

# THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER

*“There came a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink.”*

*John 4:7*

THIS was the beginning of that interesting conversation which not only blessed this woman, but has been a means of Grace to many others ever since, for this chapter and the previous one must be looked upon as among the most soulwinning parts of God’s Word. I suppose that every portion of Scripture has had its use in the experience of men and women, but these two chapters have very, very largely been blessed in the commencement of the Divine Life. Many have been led through the door of regeneration and the gateway of faith by the Truth of God so plainly taught in them.

I shall not delay you with any preface, but shall take you at once to the subject mentioned in our text.

1. You have before you, here, first, THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, “Give Me a drink.” I speak to many here who are wise to win souls. I hope that I also address many more who, although they have not yet learned this wisdom, are anxious, if possible, to be used of God to bless their fellow creatures. Here, then, is a perfect model for you—study it and copy it.

First, observe that our Savior, as the model Soul-Winner, was not reserved and distant. “Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.” If He had not been wonderfully anxious to win a soul, He would have kept Himself to Himself—and if this woman had spoken to Him, He would have answered her shortly and have let her see that He did not desire any conversation with her. There is a way of being civil, but, at the same time, of repressing anything like familiarity. There are some persons who have great gifts of freezing—they can freeze you, almost, with a look! You never dare to speak to them, again. In fact, you stand and wonder how you could ever have had the impertinence to address such exalted personages! They evidently live in a very distinct world from that in which your poor self resides—they could not sympathize with you—they are too good or too great, too clever. And if you do not complain of their conduct, yet you give them a wide berth and keep clear of them in the future, for they are not at all the sort of people that attract you. They repel you by their coldness. They are not magnets, or, if so, they exercise the very opposite influence from that of attraction.

Now, if any of you are in such a frame of mind as that, pray the Lord to bring you out of it! But do not attempt to do any good while you are in such a condition, for you might as well try to heat an oven with snowballs as to win souls for Christ with a distant cold, dignified manner of speech! No, cast all that away, for nothing can render you so feeble, and so useless, as to cultivate anything like separateness from your fellows. Come close to the sinner, draw near to him or to her—show that you are not keeping yourself to yourself, but that you regard the person you are addressing as a brother or sister—as one who will find, in you, a sympathizer who is touched with the feeling of his infirmities, seeing that you have suffered in many points like he has suffered and are, therefore, on the same level, and desire to stand on the same platform with him—and to do him good.

There was nothing stiff and starched about the Savior. He was the very reverse of that and even children felt that they might go to Him freely. He was like a great harbor into which sailors run their ships in stress of weather—they feel as if it was made on purpose for them. The very look of

Christ's face, the very glistening of His eyes, everything about Him made people feel that He did not live for Himself at all, but that He desired to bless others! There is the model SoulWinner, therefore, for your imitation, in Jesus sitting on the well and condescending even to speak to a poor fallen woman!

In the next place, our Savior was aggressive and prompt. He did not wait for the woman to speak to Him, but He addressed her. "Give Me a drink," He said. He did not wait until she had drawn the water from the well and was about to go—and so give her an excuse for saying, "I cannot be detained. I must get home with the water and the sun is hot," but no sooner has He seen her and her waterpot, than He begins a conversation with His request to her, "Give Me a drink." The true soul-winner is like a man who goes out shooting—he is not half asleep so that when the game presents itself, he waits till it has taken wing and has gone. He is on the alert—if a feather or a leaf moves, he has his gun all ready, and he is prepared for action at once! The cunning fowler spreads his nets early in the morning before the birds are awake, that when they first begin to move, they may be taken in his traps. And the Lord Jesus, with a loving wisdom, went about His work. He began with the woman at once—as soon as she came to the well where He was resting, He spoke to her and soon led the talk to the things which concerned the Christ and her own sin—and the way by which the Christ might lift her out of her sin and make her useful for the conversion of others.

I am afraid that there are some of you who cannot do that—you are so reserved, you say. How often have I told you that the soldier who was so "retiring" was shot? There was a battle going on and the man was so modest and retiring that he went to the rear of the fight—and they called him a coward and shot him dead! I am not going to call you a coward, nor to shoot you! Still, I wish you would not get into the rear so much. While souls are perishing, it does not do to be reserved and retiring! A man who can swim and would let his fellow man sink would hardly be excused if he said, "I was so retiring that I could not push myself upon him. I never had the good man's card and I did not want to force myself upon him without an introduction, so I let him drown. I was very sorry, but still, I never was a pushing person."

Are you going to let men be damned? Are you going to let the masses of people in this city perish in their sins? If so, God have mercy upon you! The question will not be, "What will become of London in this case?" But the question will be, "What will become of you who let men die in their sins without trying to rescue them?" Carry the war into the enemy's country! Speak to people whom you do not know, whom you have never seen before, as Jesus did! Speak to that woman whom you meet casually and Providentially, as He did! Speak to her when the last thing she wants is that you should speak to her. Speak out at once and let yours be an aggressive Christianity that is prompt to seize every opportunity of doing good! What a model Soul-Winner, then, you have here!

Next, the Savior was bold, but He was also wise. You cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom of our blessed Lord that He spoke to this woman while she was alone. He could not have said to her what He said and she would never have said to Him what she said, if anybody else had been there. It was necessary that this interview be held in private. But, oh, you who are so zealous that you are imprudent, you who would gladly win souls but attempt the task without that care which ought to come naturally to every sensible and prudent man, remember that although Christ spoke alone with this woman, it was in broad daylight, at twelve o'clock, by the well. If some people had been as prudent as the Savior was, they could have afforded to be as zealous as they have been! In the case of such a woman as this, I would have you remember the Savior's wisdom as well as His wondrous condescension!

With Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, He speaks by night, but with the harlot of Samaria He speaks by day. The soul-winner looks about him, he is wise in his plan of going to work. There are fish that will only bite in troubled waters. There are some that are not to be taken except at night and there are others that are only to be caught by daylight. Fit yourself to the case of the person you are seeking to bless! I do not say be so prudent that you will run no risk, but I will say, be so prudent, especially in certain difficult cases, that you run no unnecessary risk! The Savior could not have selected a better time for talking to such a person—you will see at once that if even the

disciples marveled that He spoke with the woman—it was infinitely wise on His part that it was done at the well side and done at noon.

O Soul-Winners, win souls any way you can! Be willing to risk your own reputation, if necessary, to win them, but it is not necessary, or not usually necessary, and it never should be done except when it is necessary. Your Savior sets you that wise example. Follow Him in this speaking to people singly. I do so much of public preaching that, perhaps, I lose a measure of adaptation for private conversation, yet have I sometimes done the most successful work I have ever done in private rather than in public! Sitting at a table, I have marked a young man who was a stranger to me, and I have asked him to accompany me to the place where I was to preach. I did not know the way and I asked him to walk with me. A few words on the road won him for Christ and he has been, ever since, an earnest upholder of the Gospel and a very useful one! I do not know whether any were saved by the sermon, but I know that one was converted by the talk on the way there!

I know an Evangelist who is useful in his public service, but he is also greatly useful to the families in the homes where he stays. Almost in every case the minister's sons and daughters are converted before he leaves the house, or the servant or a visitor is won by his private conversation. I like that kind of work! Oh, that we all studied this art of speaking to persons one by one! So I say to you, again, here is the model Soul-Winner—copy His example.

Observe how the Savior begins with this woman—"Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink." When you are fishing, it is not always wise to throw your fly straight at the fish's mouth. Try him a little on one side, and then a little on the other side, and maybe, presently, you will get a bite. So the Savior does not begin by saying to her, "You are a sinful woman." Oh, dear, none but an amateur in such a business would begin like that! Neither did He begin by saying, "Now, good mistress, I am the Messiah." Well, that was the truth, was it not? Yes, but that was not to come first—He began by saying, "Give Me a drink." He must first attract her attention and influence her mind—then would come the closer work of probing her conscience and changing her heart!

It was only a very ordinary, commonplace request that Jesus made. "Give Me a drink." It might have occurred to any one of you to say it, but not to use it as He did. Yet it was a word that was wisely chosen, for it fitted in with the woman's thoughts. She was thinking about drawing water and Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." There could be no more suitable metaphor or mode of expression than that of water and drinking if you are talking to a person who has come to draw water for herself or others to drink.

Besides that, it was an exceedingly pregnant expression, as full of meaning as an egg is full of meat. "Give Me a drink." It contained much within itself. It gave the Savior as wide a field as He could wish for to talk to her about her spiritual thirst, and about that Living Water which He could put within her, which would abide in her, and be a well—not one to which she should come—but a well that she would carry about with her and that would be always springing up within her unto everlasting life! So let us learn how to begin wisely with observations that are apparently commonplace, but such as will easily lead to higher things.

I think that the Savior, as the model Soul-Winner, is also to be imitated in that at the very beginning He broke down a barrier. The Lord Jesus Christ was evidently dressed as a Jew and this woman came out of Samaria. Now, at once, there was a barrier between the two, for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Our Lord broke through that caste by saying to her, "Give Me a drink." No other expression would do this so well, for to eat and to drink with persons was, after the Oriental fashion, to come into communion with them. "Give Me a drink," therefore, shook off from Him all Judaism which would separate Him from this Samaritan. If you are going to try to win people for Christ, always seek to break down everything that would separate. Are you a man of wealth? Well, I do not believe in converting souls by making your diamond rings glitter and flash when you are talking to workingmen.

Are you a scientific man? Now, that word of 17 syllables that you have been so fond of—do not use it, but say something very plain and simple! Or do you happen to belong to any political party? Do not bring that question in—you will not win souls that way—you will be more likely to excite

prejudice and opposition. If I were talking to the French, I would devoutly wish I were a Frenchman. If I had to win a German, I should wish to know as much of the idiosyncrasies of that nation as I possibly could. I shall never be ashamed of being an Englishman, but if I could win more souls by being a Dutchman, or a Zulu, I would gladly have any kind of nationality, that I might get at the hearts of men! And our Lord Jesus acted just in that spirit when He said to the woman, "Give Me a drink." He sank the noble dignity of being a Jew—for, mark you, a Jew is the aristocrat of God—Jesus, even in His humanity, came of a race that is made up of the oldest and noblest of earthly nobility, but He dropped that dignity in order that He might talk to this Samaritan woman who was nothing better than a mongrel, for her race was made up of nobody knows what! They pretended to be Jewish when there was anything to get by so doing—and to be Gentile whenever the Jews were in any kind of difficulties. But Jesus did not snub her, nor did He hint that she was in the least degree inferior to Himself. There is no winning souls in any other way than as the Savior won them. God teach us how to win them!

This must suffice for that first point, the model Soul-Winner.

II. Now for just a few minutes I want to exhibit our Divine Lord and Master in another light. Not this time as the model Soul-Winner, but as THE MASTER OF CONDESCENSION. He seems to me to be so thoughtful—this blessed Lord of ours, the Son of God, the Creator, the First-Begotten of God.

He takes His seat there on the well in weariness and thirst. Do you not see Him almost ready to faint? What condescension this was, that He was so straitened that He had not even a drink of water, or the means to get it. Maker of all springs! Bearer of the key of the rain! Lord of the ocean and yet He needs water to drink? What a stoop is this, for your Lord and mine to come to this! When He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head," He had come very low, but now, even the water, which is such a common thing around us that it ripples from the hills and streams through the vales—even that has fled from Him—and He says, "Give Me a drink." Bless your Lord, O you who love Him! Kiss His feet and wonder at His marvelous condescension!

I wonder at His condescension, next, that He not only came into such straitness, but that He was so humble as to ask for a drink of water. He that hears prayer, Himself prays! He that listens to the cries of His redeemed and, with the fullness of His majestic bounty, opens His hands and supplies the needs of every living thing, sits there and says to the woman, "Give Me a drink." O Master, how You have straitened Yourself! How You have humbled Yourself, that You should be a beggar of one of Your own creatures, asking for a sip of water!

Admire that condescension still more when you think that HE asked it of her, of her who had had five husbands and he with whom she was living was not her husband! Yet Jesus says to her, "Give Me a drink." Some of you good women would not have touched her with a pair of tongs, would you? And some of you good men would have passed by her on the other side. Jesus, however, was not only willing to give to her, but He was willing to receive from her! He would put Himself under obligation to a Samaritan sinner! So He says to her, who was not fit to come near Him to unloose the laces of His shoes—John the Baptist said that He was not worthy to do that—but what was she worthy to do? Yet Jesus says even to her, "Give Me a drink."

Then notice His condescension, again, when she answers Him tartly with a reply that was perhaps civil in tone, but that was virtually a refusal, He did not upbraid her. He did not say to her, "Oh, you cruel woman!" No, not a syllable or look of reproof did He give her. He needed not the water that was in the well—He meant to have her heart—and He did have it and, therefore, He went on to speak to her. Is not that a beautiful text, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not"? So the Savior will not give this woman a word of upbraiding—she shall be led to upbraid herself—but it shall be for her sin! She shall not be upbraided for her ungenerous reply that the Savior has passed over.

This is the crown of Christ's condescension, that He led her not to do what He asked her to do, but He led her to confess her sin. He said, "Give Me a drink," but apparently she did not let down that

waterpot, neither did He put it to His lips, parched as they were. But He led her to her confession of sin, her faith in Him, her running to call the men—and all this gave Him meat to eat and water to drink that others knew not of! He had won a soul and this had refreshed Him after His weariness. We do not hear of His being weary any more—He shook it all off at sight of that sinner saved! He was Himself, again, for He had received what He would die to win. He had received a heart returning to the great Father, He had found a soul that trusted in Him!

I wish that I knew how to preach better so that I might lead you to my Master, for I do want you to glorify Him. I have often tried to set Him before you as He hung upon the Cross, and as He will come again in His glorious Second Advent. But just now I ask you to adore Him in His weariness as He sits upon the well! He is never lovelier than in His lowliness. There is a grandeur about Him when He rides to battle on His white horse and summons the kites and eagles to devour the slain, but we start back from that terrible vision of majesty to the attractiveness of His Love when He thus humbles Himself and makes Himself of no reputation and talks with a fallen woman! Seeing Him thus condescending, we love, reverence, admire and adore Him! Let us do so now.

III. I shall have done when I have taken up my third point with considerable brevity, but with no little earnestness. It is this. You have seen the model Soul-Winner and the Master of condescension. Let us now notice THE MANNER OF THE WORKING OF GRACE with the view that we may see it here this evening.

So you have come here, my Friend. You have not come to be saved. Oh, no! That is very far from your mind. You came to see the place, you came to look at a building to which a crowd will come and listen to a minister of the Gospel. Yes, yes, but even that is no reason why you should not get a blessing, for this woman only came to draw water. “There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.” She had no desire to see Jesus, or to learn of Him. She was only looking for water! Saul went to seek his father’s asses and found a kingdom! So you may find what you never sought and you may be found of Him whom you never sought!

Listen! Open your ears! Perhaps your Day of Grace has come and the great silver bell is striking the hour of your salvation—I hope that it is so. It may be so, though you have no thought of it. You are not converted, you are not a Christian, but you would like to do good in the world, would you not? You desire to do some kindly action, something generous. I have known that thought arise in a great many who yet did not know the Lord. Some people will not ask an unconverted person to give money. I would, for my Master said to a woman who was a great sinner, “Give Me a drink.” It may be to the everlasting good of some of you to do something for the Church of God, to do something for the Christ of God! Before you know where you are, it may be that you will commit yourselves by some kindly act. I wish you would do so.

The way to win a person to yourself is not always to do him good, but to let him do you good. Jesus knew that, so He began by saying, “Give Me a drink.” So sometimes it may be wise—and I would try it now—to say to some of you, “You would like to do someone good, would you not? You would like to do some kindly action.” Well, notice, the Master is here, tonight, and He has come with much the same cry as He came to the Samaritan woman. Jesus says to you, “Give Me a drink.” “Oh,” you say, “What could I give Christ to drink? If He were here, I would gladly give Him a drink. I am sure that if I were at my cottage door and He passed by on a dusty day, I would gladly turn the handle of the well and bring up a bucket of water. Though I am not converted, I would do that.” Well, dear Heart, you may do that! I want you to do it! It is your privilege to refresh the very heart of Christ! If you were not a sinner, you could not do it, but being a guilty sinner, you can do it! Your very guilt and sin give you the possibility of refreshing Him. “How?” you ask. Why, repent of your sin! Have done with it, quit it, turn from it. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” It does not say that the angels rejoice, though I have no doubt that they do, but it is said, “There is joy in the presence of the angels.” That is, the angels see the joy of Christ when a sinner repents! They spy it out and notice it. If you let fall a tear of repentance. If in your heart there is a sense of shame because of your sin. If in your soul there is the resolve to escape from it, you have refreshed Him!

Next, guilty as you are, you can refresh Him by seeking salvation from Him. Did He not say to the woman, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water"? And when she said to Jesus, "Sir, give me this water," that refreshed Him! Ask this of Him, now, quietly in your soul. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit persuade you to do so! Cry to Him to save you! Say, "Lord Jesus, save me! I am but a girl and careless, but save me." "I am a young man and thoughtless, but save me tonight." By so doing, you have given Him a drink, and He is already refreshed! The sweetest drink of all is when you perceive that He is the Christ, and that God has sent Him to save you—and you give yourself up to be saved by Him!

Trust Him now—may the good Spirit lead you to trust Him now! So will you refresh Him—this is the recompense for all His wounds and even for His death—when sinful souls come and trust Him. I remember hearing of one who, while walking the fields, found a little bird fly into his bosom. He could not understand why the creature should come there, but when he looked up, there was a hawk which had pursued the bird, and the little thing had flown into the bosom of the man for shelter. What do you think? Did the man tear it in pieces? No. He kept it safely till he had taken it away from the place where the hawk was—and then he gave it its liberty again. The Lord Jesus Christ will do just that with you if you trust Him! Sin pursues you—fly to His bosom, for only there are you safe!

I have heard of a great king who had pitched his royal pavilion and when he was about to move it, he found that a bird had come and built its nest there. He was such a king that, although the pavilion was of silk, he ordered his soldiers not to take it down until that bird's young ones were hatched and could fly. I love the generosity of a prince who will act like that, but my Lord is a nobler and kinder Prince than all others! Oh, what a Prince He is for generosity! Poor bird, if you will dare to trust Him and make your nest in the pavilion where He dwells, you shall never be destroyed, nor your hope, either, but you shall be safe forever!

Oh, that I knew how to bring you to Christ, dear Hearers! This is a hot summer's night and you are weary, perhaps, of my talking, but I would not mind that if I could bring you to Jesus! Oh, that I might have fruit from this sermon! This week I believe I might say that I have met and heard of hundreds who, in past years, have been brought to the Savior by the printed sermons. They came to me, grasped my hand, and thanked me—and I praised God—but then I thought, "Yes, God did bless me, and He has blessed the printed sermons, but I want present fruit, and to see sinners, now, close in with Christ and be eternally saved." Is all that I preach to you only a dream or a fiction? Then, fling it away from you and despise both it and me! But if it is true and if I only tell you of a true salvation, and a true Savior, come and have it, come and trust Him now, for He casts out none who come to Him! May this be the deciding time with many of you, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.