

# SYCHAR'S SINNER SAVED

*"Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water."*

*John 4:10*

I COULD not help saying, in the reading, that the woman's answer to our Lord was, at least, somewhat abrupt, if not really rude, but, with great meekness, Jesus took no notice of it so as to blame her for her tone, or for her unkind manner. He was too intent upon saving her soul to care about a little rudeness on her part. Learn a lesson from your Lord's conduct! When you are dealing with souls, do not always expect them to yield to you at once. Do not expect them, even, to receive your expostulations with thankfulness. Be prepared to be repelled and even to be ridiculed. And when it so happens, do not be put out of temper, or out of heart, but go straight on with your work whichever way they may go.

Our Savior, instead of being vexed at the rudeness of the woman, said to her, "If you knew." "Ah, poor Soul, you do not know to whom you are speaking thus rudely!" "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water." Oh, that we might have a passion for the souls of men! May we be vehement in our desire, with a love that burns like coals of juniper! May we not be put off by any discouragements, but let us resolve that before we have done with any poor sinner, we will do all in our power to bring him to Christ, so that, if men are lost, it shall not be our fault—and if they are saved, we will, at least, have this part in it—that we have set Christ plainly before them as their soul's only hope!

Now, our Savior, having thus set us an example of great meekness, went on to read this woman's heart in a amazing manner and, reading her heart, He foretold what her action would be when her ignorance was removed. It is a difficult thing to tell what people will do under such and such circumstances, for men and women are very unaccountable creatures. But the Savior made a prediction as to what this woman would do. That will be my first point—Jesus foretold what her action would be when her ignorance was removed. And then, secondly, I will show you that the fact justified the prediction. As soon as the woman knew who it was that spoke to her, she asked Him for the Living Water—Jesus gave it to her and she went on her way rejoicing!

1. First, then, JESUS FORETOLD WHAT HER ACTION WOULD BE WHEN HER IGNORANCE WAS REMOVED. He saw in her a kindly disposition towards right things, but she was hindered by her ignorance. If that hindrance could be taken away, she would at once travel in the right road.

Let me mention the points of saving knowledge which it was desirable for her to know.

These were, first, the nature of salvation. "If you knew the gift of God." Thousands of people in the world do not know what salvation means. They conceive, if they have any notion of it at all, that it means escaping from Hell and going to Heaven when they die, which is a very imperfect and incorrect idea of salvation. "The gift of God is eternal life"—and that is salvation! God gives to all who believe in Christ a new life, a vital principle, something to be within them always—the reigning and ruling principle of their lives. Salvation means salvation from sin. To the drunk, it is salvation from the drink. To the swearer, it is salvation from a profane heart. To the unchaste, it is salvation from impurity. It means deliverance from the power of evil in the life and submission to the power of that which is good and gracious, by which sin shall be cast out.

Do you remember the meaning of the name, Jesus? “You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” The salvation that we have to preach produces a change of heart, a renewal of nature, a deliverance from the power of the devil and brings the renewed man under the supreme power of the Holy Spirit of God! If some men knew this, they would begin to seek for it. Are there not many here who feel that they ought to turn over a new leaf and they do not know how to do it? They have not the power, even though they have, in a measure, the will. Now, salvation brings you both will and power—it saves you not only from the wrath to come, but from the sin that is now within you. That is the nature of salvation.

This woman did not know the freeness of salvation. “If you knew the gift of God” — “the gift of God.” She thought, perhaps, that it had to be bought with money, or procured by sacrifices, or attained by good works after a long period of preparation. The Savior assured her that salvation was the gift of God—freely given, not because it is deserved, but because God delights to bless even the unthankful and the evil! Given, not because of penances, or austerities, or myriads of prayers, or floods of tears—but freely given to every soul that is willing to accept it by faith in Jesus Christ! Oh, if many knew this, they would seek to have it! But they do not know what salvation is. And they do not know that it is to be had for nothing and to be had on the spot. “If you knew the gift of God.”

Further, it was necessary for this woman to know the Person of Christ. “If you knew who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink.” Some do not know who the Christ is. Though He has been here and lived, and died, and is gone to Heaven and is preached by tens of thousands of preachers, and His blessed Book is with you to this day, yet you do not know that the Savior is God over all, blessed forever, the second Person of the sacred Trinity, the Son of God and yet Man! He took upon Himself the nature of man, was born into this world, lived a suffering and obedient life, died an ignominious and painful death! And now He has risen from the dead and He is sitting at the right hand of God, even the Father, and will shortly come to judge the quick and the dead according to our Gospel. Now this is He, this God, this Man, this Mediator between God and men who is to be trusted! He was commissioned of God and, therefore, He was called the Christ, the Anointed. He has come into the world on purpose to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work. Oh, you sons and daughters of men, if you would be saved, you must come and trust yourselves with the Incarnate God who is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh!

This woman also did not know the freeness of Christ, for when our Savior said, “If you knew the gift of God,” He really meant Himself. Paul said, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” This is He, the Gift of the Father! Christ has not come into the world simply to save the rich, or the learned, or those who struggle through many examinations to obtain a high degree of human wisdom. He died, also, for the poor, for you who know your own ignorance and bewail for you who know your sinfulness and repent of it. He came not call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. God has given His Son Jesus Christ, freely given Him! You may have Him for the asking! You may have Him for the taking! “Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life.” And if you will but trust Him, there is eternal life for you! It was important that this woman should know this. “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink.”

If you look at the text, you will now see the conduct which follows this saving knowledge. Christ foretold what this woman would do when her ignorance was removed. What would she do? Well, first, she would forget about the idea of giving Christ anything! He began by saying to this sinful woman, “Give Me to drink,” but He afterwards said, “If you knew the gift of God, you would have asked of Him.”

I am continually hearing, from converts and others, the expression, “I gave my heart to Christ,” as a description of conversion. Now I do not find fault with that expression, for we must give our hearts to Christ—but very seriously let me say that I am afraid that that phrase will do much mischief unless it is well guarded and looked after. The Gospel is not, “Give your hearts to Christ, and you shall be saved.” The Gospel is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”—that is, TRUST Him—“and you shall be saved.” When you do that, you will be sure to give Him your heart, by-and-by, if not at once. Salvation is not by your giving anything to Christ, but by Christ giving something to you! I am glad that you have given your heart to Christ—but have you learned, first, this lesson—

that He gave His heart for you? We do not find salvation by giving Christ anything! That is the fruit of it, but salvation comes by Christ giving us something—did I say something—by Christ giving us EVERYTHING! By His giving us Himself!

I used to notice that a good deal of Sunday school teaching to the children was, “Dear child, love Jesus.” That is not the way of salvation! The way of salvation is to trust Jesus. The fruit of salvation is that the dear child does love Jesus, but that is not the way of salvation. The way of salvation is to take Christ, to trust Christ. When you are saved, the proof of it will be that you will give your heart to Christ, but do not let us turn things upside down lest, beginning with a little blunder, we should go on to some great error and set up, again, the ruinous doctrine which once sank the world in darkness—the doctrine of an imaginary salvation by our own works!

Next, the text suggests the idea of asking of Christ as the first thing for us to do. How many there are who know that salvation is a gift, but they never seek it! They know that it is all of Grace, but they never ask for it. An occasional prayer, when you are half-asleep at night—now and then an expression of a wish that you were better—that is all the effort you put forth. The Lord says, “You shall seek Me, and find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” Men seek after gold as if they had a thousand hearts—but they seek after Grace as if their heart were cut into a thousand pieces and only one solitary thousandth part of it went after the blessing! This woman did really ask of Christ, and asked with earnestness. And so must you. If you did but know Christ. If you did but know the value of His salvation. If you did but know the freeness of it, my Hearers, you would get to your knees and you would never rise from them again till you had found Him who alone can save your souls!

Let me ask you unsaved ones, do you cry to God for mercy? Are you in earnest about it? Does your very soul go up to God in prayer? If not, do not wonder that you still remain in the gall of bitterness! How can you expect God to give to you that which you do not value enough to heartily ask for?

This woman, when her ignorance was removed, would be led to put asking, first, and then really to ask. And, next, receiving would graciously follow the asking! I call your attention to the words, “You would have asked of Him, and He would have given you.” Dear Hearer, if you had asked, you would have had! “You have not because you ask not.” Sitting in that pew, tonight, without God, without Christ—it is because you have not sought Him, you have not cried for Him! Had you sought Him, you would have found Him, “for everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.” I do not like merely to utter this Truth of God—I wish I could press it home upon your heart and that you would feel that if you have not asked, it is right that you should not have received—and that if you had asked, you would not have asked in vain! “You would have asked and He would have given.”

Then she would have received and the preciousness of the gift would have been apparent. The result would have been that she would have been a happy woman, greatly prizing the gift of God, greatly valuing the dear Savior, singing in her delight because she had found Him who could take all her sin away and send her back to Sychar a renewed woman. Instead of being a destroyer of the souls of men, she would become a herald of the Cross to them and the means of their salvation.

So our Savior pictured what she would have done. I wonder whether it is true about any of you, here, that you have only kept from prayer because you have not known better? Have you not found Christ because you really did not know anything about Him? You have been making mistakes and blunders and that is why you are not saved. Now we have explained the matter to you and you can see it—I trust that not another day will begin and end without your seeking and finding Christ—and so entering into eternal life.

Now consider the line of action which this teaching suggests to us.

If it is, in many cases, the fact that nothing but ignorance is keeping men out of eternal life. If it is true of many that if they did but know, they would ask and they would receive, then if you have not found Christ, be wise enough to try and learn all about Him! Do not remain in ignorance where that ignorance is not bliss, but endless woe. Wake yourself up and say, "If I can find out what salvation is, I will find it out, even if I have to burn the midnight oil, and wear my eyes out in searching through the sacred Book. I will hear as well as read. I will know all that I can about salvation and about this Jesus, the Son of God, the unspeakable Gift of God." Well, take care that you go where Christ is most preached! A little girl heard her mother say, "We went to the House of God to hear about Jesus." "Mother," she said, "at the place where Aunty goes, they do not hear anything about Jesus, I am sure, for I went with her many times, and I never heard anything about Him."

Do not go to places where Christ is not preached! Let those go who have no souls to be saved, if there are such people, but you, dear Hearers, are in an anxious state. You need to find salvation and, lest ignorance should hinder you, take heed what you hear and take heed how you hear. I was but a child when I first began to seek the Savior, but I have a distinct recollection that as soon as the sun shone into my little bedchamber, I was awake—and what was I reading? Doddridge's, "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," Alleine's, "Alarm to the Unconverted," and books of that order! I read when I was but a child, in the hope that I might somehow find Christ and be saved. When I went to a place of worship, I took no notice of the music of the organ, or the eloquence of the preacher. I kept listening with this one thought in my mind—"Oh that I might but find salvation! Oh, that I might but find Christ!" Whenever that is the case with anyone, depend upon it, sooner or later the ignorance that bars the way will melt and disappear! And you will ask, and God will give, and there will be joy in Heaven and joy in your own heart because you are saved!

One thing more. If you discover the Truth of God, then go on learning more about it so that you may tell it to others. It is of the nature of the Grace of God, when it gets into one heart, that it needs to flow into another. The woman of Sychar believes in Jesus. Now she must go and tell the men of the city about the Christ. I wonder whether she went to the men with whom she had sinned? Women did not often speak openly to men in those Oriental regions, but this woman did. She had broken through the laws of decorum and of the Word of God, so away she goes and says to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" Go on learning about Christ, I say, that you may teach it to others—and never think a day is well spent unless you have spoken to someone about your Master, unless you have at least dropped one tiny seed somewhere to bring forth fruit to His praise! Our Savior predicted that the woman would ask and that she would receive if she could but get rid of the ignorance that weighed her down.

II. My second point is that all this came true. THE FACT JUSTIFIED THE PREDICTION. When this woman's ignorance was taken away, she did what Christ said she would do!

First, let me remind you that what she did know stood her in good stead. She was not converted when she came to Christ—very far from it—but she did know something about Him, for she said to Him, "I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ." It is a good beginning when you know anything. I heard, yesterday, a piece of bigotry concerning Dissenters which astonished me for the moment, and then I said, "I am rather glad to hear it, for I like to meet with men, nowadays, who believe anything—for the majority of people do not believe anything at all! And there is hope for a man, or a woman, who really knows and believes something." If you have one solid bit somewhere, we can get a fulcrum for our lever and so can move you. This woman said, "I know that Messiah comes." Teachers of the children in the Sunday schools, it may be years hence, but if you have taught a child to really know something, that knowledge may be the beginning of his salvation. It was partly by common tradition, partly by conversation and partly by the belief of her associates that this woman came to say, "I know that Messiah comes."

Then she had got into her head another thing, that when He did come, He would tell them all things. "When He is come, He will tell us all things." In effect, the woman's belief led her to say, "When the Messiah comes, we shall all be set right. Now, we Jews and Samaritans have had a quarrel about where we ought to worship. The Samaritans say that Mount Gerizim is the place

where the blessing was pronounced, and that we ought to worship here. They only believe, as you know, in the Pentateuch. Those five books of Moses do not say much about Jerusalem, or about a Temple. Clinging to that grand old Pentateuch, I believe in worshipping here at Gerizim. But the Jews say that we ought to worship at Jerusalem. Well, when Messiah comes, He will tell us all things.”

She had that idea firmly fixed in her mind. Where did she get it? I will read you the passage in order that you may see how a single text may give a hook on which a soul may hang. One single text may be a little bit of solid rock on which you may plant your lever and begin to lift the heavy weight of an immortal soul! In the 18 th Chapter of Deuteronomy, beginning at the 15 th verse, we read as follows—“The LORD your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me; unto him you shall hearken; according to all that you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the Voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire anymore, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.” They need a Mediator—they shall have a Mediator to speak to them from Me.

NOW, here is the special verse, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” This woman pulled the text about a little, but she gathered this from it, “There is a great Prophet to come, God’s anointed Prophet, the Messiah, or Christ; and when He comes, we shall know Him by this, that He will tell us all things. He will more fully expound the Truth of God about which we may now be in doubt.” That is what she knew and that helped her a great deal.

But, next, what our Lord told her was a still greater help to her, for He directed her to Himself. He began, first, by preaching the Gospel to her. He would give her Living Water and if she drank it, it would remain in her forever a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. And He was ready to give her this Living Water then and there.

Next, He unveiled her life before her. He told her that she had had five husbands and that the man with whom she then lived was not her husband. With two or three strokes He drew her portrait. She marveled at this. It is a great thing for a man to see himself—it is a greater thing for him to see his Savior. After you are once converted, do not study yourself. Study your Lord! God has given one objective for the soul’s eye to rest upon, and that is Christ! Keep your eyes always resting upon Him. But, in order to her conversion, she was made to see herself, a wretched woman, living in abominable sin—and she was astonished at the sight! But even that helped her.

Then the Savior took her off from all outward religion. He said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” Jesus told her that the hour had come when the true worshippers would worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Notice, too, that Christ took her off from the Samaritan worship. He said, “Salvation is of the Jews.” But then He took her off the Jewish worship, too, and said, “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem.” It is all very well for you to try to convert a Roman Catholic into an English Churchman—that is, converting him from a Samaritan to a Jew. It is all very well for you to turn him from a Wesleyan into an Independent, or from an Independent into a Baptist, or from an Arminian into a Calvinist. The fact is, though, you have to get him off everything but Christ! And you have not done your work until you have brought him to know that no profession of religion, no outward ceremonies, whatever, can save the soul. “They that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him.”

The Savior had done this woman great service. He had preached to her the Gospel, unveiled her sin, taken her off herself and off all external religiousness. Then came the main point of all—He revealed Himself to her, unveiling the sacred majesty of His Divine Glory. He said to her, “I that speak unto you am He.” When she said, “I know that Messiah comes,” He at once spoke that grand word, “I am He.” Now, dear Friend, if the Lord has given you only to know one Truth, hold on to it! And may He teach you more of yourself, more of Himself and bring you to know that Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior even as He brought this woman to know it!

Well, once more, her own experience of Christ settled her faith. I do not know whether you see my drift. The woman had the idea in her mind that when the Messiah came, He would tell all things. She listened to Christ and when He drew a picture of her entire life, something began to whisper in her heart—"He is telling you all things that you ever did. Is not this the Christ?" And when Christ said to her, "I that speak unto you am He," the work was completed and off she went and said to the men the first thing that she could think of. She said, "You know that the Messiah, when He comes, is to tell us all things. Moses said that in Deuteronomy. You remember the passage in the Pentateuch! Now," she said, "I have met with a Man who has told me all things that ever I did. At least, He has told everything in one particular line. Do you not think that this could be the Messiah?"

In her poor, womanly way, she had argued herself into that belief—and I think that it was a good, reasonable argument, too. I have known many a soul get to Heaven with no better guidance than some one text of Scripture. One Truth of God will guide a man to Heaven, though 50 may feed him better than one. When a bridge is to be made across some deep chasm, what is to be done? The first thing is to shoot an arrow across, or a gunshot that will carry a thread. When you have a thread across, you can pull a string over the gulf. When you have the string across, you can pull a thicker and stronger cord across. That can pull a rope and that rope can carry a bigger rope that can bear a cable! And, by-and-by, when you have got your cables across, you can begin to make your iron bridge.

Now, in this woman's heart, that one belief, "I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ," was like the thread shot across the chasm! "When He is come, He will tell us all things," was like the piece of string. And when she found that she had met with One who did tell her all things, she had a cable across the chasm! This is the way in which God removes ignorance! This is the way in which God builds up faith—little by little—and I, therefore, pray any of you who believe even a little, to hold on to it, and not to give up! Search the Scriptures. Hear the Gospel until you believe a great deal more and, believing that Jesus is the Christ, sent of God to save sinners! Trust Him wholly. Trust only Him! And so you shall enter into eternal life.

I think that I hear one ask, "Do you mean to say that that woman was saved?" Yes, I expect to meet her in Heaven. Among the fair daughters of the New Jerusalem, the woman that was waiting at the well will surely be found! "But she was such a shocking character," says one. She was a shocking character—I hope that there is not any woman here half as bad as she was, though there may be, and there may even be some worse than she was—but she was saved and so will you be, if you go the same way that she went. There may be men here who are steeped in vice much worse than this poor woman ever was. You generally blame the woman and the man is allowed to go scot-free. But tonight, man or woman, I do not care which you are—even if you have committed the same sin—the very same and are guilty in the sight of God, and before your own conscience, yet listen to two things that Jesus said to that woman.

The first was, "Woman, believe Me." Woman, believe Christ. Man, believe Christ. Never mind me. Never mind ministers or priests. Believe Christ, the Sent One of God, for He cannot lie! He speaks the truth! Believe Him and believe in Him, that is, trust Him, rest upon Him for salvation!

And then Jesus left her with this word ringing in her ears, the last word that He spoke, "I that speak unto you am He." Believe that Christ is He whom God has sent to save sinners! Believe that Christ is He who took our sin, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world! Believe Him as He says, "I am He," and say to Him, "I, Lord, am like this woman, one of the chief of sinners, but I believe that You are the Savior of sinners, and I trust myself with You. Save me, Lord, for Your own name's sake!"

Now, you see, I have brought the horses to the water. But I cannot make them drink! I have set Christ before you, but I cannot make you have Him! May the Holy Spirit help you to take Him, tonight, once and for all! Do not go away till He has done so. Give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you have closed in with Christ and accepted Him as your Savior! For when you fall asleep, tonight, you may never wake up again on this earth. It will be a dreadful thing to wake up in the land where hope can never come—where you shall see afar off God's

chosen ones, but, as for yourself, you shall be told that there is a great gulf fixed between you and them so that they cannot come to you, and you cannot go to them “Repent and believe the Gospel!” May the Holy Spirit cause you to do so even now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.