

The Woman at the Well of Samaria

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"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." John 4:10

What a strange chain of providential circumstances is connected with the calling and justification of every vessel of mercy! Could we take a review of all the links in that widely extended chain, even as far as each of us is individually concerned, we should be astonished at their number, connection, and variety; and we should see that God's dealings with us in providence to bring us to the appointed spot where he first met with our souls, were no less remarkable than his subsequent dealings with us in grace. What a remarkable illustration have we of this fact in the calling of the woman of Samaria! What a chain of providential circumstances was connected with the Lord's meeting her at the well of Sychar!

Let us endeavour to trace out a few of the links of this marvellous chain which brought a poor adulteress into living union and communion with the Son of God.

1. The *first link* in the chain, as recorded by the Spirit, was the envy and enmity of the Pharisees. We read, "When the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee." (Ver. 1-3.) The envy and hatred of the Pharisees, excited by the success of the Lord's ministry and the increasing number of his disciples (his "time being not yet come"), drove him, so to speak, out of Judea into

Galilee.

2. "And he must needs go through Samaria." This is the *second link* which the Holy Ghost has recorded. What was this "*needs be*" that he should go through Samaria? There were two reasons. One was because Samaria lay in the road, and intervened between Judea and Galilee; so that, without taking a long circuit, Jesus could not reach Galilee without passing through it. That was the *natural* "needs be." But there was a *spiritual* "needs be" beyond any geographical reason, and that was, *because he had to meet a vessel of mercy there.*

3. "Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there." His reaching a city of Samaria, called Sychar, and the well being there, was the *third link* of this providential chain. In fact, we may carry our thoughts back to the very digging of the well; and beyond that, to the purchase of the land by Jacob of the sons of Hamor (Gen. 33:19); for had not Jacob bought the land and dug the well, there would have been a link wanting in this divine chain. But the Lord coming to the city where this well was, was another link of this chain of everlasting love.

4. "Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well." Here is a *fourth link* in the chain of predestination—the weariness of the Son of Man. And what a subject of contemplation does this open to us! The weariness of Jesus! How it shews us that he had a nature like our own; not, indeed, a sinful, fallen nature, but one that hungered, thirsted, was wearied, wept, agonized, bled, and died!

5. "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." Here we have a *fifth link* of

this divine chain—the woman coming out to draw water. And we may observe that there was something unusual in her coming out at this time. We read, "it was about the sixth hour," that is, twelve o'clock, or what we call noonday. It appears from another part of Scripture that this was a very unusual time for women to come to draw water. Thus, we read, Gen. 24:11, "And he made his camels to kneel down without the city, by a well of water, *at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.*" The evening being the cool part of the day, was the time in those countries when the women went out to draw water for their households and cattle; and therefore we read, Gen. 29:7, 8, that Jacob said, "Lo, it is yet *high day*, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them. And they said, we cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep." Now, what a remarkable circumstance it was, that this woman should depart from her usual custom, so as to come and draw water at this early part of the day! What some call a very trifling "accident" might have been connected with it: it might have been an impulse on her mind; or even the circumstance of one of her children or herself having upset the pitcher; such a trifling occurrence as this might have brought her to the well at this unusual time, and been the hinge on which the salvation of her soul turned.

6. "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." The Lord of life and glory asking her for water, (O what condescension!) was another link of this chain.

7. "For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat." Here we may observe a further link; for their absence gave him an opportunity to converse more freely with the woman.

8. Then comes the conversation, which forms the last link that I need point out, arising from the woman expressing her surprise that he, being a Jew, asked drink of her, who was a woman of Samaria; "for the Jews," the Apostles informs us, "have no dealings with the Samaritans." And this leads us at once to our text, where we find the Lord saying to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

Three things seem observable in the text. We find, *first*, what we may call a *Preliminary*; (observe that I do not use the word *condition*;) "*if thou knewest* the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink." Then follows, *secondly*, what would have taken place if she had known it, a *Request*, "Thou wouldest have *asked* of him." And then, *thirdly*, *The granting of the request*; "He would have *given* thee living water." If the Lord, then, enables me thus to go through my subject, I shall endeavour to trace out the words of the text in the way I have pointed out.

I.—We will look then, *first*, at the *Preliminary*. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink." Now, you will observe, that the Lord did not reproach her for not knowing these two things. He did not say, she ought to have known them; he did not reprove her for the want of this knowledge. But he merely tells her, if she had known them, then certain circumstances would have followed. So he speaks with respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." (Luke 19:42.) He did not reprove Jerusalem for not knowing; he did not say, "It was her duty to have known." He merely said, "If thou hadst known," then this and that would have followed. So we may

thus paraphrase what the Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "If thou knewest the gift of God!"—if it had been thy mercy to have known its value; if the Lord had opened thine eyes to see it, and given thee a heart to feel it; if this preliminary had been wrought in thy heart and conscience, then there would have followed two things—"thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

Now, what did the woman not know? She did not know, first, *the gift of God*; and secondly, she did not know *the Person* of him that spake to her. Thus, to know these two things—the gift of God, and the Person of Jesus, are the two grand preliminaries in order to ask of him, and in order to a spiritual reception of the mercies and blessings which he has to bestow.

1. What is meant, then, by the expression, "*the gift of God*," of which this poor woman was ignorant? We read, Rom. 6:23, "the wages of sin is death; but *the gift of God is eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord." The "gift of God," then, is eternal life; and this is that which every quickened soul is taught by the Spirit first to seek after; as Bunyan represents his Pilgrim stopping his ears, and running across the plain, crying, "Life, life, eternal life!" Eternal life was the prize he had in view; that was the goal to which he was directing his steps.

But what is meant by the expression, "*eternal life*?" Is it something future, something in dim prospect, something to be enjoyed in heaven, and not to be known here below? It is true that eternal life is to be enjoyed in heaven; it is true that the full manifestation of it is reserved for the other side of the grave. But "eternal life" begins below. "He that believeth on me hath," (not, *shall have*) "everlasting life."

(John 6:47.) "I give unto my sheep," (not, I *shall give*) "eternal life." (John 10:28.)

But the Lord himself tells us what "eternal life" is in those remarkable words, "This is life eternal; that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) "The gift of God," then, is eternal life in the soul. It is not something reserved for the future, but something felt, known, and enjoyed in this time state. And we may define it in one short sentence as *the life of God in the soul*, the communication of grace, mercy, and truth out of the fulness of Jesus. This is the "*gift of God*," not obtained by human merit, not earned by creature doings, not to be clambered up to by the ladder of our own righteousness; but a free grant to the objects of mercy, according to those words, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give *eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*" (John 17:2.)

Now, this "gift of God" the woman of Samaria knew not; she had never received a divine communication of it to her soul; she had never known its nature, felt its sweetness, or experienced its power; nay more, she had never seen or known even the necessity of it. And therefore, on the one hand, having never felt its operation; and, on the other, having never felt her need of its operation, she was carnal, sensual, and dead in sin.

Thus, the first grand preliminary to ask of Jesus what he has to bestow, is, "to know the gift of God." But before we can know the "gift of God," we must be brought to feel that eternal life cannot be attained to by the exertions of the creature. Till we are brought to know it is "*the gift of God*," we can never succeed in the first great preliminary; we can never utter one request, except hypocritically, that God

would give it us. To this point, then, God brings all his elect people—to know and feel that they cannot by anything they have done, or can do, obtain eternal life. Their prayers, tears, fastings, good deeds, alms givings, resolutions of amendment and obedience—all these things are utterly ineffectual to bring eternal life into the soul. We cannot by them regain the paradise we have lost. And this is not to be merely learned as a doctrine in the brain, but it must be experienced, and wrought with divine power as a certain truth in the conscience. As such it is usually learnt through a succession of failures; by trying to obey the precepts, and finding spiritual obedience impossible; endeavouring to be holy, and discovering little else but sin and corruption; labouring to keep the law, and hearing its curses sounding continually in the ears; striving to please God, yet daily and hourly doing those things that the conscience testifies against as most displeasing to him. So that, under divine teaching, (and there is no other worth the name,) by a long and painful succession of failures and bankruptcies, the soul learns at last that eternal life is *the gift* of God. It is a grand point to be taught this. To have our free-will smashed all to shivers, our self-righteousness shattered to a thousand pieces, and we brought helpless and hopeless to feel, "that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing:" what a profitable lesson is this! For want of this divine teaching in the soul, there is so much of the leaven of pharisaism even in the hearts of God's people, so much lurking Arminianism, so much talk about doings and duties, independent of, and distinct from the work and grace of God in the conscience.

But we must go a step beyond this. We must advance beyond the mere knowledge, through the want and absence of it, that eternal life is the gift of God; we must know something of *its nature* by the divine reception of it into our conscience. In a word, we do not know what "the gift of God"

really is, till we have it in our hands; we do not know what eternal life is, till it is felt operating with a divine power in our consciences. It is in grace, as in nature; there are many things of which we have heard, and thus can form some idea of them: but we do not really know them till we have seen them. We may read, for instance, in books of travels, of foreign countries, and their beautiful prospects, noble towns, and fine cathedrals; but what do we know of them till we have seen them with our own eyes? So spiritually, we may know, in the judgment, that salvation is all of grace, that "the election hath obtained it," and that eternal life is the gift of God. But what is all that, if we get no farther? No more than knowing about some foreign country by reading a description of it in a book, or representing to ourselves a building by merely looking at an engraving of it. We cannot know the *nature*, though we may know the *necessity*, of the gift of God, till we experience its power as revealed and shed abroad in our soul. *Then* we know some measure of the gift of God when we feel eternal life flowing through our spiritual veins. How do I know I live naturally? Is not my participation of natural life known to me by an internal consciousness that I possess it? I know I live, because I feel that I live. And so, if we have spiritual life, there will be, at times and seasons, an internal consciousness that we have it; we shall feel the spiritual heart beat, and the spiritual lungs breathe, and the spiritual eyes see, and the spiritual ears hear: in a word, we shall be internally conscious of those emotions and sensations which are peculiar to the life of God in the soul. Spiritual life will be seen in its own light, felt in its own power, and shine forth in its own testimony. The little that we do know (and it is indeed for the most part but a little) makes us long for more of it. If ever we have received "the gift of God" into our conscience; if ever we have felt the mysterious operation of divine life in our hearts; if ever we have known the sweet emotions and peculiar sensations by

which it manifests itself, it has killed us to all other religions. We say of this inward life with Mr. Hart on another subject:—

"May I be always thus devout,
Be this religion mine."

When once, by the operation of the Spirit on our conscience, we have been stripped of formality, superstition, self-righteousness, hypocrisy, presumption, and the other delusions of the flesh that hide themselves under the mask of religion, we have felt the difference between having a name to live while dead, and the power of vital godliness; and as a measure of divine life has flowed into the heart out of the fulness of the Son of God, we want no other religion but that which stands in the power of God; by that alone can we live, and by that alone we feel that we can die. And, at last, we are brought to this conviction and solemn conclusion, that there is no other religion but that which consists in the continued teachings of the Spirit, and the communications of the life of God to the soul.

But let us look a little deeper into the life of God, and in what it consists. The Lord himself tells us, that it mainly consists of two branches, the knowledge of "the only true God,"—and of "Jesus Christ whom he has sent." To know, then, God the Father by some manifestation of his solemn presence to our hearts; to fear his great and terrible Majesty; to stand in holy awe and godly reverence of his dread perfections; to worship him in spirit and in truth; to feel his heart-searching eye looking down into our very conscience; to believe that he is about our path, and around our bed, and spieth out all our ways; to see that he is holy, just and righteous, and will by no means clear the guilty—is to "know," in a measure, "*the only true God.*" But specially to know him as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, by a personal discovery of his

superabounding grace to us in the Son of his love, is to fill up the measure of this first branch of eternal life. And the other branch is, to "*know Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.*" To know, then, by a divine revelation, the glorious Person and finished work of Christ; to know his dying love and atoning blood; to know him as suffering and agonizing for our sins; to know the sympathy and compassion of his broken heart; to know the glories of his divine nature shining through the veil of his flesh; to know who and what the Son of God is by a special manifestation of him to the heart and conscience,—this is the second branch of eternal life.

And with this eternal life are connected all the actings of faith in the soul, all the anchorings of hope in the heart, and all the flowings forth of love; nay, every tear of genuine contrition that flows down the cheeks, every sigh of godly sorrow that heaves from the bosom, every cry and groan under a body of sin and death, every breath of spiritual prayer that comes from the heart; every casting of our souls upon him who is "mighty to save;" all submission to and reception of him; all communion with him, all enjoyment of him, and all the inward embracements of him in his covenant characters, suitability, and preciousness—each and all of these actings of the soul toward him spring from a knowledge of him, and issue from, as well as end in eternal life! And the soul that is privileged to enjoy these communications, is an "heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ."

Now, this poor creature at the well of Sychar, living in ignorance and sin, did not "know the gift of God." She came there merely to draw water, thinking perhaps of her children, or of the world, of her dead husbands, or living paramour, but at any rate buried in sin and self; and if she had any notion about religion, superstition, formality, and ignorance

("Ye worship ye know not what") was the sum and substance of it all; therefore she knew not the gift of God. Do you and I know it? That is the point. Do you and I know it, not only by the want of it, but by the possession of it? not only as seeing ourselves lost without it, but by the internal feelings which this gift creates wherever it is shed abroad?

2. But there was another thing that she knew not. She was ignorant of *the Person* of him who said unto her, "Give me to drink." The veil of darkness was over her heart. She perceived not Deity shining through the veil of the humanity; for her eyes were holden that she saw not the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. She was not favoured to behold his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) She knew not who Jesus was; she probably thought him to be some poor travelling Jew, some itinerant mechanic, as the Lord doubtless appeared in her eyes. She was surprised indeed that he should break through that rigid prejudice of the Jews against the Samaritans, and ask her to give him drink; but she saw nothing beyond this. But had she known who he was; had God the Spirit, in mercy, anointed her eyes with divine eye-salve; had he, in love, stripped the veil from off her heart, shone into her soul, and revealed to her who he was that spake to her at the well, then she would "have asked of him." But from her ignorance of his Divine Person, she had no request to make; for the needful preliminary was wanting. Nor can we make any request of Jesus, till we know who he is. And how can we know it except by divine revelation? For there is no truth more certain than this in God's word, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matt. 11:27.) We may have floating ideas in our mind about Christ; his name may be often, even to fulsomeness, upon our lips; but we cannot know him, except

by a personal discovery of him to our heart and conscience. But let us see more particularly what she was ignorant of. She did not know, first of all, *his Divine Person*. That is a point for which latterly I have been led very much to contend, because I see so much of vital godliness wrapped up in that glorious mystery, "God manifest in the flesh." And if a man does not know, by a divine discovery, something of the Person of Christ, he is wandering here and there altogether in the dark; and knows not whither he goeth, for darkness hath blinded his eyes. Now, the glorious Person of Christ consists in the union of his divine to a human nature; not a sinful nature, God forbid; may that heresy sink to the lowest hell; but a holy, spotless nature, according to those words, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also *that Holy Thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35.) Blessed be God for those words! What a bulwark they are against error and heresy on this vital point! That holy nature never had any existence independent of, or previous to, its union with the divine Person of the Son of God. It is not therefore a *person*, but a *nature*, a body prepared (Heb. 10:5); a "Holy Thing," begotten by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and taken into union with the divine Person of the only-begotten Son of God. Jesus thus became Immanuel, "God with us;" perfect Deity and perfect humanity in one glorious, undivided Person. Now this is the great "mystery of godliness;" and he that errs here errs everywhere; he who stumbles here, stumbles at the very foundation-stone; he that denies this is not taught by God the Spirit; and if he live and die denying it, or ignorant of it, will never be where that glorious Immanuel now is, at the right hand of the Father. The "Christ of God," is not the Christ of the Pre-existerian, of the Arian, or of the Sabellian. Nor is he a Son by office, or by covenant engagements; but a son by nature and essence, "the Son of

the Father, in truth and love," who came forth from his bosom to take a spotless human nature, in which he could suffer, bleed, and die.

But this poor creature, for the want of divine illumination, did not know this glorious Immanuel. He was to her, as the Prophet speaks, "a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, and there was no beauty in him that she should desire him." (Isa. 53:3.) He appeared to her but as a poor despised Jew, as he is to thousands and millions in our day. Had she seen *who he was* by the eye of faith, and been favoured by a special revelation of his glorious Person, her faith would have received the great mystery of godliness, her hope would have taken firm anchorage in his glorious Person, and the love and affection of her soul would have flowed out to him as the glorious Immanuel "God with us." But she knew not who the Man of Sorrows was, and perceived not Deity shining through that visage more marred than any man's. Depend upon it, Satan will ply all his arts and arms against the Person of Christ; depend upon it, if you are wrong here, you are wrong everywhere; if you are right here by the teachings of the Spirit, you are right for eternity. If you have received into your heart, by the special revelation of God the Spirit, a knowledge of Christ's glorious Person, you are an heir of glory; but without it, eternal destruction will be your portion. How firm are the Scriptures here. "If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24.) "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." (1 John 2:23.) "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." (4:15.) "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (5:12.)

But again. She knew not, from the want of divine teaching,

that he was *the divinely appointed Mediator between God and man*. She did not know that he had come forth from the bosom of the Father, where he had lain from all eternity, and had come down to this world to save his Church and Bride from the lowest hell. She did not know and feel in her heart that he who stood before her at the well was the only Mediator and Intercessor between God and man. She did not see that the weary traveller was the Great High Priest over the house of God, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and that out of his fulness all his people should receive, and grace for grace.

Now, my friends, no sooner has living faith embraced the Person of Jesus (and that is the first object which faith lays hold of), than it embraces him as the divinely appointed Mediator. And how sweet and suitable is such a Mediator to a poor, sinful, crawling reptile, a wretch defiled, morning, noon, and night, with everything foul and filthy, who has broken the law of God a million times, and cannot keep it a single moment! 'How can I,' argues the soul, 'so full of sin and depravity, how can I approach with acceptance the great, glorious, and holy Jehovah? I cannot, I dare not!' But when it sees, by the eye of faith, a divinely-appointed Mediator, a glorious Intercessor, a great High Priest over the house of God: One that has shed his blood to put away sin; One who has righteousness to justify, and has a fulness of grace and glory to give to the poor, needy, and naked: as faith sees, as hope embraces, as love enjoys this, there is a coming to God through this divine Mediator; as the Apostle saith, "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph. 2:18.) "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5.) "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." (1 Peter 1:21.) Our only access to God is

through the Mediator whom he hath appointed. All your prayers, tears, sighs, and groans; all your religious thoughts, acts, and words, are worthless, utterly worthless, unless perfumed by the intercession of the only-begotten Son of God. See to this point: and I would, in all affection, charge it upon your conscience, that you look well how you approach the Father. Do you approach him through the Son of his love? Is there a solemn feeling in your heart, when you draw near to the throne, that you approach only through Jesus? Is there a believing reception of his atoning blood into your conscience as the only sacrifice that purges away sin, and of his justifying righteousness as the only robe of acceptance before God? See to it well, examine your conscience well upon this matter, for it is vital ground. See that you approach the Father through the Son of his love, and through him alone; for depend upon it, if you approach in any other way, you are but a presumptuous professor; there is no holy fire burning on the altar of your soul; nor will any answer come down but through this divinely appointed way.

Nor did this poor sinner at Jacob's well know what stores of mercy and grace were locked up in the bosom of Jesus. She did not know him, as full of love, sympathy, and compassion. She did not know him as tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. She did not know that he was able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. She did not know his great and glorious name as "mighty to save." She did not know the pity, kindness, gentleness, and tenderness that beat in his heart, and flowed out from his bosom towards every vessel of mercy. He was no austere Pharisee, nor rigid law-giver, but a tender-hearted Saviour. But this she knew not.

II.—There are two grand preliminaries, then, to every spiritual request. "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." All spiritual prayer, then, and supplication, depends upon a knowledge of these two things—a knowledge of the gift of God, and a knowledge of the Person of Jesus. What a light this casts upon what spiritual prayer is! How many persons satisfy their conscience with what they call prayer! They get up in the morning and lie down at night, and say a few words, which they call prayer, without thought or care to receive an answer of mercy and peace. Like persons in the habit of taking laudanum, they are uneasy till conscience has had its morning and evening dose of reading and prayer. Nay, even some of God's people are here. Their consciences are too much like the stomach of the opium-eater, or of the crying child which the mother stills with Daffy's Elixir. I am not against regular seasons of reading and prayer, for I try daily to practise them; but I cannot rest in the mere form. True prayer is far beyond time, posture, or place; it is something deeper, something higher, and something more spiritual and supernatural. In a word, it is the gift of God, who alone can pour upon the heart "the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Wherever God the Spirit is our Teacher, he shews to us that spiritual and eternal life is the gift of God, and raises up in our minds a divine craving after a personal enjoyment of it. He also shews us the Person of Jesus as a divinely-appointed Mediator. And the same Spirit that thus reveals him in the heart, is also "the Spirit of grace and of supplications;" and teaches us how to pray, and what to pray for; as we read, (Rom. 8:26,) "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Thus, when we begin to feel what the gift of God is; and to know by divine teaching something of the glorious Person and work of Jesus, we begin spiritually to ask. And O, what a field of wants becomes opened up to the child of God, when the

Spirit causes him to walk in the field of spiritual requests! The reason why there is so little prayer is, because there is so little felt necessity. It is necessity that forces prayer out of their hearts. It is when we feel certain that we cannot communicate a wished-for blessing to ourselves, yet are sensible God can bestow it upon us, and that in a moment, that makes us spiritually groan our desires into the bosom of God. And this is the reason why God's people have to walk in such paths of tribulation, and have to wade through such heavy afflictions, temptations, and perplexities; and why they feel the way to heaven to be so rough, rugged, and narrow. It is to draw out the desires and petitions of their heart, that they may spread them before the throne. If a man can stand up, in a pulpit or out of it, without any necessities, or any feeling sense of his own ignorance and helplessness, and the deep depravity of his nature, how can he, with any consistency or an honest conscience, utter a word of prayer before God? This is the reason of so many mill-horse prayers in the pulpit, the pew, and the parlour. But just in proportion as the Lord the Spirit leads us into a knowledge of these two things—a knowledge of our wants, and of the supply of those wants; a knowledge of our malady, and of the appointed remedy; a knowledge of our ruin, and of the glorious salvation of the Son of God, just in proportion as the Spirit of God leads us into a knowledge of these two branches of divine teaching, will spiritual prayer rise up in our hearts. And out of our bosoms these two things can never be separated or dissociated. Men may say "We must not look at our depraved and sinful hearts; Christ is all in all." But what is Christ to me, except in connection with my wants? If I never feel my sinfulness, what do I want of his blood to purge my conscience? If I never feel my helplessness, how can I want his strength to be made perfect in weakness? If I never know myself to be a blind, ignorant fool, can I want him to be my manifested wisdom? If I am

never harassed by Satan's temptations, if I never groan under the body of sin and death, should I want smiles from his countenance, and words from his gracious lips? Men dare not in word dethrone Jesus; they take care not to do that: but they will take away everything that makes him precious to a believer. They dare not say that he is not the Son of God, that his blood does not purge from sin, that his righteousness does not justify, and that a sweet enjoyment of his love is not to be felt in the soul: nay, these things they advocate, and pretend to make their boast of. But when we come to the wants, the maladies, and the necessities of the soul, to which all Christ's glorious perfections are suited, "O," say they, "we do not want to hear about corruption." But what are such speeches but really to dethrone Jesus? Why is he now sitting on a throne of mercy and grace? Is it not for the poor and needy, the helpless and the hopeless, the lost and undone? Is it not for the sin-sick and the self-sick? Is he not sitting on his mediatorial throne on purpose to save and bless such? If, then, you slight and despise the malady, you slight and despise the remedy also. To ridicule and condemn the sighs and cries of God's distressed people is to help Satan to remove Christ from his throne of mercy and grace, and dispossess him of his glories as the ever-living Mediator between God and man. When I walk through the streets of this city, and see the medicines in the chemists' shops, do I not know there are maladies to which they are suited? If sickness and disease were to cease in the nation, would not these drugs be needless? If there were no maladies, would not all the chemists' shops be closed at once? And would not all medical aid and skill cease too with the absence of the diseases they are employed to cure? So spiritually: if I have no maladies, no sins, no griefs, no temptations, no afflictions, no sorrows, what do I want to know of God's appointed remedy? If I have no felt sense of my misery and ruin, Christ is to me but a name, as he is to many who have him

continually on their lips. So that, to speak against all experience of the malady, and brand it with the name of "corruption," is nothing but a device of Satan to dethrone the Lord of life and glory, and to thrust him from the right hand of the Father as the Saviour of the lost.

III.—If this woman, then, had known these two things, she would have asked of Jesus. The necessities of her soul would have burst forth, and she would have asked of him that which her soul longed for. And what would he have given her? "Living water." This is the last point which time allows me to treat of. What does the Lord mean by "living water?" No doubt, he meant the same thing as "the gift of God," the life of God in the soul, eternal life, for that is what Jesus is divinely appointed to bestow. "Living water!" I was speaking last Lord's Day of the teaching and operation of God's Spirit being set forth under the figure of water. We may, therefore, observe, that the life of God in the soul is pointed out by this striking figure. And the Lord calls it "living water," in opposition to dead, stagnant, and I might say, stinking water.

Now, doubtless, this woman, if she had been asked, how she expected to be saved, would have answered, "by *good works*," although she was living in fornication. I have not the shadow of doubt, if the question had been asked her, "*good works*" would have been the words on her lips, though all the while she was living in open sin.

"*Living water!*" "Living water" is opposed to such as is dead and stagnant: therefore, to all hypocrisy, formality, self-righteousness, presumption, resting on an arm of flesh, or trusting to our own good deeds. This "living water," is the life of God in the soul, "springing up," as the Lord speaks, (verse 14,) "into eternal life." This the Lord would have given her.

Had she asked for bread, he would not have given her a stone; and had she asked for a fish, he would not have given her a serpent. And had she asked for water, he would not have given her the dead, stagnant water of formality, but "living water," ever flowing, ever bubbling and springing up, ever watering her soul, bedewing her heart, refreshing her conscience, reviving her spirit, and drawing up her affections towards heavenly things. He would have given her "living waters," that her soul might live for ever, and not die; yes, live when time should be no more. He would have given it to her freely, graciously, and abundantly. He wanted no good resolutions for the future; he wanted it not to be purchased by alms-deeds, sighs, prayers, or tears. But he would give it, "without money and without price," out of his covenant fulness, out of his ever-flowing and overflowing love. He would have bestowed this "living water" upon her as an act of free and sovereign grace, whereby she would have been sealed as an heir of glory.

How blessed a thing is vital godliness! That is the thing I always wish to contend for. Not for forms and ceremonies, or doctrines floating in the brain, but for the life of God in the soul; the only thing worth knowing; the only thing to live by, and I am sure the only thing to die by. How different is vital godliness received into the heart and conscience, by the operation of God the Spirit, out of the fulness of Christ—how different is this fountain of living water from the stagnant dead water of lip service, formality, and hypocrisy! And sure I am, if our souls have ever been baptized into a spiritual knowledge of this heavenly secret; if ever we have tasted the sweetness, felt the power, and experienced a measure of the enjoyment of vital godliness in the heart and conscience, we shall want no other but living water. If we hear a preacher, we shall say, "Does he bring forth living water? or is he merely a man of strife and contention, sound in the letter, a

very hair-splitter in the doctrines, but drawing out of an enlightened judgment, or an old and stagnant experience, a muddy draught that we have had to drink a thousand times over; or is there living water in his heart, and do its streams flow out of his lips, to water and satisfy our thirsty souls?" If we read books on religion, our eyes will be looking through their pages to see if we can find any living water bubbling and gurgling through them. If we converse with those who profess to love Jesus, and bear his name, our eyes will be looking, our ears will be listening, and our hearts searching if we can discover any streams of living water rising up in their soul. Nay, in all that we do for the Lord, or for those that fear his name, in every prayer, in every ordinance, we shall be, more or less, looking out for living water. Are we, who profess to be in the wilderness, like the thirsty traveller in the deserts of Arabia, panting after the wells and the palm trees? Do we know what it is, after long seasons of drought, when the living water has sunk well nigh out of sight, to find its streams again springing up in the conscience? How living souls thirst after these revivings! We cannot now be satisfied with lip religion, pharisaical religion, doctrinal religion, a name to live while dead, the form of godliness without the power. A living soul can no more satisfy his thirst with mere forms and ceremonies, than a man naturally thirsty can drink out of a horse pond. He must have living water, something given by the Lord himself springing up in his soul.

But, does not the Lord say, that he will give it to those that ask it? "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Shall we not ask, then, and seek for it? And will he deny us? Has he denied us in time past? Will he deny us in time to come? Has he not the same loving and compassionate heart now, as beat in his bosom towards this poor sinner at the well of

Samaria? He still emboldens us to ask. He is now seated upon the throne of grace and mercy as the Mediator between God and man. And if, through mercy, we know something of the gift of God; and if through divine teaching, we know something of the glorious Person of Jesus, and have enjoyed a measure of its sweetness in our heart, sure I am, we shall ask, and our souls will receive the testimony of God in our conscience, that he will not deny, us, but give unto us "living water!"