

The Woman of Samaria

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon highlights the importance of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ in order to receive the gift of God, which is the Holy Spirit, that brings eternal life.

Scripture: Luke 2:25, Acts 4:36, Romans 12:8, 2 Corinthians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 2:3, Hebrews 12:5, Hebrews 13:22

Topics: "Divine Comfort", "Christian Encouragement"

Description

John MacArthur and Wuest delve into the concept of encouragement (paraklesis), which involves providing solace, comfort, exhortation, and consolation to others. They emphasize the root meaning of coming alongside someone to offer assistance, as exemplified by the Good Samaritan. The Bible verses highlight the importance of seeking comfort and encouragement from God, the ultimate source of strength and hope, and the need for believers to comfort others with the comfort they have received from God.

Transcript

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

JOHN 4: 1-26

THERE are three chapters in this Gospel of John which speak of the effects and operations of the Spirit of God. The first is one with which we are all doubtless familiar ; namely, chapter 3, which brings before us the power and efficacy of the Holy Ghost in His quickening office-bringing forth dead souls, and causing them to be born again. Another is chapter 7, which shews the internal effect of the indwelling of the Spirit, being described by our Lord as " rivers of living water." " He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And it is added, " This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." And in chapter 4 it is very expressly spoken of as " living water," and " a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It may be profitable now for us to advert to this subject, and consider it attentively, to ascertain how it is spoken of; what are its operations ; and whether we find it in ourselves, as believers, a well of water springing up ; and shew how it is rejected by them that believe not.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the giver of the Holy Spirit to them that believe ; He is the fountain and giver of all good : all blessings are obtained by His sacrifice and intercession, and in no other way. Indeed it is the only way God can be a giver to sinful man ; there is no possibility of His giving any blessings to us as sinners except through this channel. As sinners, our intercourse with God is suspended for ever, except

through Christ ; but through Him the most intimate intercourse is restored. We lost it by virtue of our association with sin, and were then cast out from the presence of God, bringing forth fruit to the flesh, the world, and Satan. How could any intercourse subsist between God and us in that state ? The thing was impossible. But by the finished work of Christ, and in virtue of His resurrection, having taken His people from their former position, and set them in a perfectly distinct state, He brings them into fellowship with the Father, into (as far as regards His work) an unhindered communion with God.

They come to know Christ then as the medium of communication, of fellowship, and of intercourse ; they see themselves by faith in the presence of God, in the Person of Jesus, and thus have free and unrestrained communion with Him. just as by faith they saw themselves cast out from God, so by faith are they brought again into His presence. Now they are practically conscious that they are driven out-that they were justly excluded, having wandered from the way of holiness. This was the fruit of their own work; and then by faith they learn practically, that on the work of the Lord is founded that association which, making them one with Him, brings them into the nearest union and closest communion with God. They see the transfer of sin, and the transfer of righteousness, bringing them into this state. He was made " sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In Him we see the whole body-the church gathered into one-being made divine righteousness, and so presented to God. We see Him before God perfect, and we (I speak of believers) in Him. This blessed righteousness is made known to us by the Spirit which Christ sends down from heaven, and so leads up the souls of His people to a participation in His happiness. By seeing themselves and their own state by nature, He leads them out of themselves into Christ. But this is the gift of God. This is what Christ promised while on earth: " When the Comforter is come, he shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness."

Now it is in full agreement with this that the chapter before us unfolds itself-a chapter replete with most wonderful facts of God's wisdom, and His mighty love. The Pharisees were jealous and murmured at hearing that Jesus had made more disciples than John. Jesus therefore, to follow peace with all men, left Judea, and departed again into Galilee, going through Samaria ; there being, in His eternal counsel, a needs-be for it-even to meet with one poor sinner. He had taken a long journey; He was wearied, and He sat down on the well to recover His exhausted strength. Indeed it was a world of weariness to Him while He laboured in it. He had left His rest which He had with the Father from all eternity-had left His home of glory and of blessedness, and come down to this sinful world to be wearied indeed. There was everything around to make Him weary-sin, hatred, ingratitude, ill-will, and open opposition, and toil ; but, though wearied in the contemplation of these, He was never wearied in the testimony of love : this was meat they knew not of. When driven by exhaustion and persecution from the crowd, we find love taking Him into desert places apart, to pray. There was no love of bodily ease, no selfishness dictating His conduct in any particular : it was one unmitigated scene of active love. He was wrapped up in the one sole object for which He was on earth, and nothing could divert Him.

We see how full His whole soul was on the subject from the circumstances related in this chapter. The providence of God had (so to speak) brought Him to Samaria. What do we find Him there doing ? Just sitting alone with a wicked sinner by the side of a well to settle the great question of eternity with her, to shew her herself, and to make known Himself to her. And this He does now to every soul whom He calls to Himself-just sits alone with them, leads them into the recesses of their own hearts, and then makes known to them in whose presence they are, leading them to ask those gifts which He had prepared for them. In the case of this poor sinful woman we see the blessed way in which the Lord led her. She, full of her worldly employment, unconscious whom she was to meet, came to the well. He first asks her for a drink-a

drink of cold water! -considered the very poorest and meanest gift which this world contains. See how the Lord humbled Himself! Among the Jews it was considered the depth of degradation even to hold any communion or converse with the Samaritans ; to be beholden to them for a favour would not be tolerated by them. But here we have the Lord of glory asking for a drink of water from one of the worst in the city of the Samaritans! Such was His humiliation, that the woman herself wonders that such a request should be made from a Jew to one whom the Jews ever looked upon and treated with the greatest contempt.

Now, brethren, just think of this ; do just contemplate the mind and the spirit in which He met this poor outcast-this wicked Samaritan. He did not enter into argument about the prejudices of the Jews, or their justice in thus treating their neighbours ; His mind was on the one subject-her salvation ; and therefore He needs nothing else. He answered and said unto her, " If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Now there is the great truth, the ignorance of which ruins the world. They do not know who it is that is asking them to give Him a drink-still beseeching them to be reconciled-" We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God "-still entreating them, in terms of the greatest gentleness and love, to give themselves to Him-still in this character of petitioner for a favour. The point of distinction which the world knows not is this, that it is the Son of God who thus humbles Himself to ask sinners to come ; that it is the Lord of glory doing it, the Son of the eternal God doing it. They know not who it is that is asking them, and therefore they ask not from Him that gift without which they never can enter into the kingdom of God. " If thou knewest . . . who it is that saith to thee, thou wouldest have asked of him."

We come then to inquire, What is this gift ? The gift of God. Living water. A well of water-a springing well springing up continually into eternal life. There are just two things to be considered : first, what it is-namely, the giving of the Holy Spirit ; secondly, who it is that gives it-Christ. To have known the latter would have been to have asked for the former. It is the knowledge of whom we have to do with that puts us upon asking for His gifts ; for this gift of the Holy Spirit in us (which is Christ's to give) is to be in the believer a well-always living water-not a pool, which, though full, may be liable to be dried up, but a well that cannot dry up. There is the fountain which can never be exhausted that is given to him-is put into him, and lives and abides for ever. Now this is the promise to the believer-" The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Now the possession of this water must consist, first, in the knowledge of the Giver of it : without that there must be total ignorance, darkness, stupidity, and entire inapprehension and inability to recognize or understand the worth or value of the gift, or its spiritual signification. As in the case before us, the woman's mind took in nothing of this, because she was ignorant of Him with whom she was speaking ; her mind could not therefore apprehend the truth, and we see her carnal reason entirely misconstruing it, and turning it into another channel. " Sir," she said, " thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep : from whence then hast thou that living water ? " And here we see what her mind was occupied with - the world, the duties, pursuits, and employments of the world ; and so she could not rise to any higher thoughts could not see who it was that spoke, nor what He was offering to her attention. And, thus blinded is the world, led away from the things of Christ. by the things of time and sense. Satan uses these things as instruments in his hands of in the soul from Christ. Let it be what it may, let it.. be only a waterpot, he cares not, so that it occupies the mind to the exclusion of the knowledge of Christ. He cares not for the instrument-, so that he gains his own end, to draw the mind away from the apprehension of spiritual things. I 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 waterpot 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."

I ask you now, my friends, is there nothing which is thus keeping you from knowing Christ, and seeing His great salvation-from giving yourselves up to Him, and obtaining from Him this living water? It may be harmless-it may be innocent in itself-it may even be praiseworthy in itself. But has it been of sufficient weight with you to keep you from Christ ? Is He a stranger to you ? and are you a stranger to His great gifts ? Is there anything even this day-no matter what-family duties, lawful employments-which has held you ? Perhaps something less harmless and innocent than a waterpot has been found hitherto of sufficient weight with you to keep your soul dead to the spiritual apprehension of Christ's words. See yourself then in the case of this woman, as far as we have yet considered it. Her mind was occupied in the purpose for which she came to the well-a lawful and necessary purpose; and so she had no mind for the things of Christ. She saw nothing in them but what related to her then employment ; she saw not the love, the graciousness, and compassion of the Lord's mind just going to be openly manifested towards her. There was the Lord of life and glory, weary with His journey I , at the well, while His soul was full of thoughts of reconciliation towards her. But she saw it not ; she thought more about her waterpot ; it was greater in her estimation than the living water He had been speaking of. Still pursuing her own carnal train of thought, she continued, " Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle ? " Jesus answered her, " Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again ; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Now one would have thought that such a powerful truth, from the lips of Truth itself, would have awakened her from her stupid dream, and shewn her that there was more in it than carnal nature could discern. But no ; she saw nothing of it, and replies, " Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." The natural mind is on natural things, and sees everything through that medium ; it is shut up in its own little circle of feelings and ideas, and can neither see nor feel beyond it ; there it looks for all its enjoyment ; there it lives, there it continues, and there it dies. " The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned " ; and the reason is this-they have neither seen nor know the God in whose presence they are, neither have they ever been partakers by faith in Christ of God's gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby they discern spiritually ; they have no perception of the excluded state in which they are with regard to God and heaven ; neither do they know anything of the entrance into the new life-the new creation, because the entrance of the Spirit has never been experienced in their hearts, they are foolish and worldly and know nothing of God.

But notwithstanding all this we see the perseverance of our God. In spite of all the stupidity of this sinful Samaritan, the Lord still continues His labour of love, though exhibited differently. He now changes His manner. But the patience of the Lord of love is never wearied by the obstinate perverseness of His people. We, judging from our own feelings, might well suppose the Saviour would have left her in dark stupidity, and have given her up. But no ; He is God, and not man: therefore we are not left to our own blindness. The patience of His love is never exhausted, for it proceeds from an inexhaustible source : " God is love."

The Saviour now takes another course in His wisdom; but the end is still the same - love. He had tried expostulation and entreaty, but she could not understand Him. He therefore says, "Go, call thy husband"; you are proof against all I have offered you"; you cannot understand My motive and My meaning of love, so I must make you get a view of yourself - of your ruin - of your utter wretchedness. In this one sentence her little world of iniquity was unraveled to her mind. He brought her to the consciousness of what she

was, and to the knowledge of what He was. She answers, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." The secrets of her heart and life were laid open to her by One whom she had never seen before.

The Lord struck the chord of the conscience of the sinner -it vibrated. The Stranger convinced her of what she never before in reality believed-that she was a sinner. He laid open what she had so carefully concealed, stripped her of her self-disguise, and shewed her that He was acquainted with the hidden recesses of her heart. And such ever follows the testimony of the truth, when brought home with power to the soul of the sinner. " He is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." And it is thus the Lord acts generally, before we come to the distinct apprehension that we are in the presence of One who has the keys of our conscience, and knows the secrets of our hearts, in whose hands we cannot struggle or wrestle for relief; we are judged, we are convinced, we are dumb before Him; we feel His power, and are constrained to cry, " Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did." Even while there is no manifest perception of the blessing offered, yet the soul is brought to see and feel the power of Him with whom it has to do; that He who searches the heart and finds out our sin comes in the power of God, and that it is vain for us to dissemble with Him.

Her mind is now taken off from her waterpot, and she inquires where she was to worship God. Much might be said of the reply here given to her on the worship God alone requires-spiritual worship. The whole instruction of God's

Spirit as to communion with Him is brought out here. But we pass on to the consideration of the blessed end of their converse. Her mind was now opening to the light. She was approaching to the knowledge of Him, whom to know is everlasting life, and she appears looking forward to the time when the Redeemer is to reveal himself. The Spirit leads her to say, " I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ ; when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

Now trace these steps, brethren, and you will see the perfect blessedness and graciousness of the way in which she was brought to know Christ. Though a vile sinner, stupid and heedless of the wonderful blessings He was holding out to her, not one word of anger, not one word of reproach, passes the Lord's lips. He brought her sin to her remembrance" - Thou hast well said, I have no husband." He leads her to desire the revelation of the Messiah, and then, in a way the most engaging and the most insinuating, He makes Himself known unto her. There is not one of us, if the Lord were thus to unveil our minds, but would be ready to fly from ourselves and seek Jesus. But we see not our state by nature ; we are too busy-too -much occupied with the cares, duties, engagements, and pleasures of the world, to see ourselves as we really are. We are too much occupied with our waterpot to know the Lord of glory seated at the well. But let the truth be brought to ourselves, then even the world, self-lover as it is, will hate itself. In what a way of love was she brought! no reproach, no harshness, no unkind word. He simply opens up her heart, next creates the desire to know Him, and then exclaims, " I that speak unto thee am he." Here she now found what her soul was looking for. She might have some possible hope that-He was coming ; but how could she expect to see Him so full of humility and love as to become a suitor for a drink of cold water ? This is the very way and manner in which Christ reveals Himself to any soul before that soul asks anything of Him. It is in this very position that we are able to ask anything of Him. It is in this way of dealing that we find Christ in all gentleness, all love, all condescension to our weakness and unworthiness. He shews us something of the greatness of His power in knowing our hearts ; and then leads us to the point of blessedness when He reveals Himself - I am he." The sinner can then ask from the Lord, whom he has seen willing to be a debtor for kindness he hears Him exclaim, I do not feel at enmity with you I am not

about to reproach you ; and to shew you this, I will entreat a favour at your hands, and am ready to give you what you shall ask of Me-the best gift-the gift of God.

Here, then, is what we have to look for-to know Christ, that we may obtain the gift of God. We find here that the

Spirit is given to them that believe in Him. " If thou knewest ... who it is that saith to thee.... thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water' ; He would have given a well, put it in thee, which would ever be springing up. Thus the Lord acts now. When the soul is proof (so to speak) against the blessed invitations held out, the Lord sends the word of conviction. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, goes forth, and brings the soul to see its real position-that it is depraved, lost ; that it cannot stand sinless before the face of God. " Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet " ; " He told me all things that ever I did " ; is the experience of the heart, when He has thus wrought conviction in the soul. He teaches us what we could not know before that we are in the presence of God, and that it is Jesus Himself who is talking with us. Then we come to Him, and He gives us the blessed gift which He intended for us all along.

Then we come to be taken out of our former position, as strangers, aliens, enemies, and are associated in our new

position ; no longer a worldly but a heavenly portion-Christ's portion. The Spirit is given to testify of this ; to shew that the life which he now lives is the life of Christ, setting the Christian in the same position as Christ Himself. And what follows ? what are its effects here ? " The woman then left her waterpot," and reported it to all she met with, entreating them likewise to come to Jesus. And this effect will ever follow the clear perception of Christ to the soul - the total leaving of what before the carnal mind was centred in. She came for water. This was all she wanted then; her mind was on that one thing. But soon she thought not of well, water, or waterpot. Her mind had centred in another object, and towards that she was now carried. Christ had revealed Himself to her soul; the Messiah glory was now her aim and end. She knows Him now, not from hearsay but in the personal revelation of Himself; and immediately she begins to preach Him to others. A total revolution had taken place ; things are now all put in their right places. We see order, where all before was disorder or chaos. We come to see Him, who is the life, as our life. For whoever has thus seen the Lord, asking at our hands, being willing to be dependent, as it were, on us-where this really has been seen, there the revolution has been total : the soul is led to inquire, Am I indeed in Him ? am I associated with Him in interest, in privilege, in glory ? Is He my life ? Then what is the world to me ? What have I to live for, but for His glory, and to shew my gratitude for His unspeakable mercies!

To bring the soul into this state was just the subject of those thoughts which occupied the Saviour's mind from the beginning and throughout the whole process, of this woman's self-conviction and shame. A new life is thus given; the soul is quickened ; a well of water is put within us. There is then a something in the soul which, always springing up, has always the power of refreshment, tending to whence it came-the living fountains of water-Christ Jesus ; tending towards the glory of the Lord Jesus, and receiving all its glory from thence. Under the full recognition and sensible perception of this the world is of little worth ; wealth is despised, power is despised, distinction is despised ; the soul finds no wealth but in Christ, no power but by Christ, no distinction but from Him. So far as this power of perception is in us, in so far will our joy be full; it springs up from the divine nature within us, which tends to its glorious giver, Christ. It is a fresh spring ; it draws from the Lord of glory; it has fellowship and its associations are all with Him.

Now how is it with your souls ? Is there this well within you, which is ever springing up, meeting its source ? If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that asketh thee, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. Of His giving there is not a shadow of a doubt : if thou hadst asked, He would have given thee. Have you known Christ ? Have you asked of Him ? Have you within you this well ? Is it springing up within you ? There is a vast difference between drawing from others, and having it ourselves. Could a thirsty soul receive benefit from what it found in you, except it had experienced the refreshment within itself ? If you have experienced it yourself, what practical influence has it had ? Are you separated from the world, and separated to God ? Do you consider what is your high calling. -heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ! Are you imitating Him? What was He here ? Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Are you such ? If you are Christ's, His Spirit has borne witness in your heart that He was such, and that He manifests this to you, " that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." The glory of the Lord is manifested now in the power of God's Spirit on the souls of His people. This distinguishes them internally from all the world. They have come out from a participation in position with the first Adam, and are consequently partakers of a divine nature ; they become altogether a part and portion of the last Adam, and are risen with Him. This they are called upon to manifest outwardly. Did you know one tittle of the love of God in Christ-had you seen Him, and asked from Him what He presses on your reception, it would be your desire, aim, and delight to exhibit it. Dear friends, is there in you this spring-this well of water) If not, you have not known as yet the gift of God. Be not deceived, my friends ; if you have not this in you, you have nothing. If you have not the inward refreshing spring, which Christ gives to all His people, you will find whatever else you have of little-of no-avail ; for when the sun of temptation, of trial, or of affliction comes, that which is in you will be dried up as a useless pool without spring, without any refreshing source.

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