a single person. Other missionaries from Germany followed in his steps, and they reaped an abundant harvest of souls; and Greenland is now a Christian country. Shall not Hans Egede who sowed the seed rejoice in heaven with the blessed men who reaped the sheaves? Jesus promised his apostles that they would reap

many souls when they preached; his prophets had sown good seed long before, and had not reaped. Would God forget those poor persecuted prophets?

It is a great delight to be permitted to reap; but it is a great comfort to think, that if we only sow, and even shed tears because we meet with no success, yet that our labor is not in vain in the Lord; and that at the last day we shall doubtless come again, bringing our sheaves with us. There have been parents who have died fearing that their instructions had made no impression on the hearts of their children, and yet after their death some friend or minister has reaped those children's souls. Will not the parent rejoice with that friend when they all appear before God? He who sows and he who reaps shall rejoice together.

February 15

John 4:39-54. The conversion of the Samaritans, and the healing of the nobleman's son.

Some of the Samaritans were longer in believing than others. Some believed on account of the woman's testimony, others--not until they had heard him themselves. We know it is best to believe without hesitation, for Jesus once said, "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed." You remember how readily Mary believed the angel's message; and Elizabeth said to her, "Blessed is she who believes, for there shall be a performance of the things told her of the Lord." But though some of the Samaritans were slow in believing--after they believed, they were bold in confessing their faith. They said, "We know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." O what a title that is! The Savior of the "world;" not of Jews only, but of SAMARITANS also, of some of every kindred and of every nation. May we all know him as our Savior. We shall never truly love him until we know him, not only from report, but from experience. How different is the state of that person who only knows Jesus from what others have said of him--from his state who has received answers to his own prayers, and felt that his own sins are forgiven!

Jesus could not stay more than two days with these Samaritans! We perhaps have heard a thousand sermons, and have read the Bible through many times. Is it possible that any one among us does not love the Savior? Would not these Samaritans rise up in judgment against one so much favored and yet so unfeeling!

Jesus did not return to Nazareth, which was his own country. There he was more despised than in any other place, because the people were accustomed to him. Though they had heard his blessed conversation year after year, and beheld his lovely example, they esteemed him not. It often happens that the gospel is most neglected where it has been longest preached. The excellent Baxter said, "I wish to be the minister of a place, either where the people have heartily embraced the gospel or where they have never heard it; but I dread being the minister of a place where the people have heard in vain." Those who have heard without profit become hardened, and are more rarely converted than others.

We find in this chapter an instance of a nobleman coming to Jesus. Not many noble are called, yet some are called. This man was brought to Jesus by his afflictions. In his sorrowful circumstances this nobleman found himself as

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