

CHAPTER 4

It was, more than any thing else, the glory of the land of Israel, that it was Emmanuel's land (^{<2008>}Isaiah 8:8), not only the place of his birth, but the scene of his preaching and miracles. This land in our Saviour's time was divided into three parts: Judea in the south, Galilee in the north, and Samaria lying between them. Now, in this chapter, we have Christ in each of these three parts of that land.

I. Departing out of Judea (v. 1-3).

II. Passing through Samaria, which, though a visit in transitu, here takes up most room.

1. His coming into Samaria (v. 4-6).
2. His discourse with the Samaritan woman at a well (v. 7-26).
3. The notice which the woman gave of him to the city (v. 27-30).
4. Christ's talk with his disciples in the meantime (v. 31-38).
5. The good effect of this among the Samaritans (v. 39-42).

III. We find him residing for some time in Galilee (v. 43-46), and his curing a nobleman's son there, that was at death's door (v. 46-54).

<401> JOHN 4:1-3

CHRIST'S JOURNEY INTO GALILEE

We read of Christ's coming into Judea (^{<402>}John 3:22), after he had kept the feast at Jerusalem; and now he left Judea four months before harvest, as is said here (v. 35); so that it is computed that he staid in Judea about six months, to build upon the foundation John had laid there. We have no particular account of his sermons and miracles there, only in general, v. 1.

I. That he *made disciples*; he prevailed with many to embrace his doctrine, and to follow him as a teacher come from God. His ministry was successful, notwithstanding the opposition it met with (^{<403>}Psalm 110:2, 3); *mathetas poiei* — it signifies the same with *matheteuo* — *to disciples*.

Compare ^{<117>}Genesis 12:5. *The souls which they had gotten, which they had made* (so the word is), which they had *made proselytes*. Note, It is Christ's prerogative to *make disciples*, first to bring them to his foot, and then to form and fashion them to his will. *Fit, non nascitur, Christianus* — *The Christian is made such, not born such*. Tertullian.

II. That he *baptized* those whom he *made disciples*, admitted them by *washing them with water*; not himself, but by the ministry of his disciples, v. 2.

- 1.** Because he would put a difference between his baptism and that of John, who baptized all himself; for he baptized as a servant, Christ as a master.
- 2.** He would apply himself more to preaching work, which was the more excellent, ^{<117>}1 Corinthians 1:17.
- 3.** He would put honour upon his disciples, by empowering and employing them to do it; and so train them up to further services.
- 4.** If he had baptized some himself, they would have been apt to value themselves upon that, and despise others, which he would prevent, as Paul, ^{<117>}1 Corinthians 1:13, 14.
- 5.** He would reserve himself for the honour of baptizing with the Holy Ghost, ^{<117>}Acts 1:5.

6. He would teach us that the efficacy of the sacraments depends not on any virtue in the hand that administers them, as also that what is done by his ministers, according to his direction, he owns as done by himself.

III. That he made and baptized *more disciples than John*; not only more than John did at this time, but more than he had done at any time. Christ's converse was more winning than John's. His miracles were convincing, and the cures he wrought *gratis* very inviting.

IV. That the Pharisees were informed of this; they heard what multitudes he baptized, for they had, from his first appearing, a jealous eye upon him, and wanted not spies to give them notice concerning him. Observe,

- 1.** When the Pharisees thought they had got rid of John (for he was by this time imprisoned), and were pleasing themselves with that, Jesus appears,

who was a greater vexation to them than ever John had been. The witnesses will rise again.

2. That which grieved them was that Christ made so many disciples. The success of the gospel exasperates its enemies, and it is a good sign that it is getting ground when the powers of darkness are enraged against it.

V. That our Lord Jesus knew very well what informations were given in against him to the Pharisees. It is probable the informers were willing to have their names concealed, and the Pharisees loth to have their designs known; but none can dig so deep as to *hide their counsels from the Lord* (²⁹⁰⁵Isaiah 29:15), and Christ is here called *the Lord*. He knew what was told the Pharisees, and how much, it is likely, it exceeded the truth; for it is not likely that Jesus had yet baptized *more than John*; but so the thing was represented, to make him appear the more formidable; see ¹¹¹²2 Kings 6:12.

VI. That hereupon our Lord Jesus *left Judea and departed again* to go to Galilee.

1. He *left Judea*, because he was likely to be persecuted there even to the death; such was the rage of the Pharisees against him, and such their impious policy to devour the man-child in his infancy. To escape their designs, Christ quitted the country, and went where what he did would be less provoking than just under their eye. For,

(1.) His hour was not yet come (⁴⁰⁷³John 7:30), the time fixed in the counsels of God, and the Old-Testament prophecies, for Messiah's being cut off. He had not finished his testimony, and therefore would not surrender or expose himself.

(2.) The disciples he had gathered in Judea were not able to bear hardships, and therefore he would not expose them.

(3.) Hereby he gave an example to his own rule: *When they persecute you in one city, flee to another*. We are not called to suffer, while we may avoid it without sin; and therefore, though we may not, for our own preservation, change our religion, yet we may change our place. Christ secured himself, not by a miracle, but in a way *common to men*, for the direction and encouragement of his suffering people.

2. He departed into Galilee, because he had work to do there, and many friends and fewer enemies. He went to Galilee now,

(1.) Because John's ministry had now *made way* for him there; for Galilee, which was under Herod's jurisdiction, was the last scene of John's baptism.

(2.) Because John's imprisonment had now *made room* for him there. That light being now put under a bushel, the minds of people would not be divided between him and Christ. Thus both the liberties and restraints of good ministers are for the furtherance of the gospel, ^{<3012>}Philippians 1:12. But to what purpose does he go into Galilee for safety? Herod, the persecutor of John, will never be the protector of Jesus. Chemnitius here notes, *Pii in hfc vitf quos fugiant habent; ad quos vero fugiant ut in tuto sint non habent, nisi ad te, Deus, qui solus regugium nostrum es* — *The pious have those, in this life, to whom they can fly; but they have none to fly to, who can afford them refuge, except thee, O God.*

~~<300>~~ JOHN 4:4-26

CHRIST AT THE WELL OF SAMARIA

We have here an account of the good Christ did in Samaria, when he *passed through* that country in his way to Galilee. The Samaritans, both in *blood* and *religion*, were *mongrel Jews*, the posterity of those colonies which the king of Assyria planted there after the captivity of the ten tribes, with whom the poor of the land that were left behind, and many other Jews afterwards, incorporated themselves. They worshipped the God of Israel only, to whom they erected a temple on mount Gerizim, in competition with that at Jerusalem. There was great enmity between them and the Jews; the Samaritans would not admit Christ, when they saw he was going to Jerusalem (^{<4053>}Luke 9:53); the Jews thought they could not give him a worse name than to say, *He is a Samaritan*. When the Jews were in prosperity, the Samaritans claimed kindred to them (^{<3002>}Ezra 4:2), but, when the Jews were in distress, they were Medes and Persians; see Joseph. *Antiq.* 11.340-341; 12.257. Now observe,

I. Christ's coming into Samaria. He charged his disciples not to *enter into any city of the Samaritans* (^{<4005>}Matthew 10:5), that is, not to preach the

gospel, or work miracles; nor did he here preach publicly, or work any miracle, his eye being to *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. What kindness he here did them was *accidental*; it was only a *crumb* of the children's bread that casually *fell from the master's table*.

1. His *road* from Judea to Galilee lay through the *country* of Samaria (v. 4): *He must needs go through Samaria*. There was no other way, unless he would have fetched a compass on the other side *Jordan*, a great way about. The wicked and profane are at present so intermixed with God's Israel that, unless we will go *out of the world*, we cannot avoid *going through* the company of such, ^{<460>}1 Corinthians 5:10. We have therefore need of the armour or righteousness on the right hand and on the left, that we may neither give *provocation* to them nor contract *pollution* by them. We should not go into places of temptation but when we *needs must*; and then we should not reside in them, but *hasten through* them. Some think that Christ *must needs* go through Samaria because of the good work he had to do there; a poor woman to be converted, a lost sheep to be sought and saved. This was work his heart was upon, the *therefore* he *must needs* go this way. It was happy for Samaria that it lay *in Christ's way*, which gave him an opportunity of calling on them. *When I passed by thee, I said unto thee, Live,* ^{<306>}Ezekiel 16:6.

2. His baiting place happened to be at a *city of Samaria*. Now observe,

(1.) The place described. It was called *Sychar*; probably the same with *Sichem*, or *Shechem*, a place which we read much of in the Old Testament. Thus are the names of places commonly corrupted by tract of time. Shechem yielded the first proselyte that ever came into the church of Israel (^{<182>}Genesis 34:24), and now it is the first place where the gospel is preached out of the commonwealth of Israel; so Dr. Lightfoot observes; as also that the *valley of Achor*, which was given for a *door of hope*, hope to the poor Gentiles, ran along by this city, ^{<305>}Hosea 2:15. Abimelech was made king here; it was Jeroboam's royal seat; but the evangelist, when he would give us the antiquities of the place, takes notice of Jacob's interest there, which was more its honour than its crowned heads.

[1.] Here lay Jacob's ground, the *parcel of ground which Jacob* gave to his son Joseph, whose bones were buried in it, ^{<142>}Genesis 48:22; ^{<123>}Joshua 24:32. Probably this is mentioned to intimate that Christ, when he reposed himself hard by here, took occasion from the ground which Jacob gave Joseph to meditate on the good report which the elders by faith obtained.

Jerome chose to live in the land of Canaan, that the sight of the places might affect him the more with scripture stories.

[2.] Here was Jacob's well which he digged, or at least used, for himself and his family. We find no mention of this well in the Old Testament; but the tradition was that it was Jacob's well.

(2.) The posture of our Lord Jesus at this place: *Being wearied with his journey, he sat thus on the well.* We have here our Lord Jesus,

[1.] Labouring under the common fatigue of travellers. He was *wearied with his journey.* Though it was yet but the sixth hour, and he had performed but half his day's journey, yet he was weary; or, *because* it was the sixth hour, the time of the heat of the day, therefore he was weary. Here we see, *First*, That he was a *true man*, and subject to the common infirmities of the human nature. Toil came in with sin (~~OR~~ Genesis 3:19), and therefore Christ, having made himself a curse for us, submitted to it. *Secondly*, That he was a *poor man*, else he might have travelled on horseback or in a chariot. To this instance of meanness and mortification he humbled himself for us, that he went all his journeys on foot. When *servants* were on *horses*, *princes walked as servants on the earth*, ~~2100~~ Ecclesiastes 10:7. When we are carried easily, let us think on the weariness of our Master. *Thirdly*, It should seem that he was but a *tender man*, and not of a robust constitution; it should seem, his disciples were not tired, for they went into the town without any difficulty, when their Master sat down, and could not go a step further. Bodies of the finest mould are most sensible of fatigue, and can worst bear it.

[2.] We have him here betaking himself to the common relief of travellers; *Being wearied, he sat thus on the well.* *First*, He sat *on the well*, an *uneasy place*, cold and hard; he had no couch, no easy chair to repose himself in, but took to that which was *next hand*, to teach us not to be nice and curious in the conveniences of this life, but content with *mean things*. *Secondly*, He sat *thus*, in an *uneasy posture*; sat *carelessly* — *incuriose et neglectim*; or he sat *so* as people that are wearied with travelling are accustomed to sit.

II. His discourse with a Samaritan woman, which is here recorded at large, while Christ's dispute with the doctors, and his discourse with Moses and Elias on the mount, are buried in silence. This discourse is reducible to four heads: —

1. They discourse *concerning the water*, v. 7-15.

(1.) Notice is taken of the *circumstances* that gave occasion to this discourse.

[1.] There comes a *woman* of Samaria to *draw water*. This intimates her poverty, she had no servant to be a *drawer of water*; and her industry, she would do it herself. See here, *First*, How God owns and approves of honest humble diligence in our places. Christ was made known to the shepherds when they were keeping their flock. *Secondly*, How the divine Providence brings about glorious purposes by events which seem to us fortuitous and accidental. This woman's meeting with Christ at the well may remind us of the stories of Rebekah, Rachel, and Jethro's daughter, who all met with husbands, good husbands, no worse than Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, when they came to the wells for water. *Thirdly*, How the preventing grace of God sometimes brings people unexpectedly under the means of conversion and salvation. He is found of them that sought him not.

[2.] His disciples were *gone away into the city to buy meat*. Hence learn a lesson, *First*, Of justice and honesty. The meat Christ ate, he bought and paid for, as Paul, ⁵⁸⁸2 Thessalonians 3:8. *Secondly*, Of daily dependence upon Providence: *Take no thought for the morrow*. Christ did not go into the city to eat, but sent his disciples to fetch his meat thither; not because he scrupled eating in a Samaritan city, but,

1. Because he had a good work to do at that well, which might be done while they were catering. It is wisdom to fill up our vacant minutes with that which is good, that the *fragments* of time may *not be lost*. Peter, while his dinner was getting ready, fell into a trance, ⁴⁰⁰Acts 10:10.

2. Because it was more private and retired, more cheap and homely, to have his dinner brought him hither, than to go into the town for it. Perhaps his purse was low, and he would teach us *good husbandry*, to *spend* according to what we *have* and not go beyond it. At least, he would teach us not to affect great things. Christ could eat his dinner as well upon a *draw well* as in the best inn in the town. Let us *comport* with our circumstances. Now this gave Christ an opportunity of discoursing with this woman about spiritual concerns, and he improved it; he often preached to multitudes that crowded after him

for instruction, yet here he condescends to teach a single person, a woman, a poor woman, a stranger, a Samaritan, to teach his ministers to do likewise, as those that know what a glorious achievement it is to help to save, though but *one soul*, from death.

(2.) Let us observe the *particulars* of this discourse.

[1.] Jesus begins with a modest request for a draught of water: *Give me to drink*. He that *for our sakes became poor* here becomes a beggar, that those who are in want, and cannot dig, may not be ashamed to beg. Christ asked for it, not only because he needed it, and needed her help to come at it, but because he would draw on further discourse with her, and teach us to be willing to be beholden to the meanest when there is occasion. Christ is still begging in his poor members, and a *cup of cold water*, like this here, given to them in his name, shall not lose its reward.

[2.] The woman, though she does not deny his request, yet quarrels with him because he did not carry on the humour of his own nation (v. 9): *How is it?* Observe, *First*, What a mortal feud there was between the Jews and the Samaritans: *The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*. The Samaritans were the *adversaries of Judah* (~~401~~ Ezra 4:1), were upon all occasions mischievous to them. The Jews were extremely malicious against the Samaritans, “looked upon them as having no part in the resurrection, excommunicated and cursed them by the sacred name of God, by the glorious writing of the tables, and by the curse of the upper and lower house of judgment, with this law, That no Israelite eat of any thing that is a Samaritan's, for it is as if he should eat swine's flesh.” So Dr. Lightfoot, out of *Rabbi Tanchum*. Note, Quarrels about religion are usually the most implacable of all quarrels. Men were made to *have dealing* one with another; but if men, because one worships at one temple and another at another, will deny the offices of humanity, and charity, and common civility, will be morose and unnatural, scornful and censorious, and this under colour of zeal for religion, they plainly show that however their religion may be *true* they are not *truly religious*; but, pretending to stickle for religion, subvert the design of it. *Secondly*, How ready the woman was to upbraid Christ with the haughtiness and ill nature of the Jewish nation: *How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me?* By his dress or dialect, or both, she knew him to be a Jew, and *thinks it strange* that he runs not to the same excess of riot against the Samaritans with other Jews. Note, Moderate men of all sides are, like Joshua and his

fellows (~~308~~ Zechariah 3:8), *men wondered at*. Two things this woman wonders at,

1. That he should *ask* this kindness; for it was the pride of the Jews that they would endure any hardship rather than be beholden to a Samaritan. It was part of Christ's humiliation that he was born of the Jewish nation, which was *now* not only in an *ill state*, subject to the Romans, but in an *ill name* among the nations. With what disdain did Pilate ask, *Am I a Jew?* Thus he *made himself* not only of *no reputation*, but of *ill reputation*; but herein he has set us an example of swimming against the stream of common corruptions. We must, like our master, put on *goodness* and *kindness*, though it should be ever so much the genius of our country, or the humour of our party, to be morose and ill-natured. This woman expected that Christ should be as other Jews were; but it is unjust to charge upon every individual person even the common faults of the community: no rule but has some exceptions.

2. She wonders that he should *expect to receive* this kindness from her that was a Samaritan: "You Jews could deny it to one of our nation, and why should we grant it to one of yours?" Thus quarrels are propagated endlessly by revenge and retaliation.

[3.] Christ takes this occasion to instruct her in divine things: *If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked*, v. 10. Observe,

First, He waives her objection of the feud between the Jews and Samaritans, and takes no notice of it. Some differences are best *healed* by being *slighted*, and by avoiding all occasions of *entering into dispute* about them. Christ will convert this woman, not by showing her that the Samaritan worship was *schismatical* (though really it was so), but by showing her her own ignorance and immoralities, and her need of a Saviour.

Secondly, He fills her with an apprehension that she had now an opportunity (a fairer opportunity than she was aware of) of gaining that which would be of unspeakable advantage to her. She had not the helps that the Jews had to discern the signs of the times, and therefore Christ tells her expressly that she had now a season of grace; this was *the day of her visitation*.

a. He hints to her what she *should know*, but was ignorant of: *If thou knewest the gift of God*, that is, as the next words explain it, *who it is that saith, Give me to drink*. If thou knewest *who I am*. She saw him to be a Jew, a poor weary traveller; but he would have her know something more concerning him that did yet appear. Note,

(**a.**) Jesus Christ is the *gift of God*, the richest token of God's love to us, and the richest treasure of all good for us; *a gift*, not a debt which we could demand from God; not a *loan*, which he will demand from us again, but a gift, a free gift, ^{<B36>}John 3:16.

(**b.**) It is an unspeakable privilege to have this gift of God proposed and offered to us; to have an opportunity of embracing it: "He who is the gift of God is now set before thee, and addresses himself to *thee*; it is he that saith, *Give me to drink*; this gift comes a begging to thee."

(**c.**) Though Christ is set before us, and sues to us in and by his gospel, yet there are multitudes that *know him not*. They know not who it is that speaks to them in the gospel, that saith, *Give me to drink*; they perceive not that it is the Lord that calls them.

b. He hopes concerning her, what she would have done if she had known him; to be sure she would not have given him such a rude and uncivil answer; nay, she would have been so far from affronting him that she would have made her addresses to him: *Thou wouldest have asked*. Note,

(**a.**) Those that would have any benefit by Christ must ask for it, must be earnest in prayer to God for it.

(**b.**) Those that have a right knowledge of Christ will seek to him, and if we do not seek unto him it is a sign that we do not know him, ^{<B90>}Psalms 9:10.

(**c.**) Christ knows what they that want the means of knowledge would have done if they had had them, ^{<B12>}Matthew 11:21.

c. He assures her what he would have done for her if she had applied to him: "He *would have given thee* (and not have upbraided thee as thou doest me) *living water*." By this living water is meant the *Spirit*, who is not like the water in the bottom of the well, for some of which he asked, but like *living* or *running* water, which was much more valuable. Note,

(a.) The Spirit of grace is as *living water*; see ^{<478>}John 7:38. Under this similitude the blessings of the Messiah had been promised in the Old Testament, ^{<247>}Isaiah 12:3; 35:7; 44:3; 55:1; ^{<344>}Zechariah 14:8. The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul, that knows its own nature and necessity.

(b.) Jesus Christ *can* and *will* give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; for he *received* that he might *give*.

[4.] The woman objects against and cavils at the gracious intimation which Christ gave her (v. 11, 12): *Thou hast nothing to draw with*; and besides, *Art thou greater than our father Jacob*? What he spoke figuratively, she took literally; Nicodemus did so too. See what confused notions they have of spiritual things who are wholly taken up with the things that are sensible. Some respect she pays to this person, in calling him *Sir*, or *Lord*; but little respect to what he said, which she does but banter.

First, She does not think him capable of furnishing her with any water, no, not this in the well that is just at hand: *Thou has nothing to draw with*, and *the well is deep*. This she said, not knowing the power of Christ, for he who *causeth the vapours* to ascend from the ends of the earth needs *nothing to draw*. But there are those who will trust Christ no further than they can see him, and will not believe his promise, unless the means of the performance of it be *visible*; as if he were tied to our methods, and could not draw water without our buckets. She asks scornfully, "*Whence hast thou this living water*? I see not whence thou canst have it." Note, The springs of that living water which Christ has for those that come to him are secret and undiscovered. The fountain of life is hid with Christ. Christ has enough for us, though we see not whence he has it.

Secondly, She does not think it possible that he should furnish her with any better water than this which she could come at, but he could not: *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well*?

a. We will suppose the tradition true, that Jacob *himself, and his children, and cattle, did drink of this well*. And we may observe from it,

(a.) The power and providence of God, in the continuance of the fountains of water from generation to generation, by the constant circulation of the rivers, like the blood in the body (^{<200>}Ecclesiastes

1:7), to which circulation perhaps the flux and reflux of the sea, like the pulses of the heart, contribute.

(b.) The plainness of the patriarch Jacob; his drink was water, and he and his children drank of the same well with his cattle.

b. Yet, allowing that to be true, she was out in several things; as,

(a.) In calling Jacob *father*. What authority had the Samaritans to reckon themselves of the seed of Jacob? They were descended from that mixed multitude which the king of Assyria had placed in the cities of Samaria; what have they to do then with Jacob? Because they were the *invaders* of Israel's rights, and the unjust possessors of Israel's lands, were they therefore the *inheritors* of Israel's blood and honour? How absurd were those pretensions!

(b.) She is out in claiming this well as Jacob's gift, whereas he did no more give it than Moses gave the *manna*, ~~REF~~ John 6:32. But thus we are apt to call the *messengers* of God's gifts the *donors* of them, and to look so much at the hands they *pass through* as to forget the hand they *come from*. Jacob gave it to his sons, not to *them*. Yet thus the church's enemies not only *usurp*, but monopolize, the church's privileges.

(c.) She was out in speaking of Christ as not worthy to be compared with our father Jacob. An over-fond veneration for antiquity makes God's graces, in the good people of our own day, to be slighted.

[5.] Christ answers this cavil, and makes it out that the *living water* he had to give was far better than that of Jacob's well, v. 13, 14. Though she spoke perversely, Christ did not cast her off, but instructed and encouraged her. He shows her,

First, That the water of Jacob's well yielded but a *transient* satisfaction and supply: "*Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again*. It is no better than other water; it will quench the present thirst, but the thirst will return, and in a few hours a man will have as much *need*, and as much *desire*, of water as ever he had." This intimates,

1. The *infirmities* of our bodies in this present state; they are still *necessitous*, and ever *craving*. Life is a *fire*, a *lamp*, which will soon go out, without continual supplies of fuel and oil. The natural heat preys upon itself.

2. The *imperfections* of all our comforts in this world; they are not lasting, nor our satisfaction in them remaining. Whatever waters of comfort we drink of, we shall *thirst again*. Yesterday's meat and drink will not do to-day's work.

Secondly, That the living waters he would give should yield a lasting satisfaction and bliss, v. 14. Christ's gifts appear most valuable when they come to be compared with the things of this world; for there will appear no comparison between them. Whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the everlasting gospel,

a. He shall *never thirst*, he shall never want that which will abundantly satisfy his soul's desires; they are *longing*, but not *languishing*. A *desiring* thirst he has, nothing more *than* God, still more and more *of* God; but not a *despairing* thirst.

b. Therefore he shall never thirst, because this water that Christ gives *shall be in him a well of water*. He can never be reduced to extremity that has in himself a *fountain* of supply and satisfaction.

(a.) *Ever ready*, for it shall be *in him*. The principle of grace planted *in him* is the spring of his comfort; see ~~4178~~ John 7:38. A good man is *satisfied from himself*, for Christ *dwells in his heart*. The anointing abides in him; he needs not sneak to the world for comfort; the *work* and the *witness* of the Spirit in the heart furnish him with a firm foundation of hope and an overflowing fountain of joy.

(b.) *Never failing*, for it shall be in him a *well of water*. He that has at hand only a bucket of water needs not thirst as long as this lasts, but it will soon be *exhausted*; but believers have in them a *well of water*, overflowing, ever flowing. The *principles* and *affections* which Christ's holy religion *forms* in the souls of those that are brought under the power of it are this *well of water*.

[a.] It is *springing up*, ever in motion, which bespeaks the actings of grace strong and vigorous. If good truths *stagnate* in our souls, like standing water, they do not answer the end of our receiving them. If there be a good treasure in the heart, we must thence bring forth good things.

[b.] It is springing up *unto everlasting life*; which intimates, *First*, The *aims* of gracious actings. A sanctified soul has its eye upon heaven,

means this, designs this, does all for this, will take up with nothing short of this. Spiritual life springs up towards its own perfection in eternal life. *Secondly*, The *constancy* of those actings; it will continue springing up till it come to perfection. *Thirdly*, The crown of them, eternal life at last. The living water rises *from* heaven, and therefore rises *towards* heaven; see ²⁰⁰⁹Ecclesiastes 1:7. And now is not this water better than that of Jacob's well?

[6.] The woman (whether in jest or earnest is hard to say) begs of him to give her some of this water (v. 15): *Give me this water, that I thirst not.* *First*, Some think that she speaks *tauntingly*, and ridicules what Christ had said as mere stuff; and, in derision of it, not *desires*, but *challenges* him to give her some of this water: “A rare invention; it will save me a great deal of *pains* if I never *come hither to draw.*” But, *Secondly*, Others think that it was a *well-meant* but weak and ignorant desire. She apprehended that he meant something very good and useful, and therefore saith *Amen*, at a venture. *Whatever it be*, let me have it; *who will show me any good? Ease*, or saving of labour, is a valuable good to poor labouring people. Note,

1. Even those that are weak and ignorant may yet have some faint and fluctuating desires towards Christ and his gifts, and some good wishes of grace and glory.
2. Carnal hearts, in their best wishes, look no higher than carnal ends. “Give it to me,” saith she, “not that I may have everlasting life” (which Christ proposed), “but that I *come not hither to draw.*”

2. The next subject of discourse with this woman in *concerning her husband*, v. 16-18. It was not to let fall the discourse of the water of life that Christ started this, as many who will bring in any *impertinence* in conversation that they may drop a serious subject; but it was with a gracious design that Christ mentioned it. What he had said concerning his grace and eternal life he found had made little impression upon her, because she had not been convinced of sin: therefore, waiving the discourse about the living water, he sets himself to awaken her conscience, to open the wound of guilt, and then she would more easily apprehend the remedy by grace. And this is the method of dealing with souls; they must first be made *weary* and *heavy-laden* under the burden of sin, and then brought to Christ for rest; first pricked to the heart, and then healed. This is the course of spiritual physic; and if we proceed not in this order we begin at the wrong end.

Observe,

(1.) How discreetly and decently Christ introduces this discourse (v. 16):
Go, call thy husband, and come hither. Now,

[1.] The order Christ gave her had a *very good colour*: “*Call thy husband, that he may teach thee, and help thee to understand these things, which thou art so ignorant of*” The wives that will learn must *ask their husbands* (~~445~~ 1 Corinthians 14:35), who must dwell with them *as men of knowledge*, ~~400~~ 1 Peter 3:7. “*Call thy husband, that he may learn with thee; that then you may be heirs together of the grace of life. Call thy husband, that he may be witness to what passes between us.*” Christ would thus teach us to *provide things honest in the sight of all men*, and to study that which is of good report.

[2.] As it had a good colour, so it had a *good design*; for hence he would take occasion to call her sin to remembrance. There is need of art and prudence in giving reproofs; to fetch a compass, as the woman of Tekoa, ~~140~~ 2 Samuel 14:20.

(2.) How industriously the woman seeks to evade the conviction, and yet insensibly convicts herself, and, ere she is aware, owns her fault; she said, *I have no husband.* Her saying this intimated no more than that she did not care to have her husband spoken of, nor that matter mentioned any more. She would not have her husband come thither, lest, in further discourse, the truth of the matter should come out, to her shame; and therefore, “*Pray go on to talk of something else, I have no husband;*” she would be thought a *maid* or a *widow*, whereas, though she had no husband, she was neither. The carnal mind is very ingenious to *shift off* convictions, and to keep them from fastening, careful to *cover the sin*.

(3.) How closely our Lord Jesus brings home the conviction to her conscience. It is probable that he said more than is here recorded, for she thought that he told her all that ever she did (v. 29), but that which is here recorded is concerning her husbands. Here is,

[1.] A *surprising narrative* of her *past* conversation: *Thou has had five husbands.* Doubtless, it was not her *affliction* (the burying of so many husbands), but her *sin*, that Christ intended to upbraid her with; either she had *eloped* (as the law speaks), had run away from her *husbands*, and married others, or by her undutiful, unclean, disloyal conduct, had

provoked them to *divorce her*, or by indirect means had, contrary to law, *divorced them*. Those who make light of such scandalous practices as these, as no more than *nine days' wonder*, and as if the guilt were over as soon as the talk is over, should remember that Christ keeps account of all.

[2.] A severe reproof of her present state of life: *He whom thou now hast is not thy husband*. Either she was never married to him at all, or he had some other wife, or, which is most probable, her former husband or husbands were living: so that, in short, *she lived in adultery*. Yet observe how mildly Christ tells her of it; he doth not call her *strumpet*, but tells her, *He with whom thou livest is not thy husband*: and then leaves it to her own conscience to say the rest. Note, Reproofs are ordinarily *most profitable* when they are *least provoking*.

[3.] Yet in this he puts a better construction than it would well bear upon what she said by way of shuffle and evasion: *Thou has well said I have no husband*; and again, *In that saidst thou truly*. What she intended as a *denial of the fact* (that she had none with whom she lived as a husband) he favourably interpreted, or at least turned upon her, as a *confession of the fault*. Note, Those who would win souls should *make the best* of them, whereby they may hope to *work* upon their *good-nature*; for, if they *make the worst* of them, they certainly *exasperate* their *ill-nature*.

3. The next subject of discourse with this woman is concerning *the place of worship*, v. 19-24. Observe,

(1.) A case of conscience proposed to Christ by the woman, concerning the place of worship, v. 19, 20.

[1.] The inducement she had to put this case: *Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet*. She does not deny the truth of what he had charged her with, but by her silence owns the justice of the reproof; nor is she put into a passion by it, as many are when they are touched in a sore place, does not impute his censure to the general disgust the Jews had to the Samaritans, but (which is a rare thing) can bear to be told of a fault. But this is not all; she goes further: *First*, She speaks respectfully to him, calls him *Sir*. Thus should we *honour* those that deal faithfully with us. This was the effect of Christ's meekness in reproofing her; he gave her no ill language, and then she gave him none. *Secondly*, She acknowledges him to be a *prophet*, one that had a correspondence with Heaven. Note, The power of the word of Christ in searching the heart, and convincing the conscience of secret sins,

is a great proof of its divine authority, ⁽¹¹²⁾1 Corinthians 14:24, 25. *Thirdly*, She desires some further instruction from him. Many that are not *angry* at their reprovers, nor fly in their faces, yet are *afraid* of them and keep out of their way; but this woman was willing to have some more discourse with him that told her of her faults.

[2.] The case itself that she propounded concerning the *place of religious worship in public*. Some think that she started this to shift off further discourse concerning her sin. Controversies in religion often prove great prejudices to serious godliness; but, it should seem, she proposed it with a good design; she knew she must worship God, and desired to do it aright; and therefore, meeting with a prophet, begs his direction. Note, It is our wisdom to improve all opportunities of getting knowledge in the things of God. When we are in company with those that are *fit to teach*, let us be *forward to learn*, and have a *good question* ready to put to those who are able to give a *good answer*. It was agreed between the Jews and the Samaritans that God is to be worshipped (even those who were such fools as to worship *false* gods were not such brutes as to worship none), and that religious worship is an affair of great importance: men would not *contend* about it if they were not *concerned* about it. But the matter in variance was *where* they should worship God. Observe how she states the case: —

First, As for the Samaritans: *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain*, near to this city and this well; there the Samaritan temple was built by Sanballat, in favour of which she insinuates,

1. That whatever the temple was the place was holy; it was mount *Gerizim*, the mount in which the blessings were pronounced; and some think the same on which Abraham built his altar (⁽¹¹⁶⁾Genesis 12:6, 7), and Jacob his, ⁽¹³⁸⁾Genesis 33:18-20.

2. That it might plead prescription: *Our fathers* worshipped here. She thinks they have antiquity, tradition, and succession, on their side. A *vain conversation* often supports itself with this, that it was *received by tradition from our fathers*. But she had little reason to boast of *their fathers*; for, when Antiochus persecuted the Jews, the Samaritans, for fear of sharing with them in their sufferings, not only renounced all relation to the Jews, but surrendered their temple to Antiochus, with a request that it might be dedicated to Jupiter Olympius, and called by his name. Joseph. *Antiq.* 12.257-264.

Secondly, As to the Jews: *You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* The Samaritans governed themselves by the five books of Moses, and (some think) received *only them* as canonical. Now, though they found frequent mention there of the place God would choose, yet they did not find it named there; and they saw the temple at Jerusalem stripped of many of its ancient glories, and therefore thought themselves at liberty to set up another place, altar against altar.

(2.) Christ's answer to this case of conscience, v. 21, etc. Those that apply themselves to Christ for instruction shall find him *meek, to teach the meek his way.* Now here,

[1.] He puts a *slight* upon the question, as she had proposed it, concerning the place of worship (v. 21): "*Woman, believe me* as a prophet, and mark what I say. Thou art expecting the *hour to come* when either by some divine revelation, or some signal providence, this matter shall be decided in favour either of Jerusalem or of Mount Gerizim; but I tell thee the hour is at hand when it shall be no more a question; that which thou has been taught to lay so much weight on shall be set aside as a thing *indifferent.*" Note, It should cool us in our contests to think that those things which now fill us, and which we make such a noise about, shall shortly *vanish*, and be *no more*: the very things we are striving about are passing away: *The hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.* First, The object of worship is supposed to continue still the same — *God*, as a Father; under this notion the very heathen worshipped God, the Jews did so, and probably the Samaritans. Secondly, But a period shall be put to all niceness and all differences about the place of worship. The approaching dissolution of the Jewish economy, and the erecting of the evangelical state, shall set this matter *at large*, and lay all *in common*, so that it shall be a thing perfectly indifferent whether in either of these places or any other men worship God, for they shall not be tied to any place; neither *here* nor *there*, but *both*, and *any where*, and *every where*. Note, The worship of God is not now, under the gospel, appropriated to any place, as it was under the law, but it is God's will that men pray every where. ^{<508>}1 Timothy 2:8; ^{<3011>}Malachi 1:11. Our reason teaches us to consult *decency* and *convenience* in the places of our worship: but our religion gives no preference to one place above another, in respect to holiness and acceptableness to God. Those who prefer any worship merely for the sake of the house or building in which it is performed (though it were as magnificent and as *solemnly* consecrated as

ever Solomon's temple was) forget that the *hour is come* when there shall be no difference put in God's account: no, not between Jerusalem, which *had been* so famous for sanctity, and the mountain of Samaria, which *had been* so infamous for impiety.

[2.] He *lays a stress* upon other things, in the matter of religious worship. When he made so light of the place of worship he did not intend to lessen our concern about the thing itself, of which therefore he takes occasion to discourse more fully.

First, As to the present state of the controversy, he *determines* against the Samaritan worship, and in favour of the Jews, v. 22. He tells here,

1. That the Samaritans were certainly *in the wrong*; not merely because they worshipped in this mountain, though, while Jerusalem's choice was in force, that was sinful, but because they were out in the object of their worship. If the worship itself had been as it should have been, its separation from Jerusalem might have been connived at, as the *high places* were in the best reigns: *But you worship you know not what, or that which you do not know*. They worshipped the God of Israel, the true God (^{<100>}Ezra 4:2; ^{<173>}2 Kings 17:32); but they were sunk into gross ignorance; they worshipped him as the *God of that land* (^{<172>}2 Kings 17:27, 33), as a local deity, like the gods of the nations, whereas God must be served *as God*, as the universal cause and Lord. Note, Ignorance is so far from being the *mother* of devotion that it is the *murderer* of it. Those that worship God *ignorantly* offer the *blind for sacrifice*, and it is the *sacrifice of fools*.

2. That the Jews were certainly *in the right*. For,

(1.) “*We know what we worship*. We go upon sure grounds in our worship, for our people are catechised and trained up in the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in the scripture.” Note, Those who by the scriptures have obtained some knowledge of God (a *certain* though not a *perfect* knowledge) may worship him *comfortably* to themselves, and *acceptably* to him, for they *know what they worship*. Christ elsewhere condemns the corruptions of the Jews' worship (^{<159>}Matthew 15:9), and yet here defends the worship itself; the worship may be *true* where yet it is not *pure* and *entire*. Observe, Our Lord Jesus was pleased to reckon himself among the *worshippers* of God: *We worship. Though he was a Son* (and then are the children

free), yet learned he this obedience, in the days of his humiliation. Let not the greatest of men think the worship of God below them, when the Son of God himself did not.

(2.) *Salvation is of the Jews*; and therefore they know what they worship, and what grounds they go upon in their worship. Not that all the Jews were saved, nor that it was not possible but that many of the Gentiles and Samaritans might be saved, for in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is *accepted of him*; but,

[1.] The author of eternal salvation comes of the Jews, appears among them (^{<4895>}Romans 9:5), and is sent first to *bless* them.

[2.] The means of eternal salvation are afforded to them. The *word of salvation* (^{<4435>}Acts 13:26) was *of the Jews*. It was delivered to them, and other nations derived it through them. This was a sure guide to them in their devotions, and they followed it, and therefore knew what they worshipped. To them were committed the *oracles of God* (^{<4892>}Romans 3:2), and the *service of God*, (^{<4904>}Romans 9:4). The Jews therefore being thus privileged and advanced, it was presumption for the Samaritans to vie with them.

Secondly, He describes the evangelical worship which alone God would accept and be well pleased with. Having shown that the place is *indifferent*, he comes to show what is *necessary* and *essential* — that we worship God *in spirit and in truth*, v. 23, 24. The stress is not to be laid upon the *place* where we worship God, but upon the state of *mind* in which we worship him. Note, The most effectual way to take up differences in the minor matters of religion is to be more zealous in the greater. Those who daily make it the matter of their care to worship *in the spirit*, one would think, should not make it the matter of their strife whether he should be worshipped here or there. Christ had justly preferred the Jewish worship before the Samaritan, yet here he intimates the imperfection of that. The worship was *ceremonial*, (^{<3901>}Hebrews 9:1, 10). The worshippers were generally *carnal*, and strangers to the *inward part* of divine worship. Note, It is possible that we may be better than our neighbours, and yet not so good as we should be. It concerns us to be right, not only in the *object* of our worship, but in the *manner* of it; and it is this which Christ here instructs us in. Observe,

a. The great and glorious revolution which should introduce this change: *The hour cometh, and now is* — the fixed stated time, concerning which it was of old determined when it should come, and how long it should last. The time of its *appearance* if *fixed* to an hour, so punctual and exact are the divine counsels; the time of its *continuance* is *limited* to an hour, so close and pressing is the opportunity of divine grace, ^{<400>}2 Corinthians 6:2. This hour *cometh*, it is coming in its full strength, lustre, and perfection, it *now is* in the embryo and infancy. The *perfect day is coming*, and now it *dawns*.

b. The blessed change itself. In gospel times the *true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth*. As creatures, we worship the Father of *all*: as Christians, we worship *the Father of our Lord Jesus*. Now the change shall be,

(a.) In the *nature* of the worship. Christians shall worship God, not in the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic institution, but in *spiritual* ordinances, consisting less in *bodily exercise*, and animated and invigorated more with divine power and energy. The way of worship which Christ has instituted is rational and intellectual, and refined from those external rites and ceremonies with which the Old-Testament worship was both clouded and clogged. This is called true worship, in opposition to that which was typical. The legal services were *figures of the true*, ^{<500>}Hebrews 9:3, 24. Those that revolted from Christianity to Judaism are said to *begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh*, ^{<400>}Galatians 3:3. Such was the difference between Old-Testament and New-Testament institutions.

(b.) In the *temper* and *disposition* of the worshippers; and so the true worshippers are good Christians, distinguished from hypocrites; all *should*, and they will, worship God *in spirit and in truth*. It is spoken of (v. 23) as their character, and (v. 24) as their duty. Note, It is required of all that worship God that they worship him *in spirit and in truth*. We must worship God,

[a.] *In spirit*, ^{<500>}Philippians 3:3. We must depend upon *God's Spirit* for strength and assistance, laying our souls under his influences and operations; we must devote *our own spirits* to, and employ them in, the service of God (^{<400>}Romans 1:9), must worship him with fixedness of thought and a flame of affection, with *all that is within us*. Spirit is sometimes put for the new nature, in opposition to the *flesh*, which is

the corrupt nature; and so to worship God *with our spirits* is to worship him *with our graces*, ^{<3828>}Hebrews 12:28.

[b.] *In truth*, that is, in *sincerity*. God requires not only the *inward part* in our worship, but *truth in the inward part*, ^{<4516>}Psalm 51:6. We must mind the power more than the form, must aim at God's glory, and not to be *seen of men*; draw near with a *true heart*, ^{<3812>}Hebrews 10:22.

Thirdly, He intimates the reasons why God must be thus worshipped.

a. Because in gospel times they, and they only, are accounted the *true* worshippers. The gospel erects a spiritual way of worship, so that the professors of the gospel are not true in their profession, do not live up to gospel light and laws, if they do not worship God *in spirit and in truth*.

b. Because *the Father seeketh such worshippers of him*. This intimates,

(a.) That such worshippers are very rare, and seldom met with, ^{<2812>}Jeremiah 30:21. The gate of spiritual worshipping is strait.

(b.) That such worship is necessary, and what the God of heaven insists upon. When God comes to *enquire* for worshippers, the question will not be, "Who worshipped at Jerusalem?" but, "Who worshipped in spirit?" That will be the touchstone.

(c.) That God is greatly well pleased with and graciously accepts such worship and such worshippers. *I have desired it*, ^{<4123>}Psalm 132:13, 14; ^{<2124>}Song of Solomon 2:14.

(d.) That there has been, and will be to the end, a remnant of such worshippers; his *seeking* such worshippers implies his *making* them such. God is in all ages gathering in to himself a generation of spiritual worshippers.

c. Because *God is a spirit*. Christ came to *declare God* to us (^{<4118>}John 1:18), and this he has declared concerning him; he declared it to this poor Samaritan woman, for the meanest are concerned to know God; and with this design, to rectify her mistakes concerning religious worship, to which nothing would contribute more than the right knowledge of God. Note,

(a.) *God is a spirit*, for he is an infinite and eternal mind, an intelligent being, incorporeal, immaterial, invisible, and incorruptible. It is easier to say what God is not than what he is; a spirit *has not flesh and bones*,

but *who knows the way of a spirit?* If God were not *a spirit*, he could not be *perfect*, nor infinite, nor eternal, nor independent, nor the Father of spirits.

(b.) The spirituality of the divine nature is a very good reason for the spirituality of divine worship. If we do not worship God, who is *a spirit, in the spirit*, we neither *give him the glory due to his name*, and so do not perform the *act* of worship, nor can we hope to obtain his favour and acceptance, and so we miss of the *end* of worship,
^{<118>}Matthew 15:8, 9.

4. The last subject of discourse with this woman is concerning the Messiah, v. 25, 26. Observe here,

(1.) The faith of the woman, by which she expected the Messiah: *I know that Messiah cometh — and he will tell us all things*. She had nothing to object against what Christ had said; his discourse was, for aught she knew, what might become the Messiah then expected; but *from him* she would receive it, and in the mean time she thinks it best to suspend her belief. Thus many have no heart to the price *in their hand* (^{<176>}Proverbs 17:16), because they think they have a better *in their eye*, and deceive themselves with a promise that they will learn that *hereafter* which they neglect *now*. Observe here,

[1.] Whom she expects: *I know that Messiah cometh*. The Jews and Samaritans, though so much at variance, agreed in the expectation of the messiah and his kingdom. The Samaritans received the writings of Moses, and were no strangers to the prophets, nor to the hopes of the Jewish nation; those who knew least knew this, that Messiah was to come; so general and uncontested was the expectation of him, and at this time more raised than ever (for the sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel's weeks were near expiring), so that she concludes not only, *He will come*, but *erchetai* — “*He comes, he is just at hand:*” *Messias, who is called Christ*. The evangelist, though he retains the Hebrew word *Messias* (which the woman used) in honour to the holy language, and to the Jewish church, that used it familiarly, yet, writing for the use of the Gentiles, he takes care to render it by a Greek word of the same signification, *who is called Christ* — *Anointed*, giving an example to the apostle's rule, that whatever is spoken in an unknown or less vulgar tongue should be *interpreted*, ^{<127>}1 Corinthians 14:27, 28.

[2.] What she expects from him: “*He will tell us all things* relating to the service of God which it is needful for us to know, will tell us that which will supply our defects, rectify our mistakes, and put an end to all our disputes. He will tell us the mind of God fully and clearly, and keep back nothing.” Now this implies an acknowledgement, *First*, Of the deficiency and imperfection of the discovery they now had of the divine will, and the rule they had of the divine worship; *it could not make the comers thereunto perfect*, and therefore they expected some great advance and improvement in matters of religion, a time of reformation. *Secondly*, Of the sufficiency of the Messiah to make this change: “*He will tell us all things* which we want to know, and about which we wrangle in the dark. He will introduce *peace*, by *leading us into all truth*, and dispelling the mists of error.” It seems, this was the comfort of good people in those dark times that light would arise; if they found themselves at a loss, and run aground, it was a satisfaction to them to say, *When Messiah comes, he will tell us all things*; as it may be to us now with reference to his second coming: now we see through a glass, but then *face to face*.

(2.) The favour of our Lord Jesus in making himself known to her: *I that speak to thee am he*, v. 26. Christ did never make himself known so expressly to any as he did here to this poor Samaritan, and to the blind man (~~408~~ John 9:37); no, not to John Baptist, when he sent to him (~~410~~ Matthew 11:4, 5); no, not to the Jews, when they challenged him to tell them whether he was the Christ, ~~412~~ John 10:24. But,

[1.] Christ would thus put an honour upon such as were poor and despised, ~~416~~ James 2:6.

[2.] This woman, for aught we know, had never had any opportunity of seeing Christ's miracles, which were then the ordinary method of conviction. Note, To those who have not the advantage of the *external* means of knowledge and grace God hath *secret* ways of making up the want of them; we must therefore judge charitably concerning such. God can make the light of grace shine *into the heart* even where he doth not make the light of the gospel shine *in the face*.

[3.] This woman was better prepared to receive such a discovery than others were; she was big with expectation of the Messiah, and ready to receive instruction from him. Christ will manifest himself to those who with an honest humble heart desire to be acquainted with him: *I that speak to thee am he*. See here, *First*, How near Jesus Christ was to her, when she

knew not who he was, ^{<1236>}Genesis 28:16. Many are lamenting Christ's absence, and longing for his presence, when at the same time he is speaking to them. *Secondly*, How Christ makes himself known to us by *speaking* to us: *I that speak unto thee*, so closely, so convincingly, with such assurance, with such authority, *I am he*.

<492> JOHN 4:27-42

CHRIST AT THE WELL OF SAMARIA

We have here the remainder of the story of what happened when Christ was in Samaria, after the long conference he had with the woman.

I. The *interruption given to this discourse* by the disciples' coming. It is probable that much more was said than is recorded; but just when the discourse was brought to a head, when Christ had made himself known to her as the true Messiah, *then came the disciples*. *The daughters of Jerusalem shall not stir up nor awake my love till he please*.

1. They wondered at Christ's converse with this woman, marvelled that he talked thus earnestly (as perhaps they observed at a distance) with a woman, a strange woman alone (he used to be more *reserved*), especially with a Samaritan woman, that was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel; they thought their Master should be as shy of the Samaritans as the other Jews were, at least that he should not preach the gospel to them. They wondered he should condescend to talk with such a poor contemptible woman, forgetting what despicable men they themselves were when Christ first called them into fellowship with himself.

2. Yet they acquiesced in it; they knew it was for some good reason, and some good end, of which he was not bound to give them an account, and therefore none of them asked, *What seekest thou?* or, *Why talkest thou with her?* Thus, when particular difficulties occur in the word and providence of God, it is good to satisfy ourselves with this in general, that all is well which Jesus Christ saith and doeth. Perhaps there was something *amiss* in their *marveling* that *Christ talked with the woman*: it was something like the Pharisees being offended at his eating with publicans and sinners. But, whatever they *thought*, they said *nothing*. *If thou hast thought evil* at any time, *lay thy hand upon thy mouth*, to keep

that evil thought from turning into an evil word, ~~418B~~ Proverbs 30:32;
~~418B~~ Psalm 39:1-3.

The notice which the woman gave to her neighbours of the extraordinary person she had happily met with, v. 28, 29. Observe here,

1. How she *forgot her errand to the well*, v. 28. Therefore, because the disciples were come, and broke up the discourse, and perhaps she observed they were not pleased with it, she *went her way*. She withdrew, in civility to Christ, that he might have leisure to *eat his dinner*. She delighted in his discourse, but would not be *rude*; every thing is beautiful in its season. She supposed that Jesus, when he had dined, would go forward in his journey, and therefore hastened to tell her neighbours, that they might come quickly. *Yet a little while is the light with you*. See how she improved time; when one good work was done, she applied herself to another. When opportunities of *getting good* cease, or are interrupted, we should seek opportunities of *doing good*; when we have done *hearing* the word, then is a time to be *speaking* of it. Notice is taken of her *leaving her water-pot* or *pail*.

(1.) She left it in kindness to Christ, that he might have water to drink; he turned water into wine for others, but not for himself. Compare this with Rebecca's civility to Abraham's servant (~~412B~~ Genesis 24:18), and see that promise, ~~410C~~ Matthew 10:42.

(2.) She left it that she might make the more haste into the city, to carry thither these good tidings. Those whose business it is to publish the name of Christ must not encumber or entangle themselves with any thing that will retard or hinder them therein. When the disciples are to be made fishers of men they must *forsake all*.

(3.) She left her water-pot, as one *careless of it*, being wholly taken up with better things. Note, Those who are brought to the knowledge of Christ will show it by a holy contempt of this world and the things of it. And those who are *newly* acquainted with the things of God must be *excused*, if at first they be so taken up with the new world into which they are brought that the things of this world seem to be for a time wholly neglected. Mr. Hildersham, in one of his sermons on this verse, from this instance largely justifies those who leave their worldly business on week-days to go to hear sermons.

2. How she *minded her errand to the town*, for her heart was upon it. She *went into the city*, and said to *the men*, probably the aldermen, the men in authority, whom, it may be, she found met together upon some public business; or to *the men*, that is, to every man she met in the streets; she proclaimed it in the chief places of concourse: *Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?* Observe,

(1.) How *solicitous* she was to *have her friends and neighbours* acquainted with Christ. When she had found that treasure, she *called together her friends and neighbours* (as ^{<215>}Luke 15:9), not only to *rejoice with her*, but to share with her, knowing there was enough to enrich herself and all that would partake with her. Note, They that have been themselves with Jesus, and have found comfort in him, should do all they can to bring others to him. Has he done us the honour to make himself known to us? Let us do him the honour to make him known to others; nor can we do ourselves a greater honour. This woman becomes an apostle. *Quae scortum fuerat egressa, regreditur magistra evangelica* — *She who went forth a specimen of impurity returns a teacher of evangelical truth*, saith Aretius. Christ had told her to *call her husband*, which she thought was warrant enough to *call every body*. She went into *the city*, the city where she dwelt, among her kinsfolks and acquaintance. Though every man is my neighbour that I have opportunity of doing good to, yet I have most *opportunity*, and therefore lie under the greatest *obligations*, to do good to those that live near me. *Where the tree falls*, there let it be made useful.

(2.) How fair and ingenuous she was in the notice she gave them concerning this stranger she had met with.

[1.] She *tells them* plainly what induced her to admire him: *He has told me all things that ever I did*. No more is recorded than what he told her of her husbands; but it is not improbable that he had told her of more of her faults. Or, his telling her that which she knew he could not by any ordinary means come to the knowledge of convinced her that he could have told her all that she ever did. If he has a *divine* knowledge, it must be omniscience. He told her that which none knew but God and her own conscience. Two things affected her: — *First, the extent of his knowledge*. We ourselves cannot tell *all things that ever we did* (many things pass *unheeded*, and more pass away and are forgotten); but Jesus Christ knows all the thoughts, words, and actions, of all the children of men; see ^{<204>}Hebrews 4:13. He hath said, *I know thy works*. *Secondly, The power of his word*.

This made a great impression upon her, that he told her her *secret sins* with such an unaccountable power and energy that, being told of one, she is *convinced of all, and judged of all*. She does not say, “Come, see a man that has told me strange things concerning religious worship, and the laws of it, that has decided the controversy between this mountain and Jerusalem, a man that calls himself the *Messias*;” but, “*Come see a man that has told me of my sins*.” She fastens upon that part of Christ's discourse which one would think she would have been most shy of repeating; but experimental proofs of the power of Christ's word and Spirit are of all others the most cogent and convincing; and that *knowledge of Christ* into which we are led by the conviction of sin and humiliation is most likely to be *sound and saving*.

[2.] She *invites them to come and see* him of whom she had conceived so high an opinion. Not barely, “Come and look upon him” (she does not invite them to him as a *show*), but, “Come and converse with him; come and *hear his wisdom*, as I have done, and you will be of my mind.” She would not undertake to manage the arguments which had convinced her, in such a manner as to convince others; all that see the evidence of truth themselves are not able to make others see it; but, “Come, and talk with him, and you will find such a power in his word as far exceeds all other evidence.” Note, Those who can do little else towards the conviction and conversion of others may and should bring them to those means of grace which they themselves have found effectual. Jesus was now at the town's end. “Now come see him.” When opportunities of getting the knowledge of God are brought to our doors we are inexcusable if we neglect them; shall we not go over the threshold to see him whose day prophets and kings desired to see?

[3.] She resolves to *appeal to themselves*, and their own sentiments upon the trial. *Is not this the Christ?* She does not peremptorily say, “He is the Messiah,” how clear soever she was in her own mind, and yet she very prudently mentions the Messiah, of whom otherwise they would not have thought, and then refers it to themselves; she will not impose her faith upon them, but only propose it to them. By such fair but forcible appeals as these men's judgments and consciences are sometimes taken hold of ere they are aware.

(3.) What success she had in this invitation: *They went out of the city, and came to him*, v. 30. Though it might seem very improbable that a woman

of so *small* a figure, and so *ill* a character, should have the honour of the first discovery of the Messiah among the Samaritans, yet it pleased God to incline their hearts to take notice of her report, and not to slight it as an idle tale. Time was when lepers were the first that brought tidings to Samaria of a great deliverance, ^(117B)2 Kings 7:3, etc. They *came unto him*; did not send for him into the city to them, but in token of their respect to him, and the earnestness of their desire to see him, they *went out to him*. Those that would know Christ must meet him where he records his name.

III. Christ's discourse with his disciples while the woman was absent, v. 31-38. See how industrious our Lord Jesus was to *redeem time*, to husband every minute of it, and to *fill up* the vacancies of it. When the disciples were gone into the town, his discourse with the woman was *edifying*, and suited to her case; when she was gone into the town, his discourse with them was no less edifying, and suited to their case; it were well if we could *thus* gather up the fragments of time, that none of it may be lost. Two things are observable in this discourse: —

1. How Christ *expresses the delight* which he himself had in his work. His work was to *seek and save* that which was lost, to go about doing good. Now with this work we here find him wholly taken up. For,

(1.) *He neglected his meat and drink for his work.* When he sat down upon the well, he was *weary*, and needed refreshment; but this opportunity of saving souls made him forget his weariness and hunger. And he minded *his food* so little that,

[1.] His disciples were forced to invite him to it: *They prayed him*, they pressed him, saying, *Master, eat*. It was an instance of their *love to him* that they invited him, lest he should be faint and sick for want of some support; but it was a greater instance of his *love to souls* that he needed invitation. Let us learn hence a holy indifference even to the needful supports of life, in comparison with spiritual things.

[2.] He minded it so little that they suspected he had had meat brought him in their absence (v. 33): *Has any man brought him ought to eat?* He had so little appetite for his dinner that they were ready to think he had dined already. Those that make religion their business will, when any of its affairs are to be attended, prefer them before their food; as Abraham's servant, that would not eat till he had told his errand (^(123B)Genesis 24:33),

and Samuel, that would not sit down till David was anointed, ^{<orig>}1 Samuel 16:11.

(2.) He *made his work his meat and drink*. The work he *had to do* among the Samaritans, the prospect he now had of doing good to many, this was *meat and drink* to him; it was the greatest pleasure and satisfaction imaginable. Never did a hungry man, or an epicure, expect a plentiful feast with so much desire, nor feed upon its dainties with so much delight, as our Lord Jesus expected and improved an opportunity of doing good to souls. Concerning this he saith,

[1.] That it was such *meat* as the disciples *knew not of*. They did not imagine that he had any design or prospect of planting his gospel among the Samaritans; this was a piece of usefulness they never thought of. Note, Christ by his gospel and Spirit does more good to the souls of men than his own disciples *know of or expect*. This may be said of good Christians too, who live by faith, that they have meat to eat which others know not of, joy with which a stranger does not intermeddle. Now this word made them ask, *Has any man brought him ought to eat?* so apt were even his own disciples to understand him after a corporal and carnal manner when he used similitudes.

[2.] That the reason why his work was his meat and drink was because it was his Father's work, his Father's will: *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me*, v. 34. Note, *First*, The salvation of sinners is the *will of God*, and the instruction of them in order thereunto is *his work*. See ^{<scri>}1 Timothy 2:4. There is a chosen remnant whose salvation is in a particular manner his will. *Secondly*, Christ was *sent into the world* on this errand, to bring people to God, to know him and to be happy in him. *Thirdly*, He made this work his business and delight. When his body needed food, his mind was so taken up with this that he forgot both hunger and thirst, both meat and drink. Nothing could be more grateful to him than doing good; when he was invited *to meat* he went, that he might *do good*, for that was his meat always. *Fourthly*, He was not only ready upon all occasions to go to his work, but he was *earnest* and in care to go *through* it, and to *finish his work* in all the parts of it. He resolved never to quit it, nor lay it down, till he could say, *It is finished*. Many have zeal to carry them *out* at first, but not zeal to carry them *on* to the last; but our Lord Jesus was intent upon *finishing his work*. Our Master has herein left us an example, that we may learn to do the will of God as he did;

1. With diligence and close application, as those that make a business of it.
2. With delight and pleasure in it, as in our element.
3. With constancy and perseverance; not only minding to *do*, but aiming to *finish*, our work.

2. See here how Christ, having expressed his delight in *his* work, excites his disciples to diligence in *their* work; they were workers *with him*, and therefore should be workers *like him*, and make their work their *meat*, as he did. The work they had to do was to *preach the gospel*, and to set up the kingdom of the Messiah. Now this work he here compares to *harvest work*, the gathering in of the fruits of the earth; and this similitude he prosecutes throughout the discourse, v. 35-38. Note, gospel time is harvest time, and gospel work harvest work. The harvest is before *appointed* and expected; so was the gospel. Harvest time is *busy* time; all hands must be then at work: every one must work for *himself*, that he may reap of the graces and comforts of the gospel: ministers must work *for God*, to gather in souls to him. Harvest time is *opportunity*, a short and limited time, which will not last always; and harvest work is work that must be done *then* or not at all; so the time of the enjoyment of the gospel is a particular season, which must be improved for its proper purposes; for, once past, it cannot be recalled. The disciples were to gather in a harvest of souls for Christ. Now he here suggests three things to them to quicken them to diligence: —

(1.) That it was *necessary work*, and the *occasion* for it very urgent and pressing (v. 35): *You say, It is four months to harvest; but I say, The fields are already white.* Here is,

[1.] A saying of Christ's disciples concerning the *corn-harvest*; there *are yet four months, and then comes harvest*, which may be taken either *generally* — “You say, for the encouragement of the sower at seed-time, that it will be but four months to the harvest.” With us it is but about four months between the barley-sowing and the barley-harvest, probably it was so with them as to other grain; or, “Particularly, now at this time you reckon it will be four months to next harvest, according to the ordinary course of providence.” The Jews' harvest began at the Passover, about Easter, much earlier in the year than ours, by which it appears that this journey of Christ from Judea to Galilee was in the winter, about the end of

November, for he travelled *all weathers* to do good. God has not only promised us a harvest every year, but has appointed the *weeks of harvest*; so that we know *when* to expect it, and take our measures accordingly.

[2.] A saying of Christ's concerning the *gospel harvest*; his heart was as much upon the fruits of his gospel as the hearts of others were upon the fruits of the earth; and to this he would lead the thoughts of his disciples: *Look, the fields are already white unto the harvest. First*, Here in *this* place, where they *now* were, there was harvest work for *him* to do. They would have him to *eat*, v. 31. "Eat!" saith he, "I have other work to do, that is more needful; *look* what crowds of Samaritans are coming out of the town over the fields that are ready to receive the gospel;" probably there were many now in view. People's forwardness to hear the word is a great excitement to ministers' diligence and liveliness in preaching it. *Secondly*, In *other places*, all the country over, there was harvest work enough for them all to do. "*Consider the regions*, think of the state of the country, and you will find there are multitudes as ready to receive the gospel as a field of corn that is fully ripe is ready to be reaped." The fields were now made *white to the harvest*,

1. By the *decree of God* revealed in the prophecies of the Old Testament. Now was the time when the gathering of the people should be to Christ (^{<0490>}Genesis 49:10), when great accessions should be made to the church and the bounds of it should be enlarged, and therefore it was time for them to be busy. It is a great encouragement to us to engage in any work for God, if we understand by the signs of the times that this is the proper season for that work, for then it will prosper.

2. By the *disposition of men*. John Baptist had *made ready a people prepared for the Lord*, ^{<0417>}Luke 1:17. Since he began to preach the kingdom of God *every man pressed into it*, ^{<0606>}Luke 16:16. This, therefore, was a time for the preachers of the gospel to apply themselves to their work with the utmost vigour, to *thrust in their sickle*, when the harvest was ripe, ^{<0445>}Revelation 14:15. It was *necessary* to work now, pity that such a season should be let slip. If the corn that is *ripe* be not reaped, it will *shed* and be lost, and the fowls will pick it up. If souls that are under convictions, and have some good inclinations, be not helped now, their hopeful beginnings will come to nothing, and they will be a prey to pretenders. It was also *easy* to work now; when the people's hearts are *prepared* the work will be done

suddenly, ^{<408>}2 Chronicles 29:36. It cannot but quicken ministers to take *pains* in preaching the word when they observe that people *take pleasure* in hearing it.

(2.) That it was *profitable* and *advantageous* work, which they themselves would be gainers by (v. 36): “*He that reapeth receiveth wages, and so shall you.*” Christ has undertaken to pay those well whom he employs in his work; for he will never do as Jehoiakim did, *who used his neighbour's service without wages* (^{<2023>}Jeremiah 22:13), or those who *by fraud kept back the hire of those particularly who reaped their corn-fields*, ^{<5084>}James 5:4. Christ's reapers, though they cry *to him* day and night, shall never have cause to cry *against him*, nor to say they served a hard Master. He that reapeth, not only *shall* but *does* receive wages. There is a present reward in the service of Christ, and his work is *its own wages*.

[1.] Christ's reapers have *fruit*: *He gathereth fruit unto life eternal*; that is, he shall both save himself and those that hear him, ^{<5046>}1 Timothy 4:16. If the faithful reaper save his own soul, that is fruit abounding to his account, it is fruit gathered to *life eternal*; and if, over and above this, he be instrumental to save the souls of others too, there is *fruit gathered*. Souls gathered to Christ are fruit, good fruit, the fruit that Christ seeks for (^{<4013>}Romans 1:13); it is gathered for Christ (^{<2081>}Song of Solomon 8:11, 12); it is gathered to *life eternal*. This is the comfort of faithful ministers, that their work has a tendency to the eternal salvation of precious souls.

[2.] They have *joy*: *That he that sows and they that reap may rejoice together*. The minister who is the happy instrument of beginning a good work is *he that sows*, as John Baptist; he that is employed to carry it on and perfect it is *he that reaps*: and both shall rejoice together. Note, *First*, Though God is to have all the glory of the success of the gospel, yet faithful ministers may themselves take the comfort of it. The reapers share in the *joy of harvest*, though the profits belong to the master, ^{<5029>}1 Thessalonians 2:19. *Secondly*, Those ministers who are variously gifted and employed should be so far from envying one another that they should rather mutually rejoice in each other's success and usefulness. Though all Christ's ministers are not alike *serviceable*, nor alike *successful*, yet, if they have obtained mercy of the Lord to be *faithful*, they shall all enter *together into the joy of their Lord* at last.

(3.) That it was *easy work*, and work that was half done to their hands by those that were gone before them: *One soweth, and another reapeth*, v. 37,

38. This sometimes denotes a grievous judgment upon him that sows, ^{<385>}Micah 6:15; ^{<380>}Deuteronomy 28:30, *Thou shalt sow, and another shall reap*; as ^{<381>}Deuteronomy 6:11, *Houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not*. So here. Moses, and the prophets, and John Baptist, had *paved* the way to the gospel, had sown the good seed which the New-Testament ministers did in effect but gather the fruit of. *I send you to reap that whereon you bestowed*, in comparison, no *labour*. ^{<340>}Isaiah 40:3-5.

[1.] This intimates *two things* concerning the Old-Testament ministry: — *First*, That it was very much *short* of the New-Testament ministry. Moses and the *prophets* sowed, but they could not be said to *reap*, so little did they see of the fruit of their labours. Their writings have done much more good since they left us than ever their preaching did. *Secondly*, That it was very *serviceable* to the New-Testament ministry, and made way for it. The writings of the prophets, which were read in the synagogues every sabbath day, raised people's expectations of the Messiah, and so prepared them to bid him welcome. Had it not been for the seed sown by the prophets, this Samaritan woman could not have said, *We know that Messiah cometh*. The writings of the Old Testament are in some respects more useful to us than they could be to those to whom they were first written, because better understood by the accomplishment of them. See ^{<311>}1 Peter 1:12; ^{<302>}Hebrews 4:2; ^{<365>}Romans 16:25, 26.

[2.] This also intimates *two things* concerning the ministry of the *apostles of Christ*. *First*, That it was a *fruitful* ministry: they were reapers that gathered in a great harvest of souls to Jesus Christ, and did more in seven years towards the setting up of the kingdom of God among men than the prophets of the Old Testament had done in twice so many ages. *Secondly*, That it was much *facilitated*, especially among the Jews, to whom they were first sent, by the writings of the prophets. The prophets *sowed in tears*, crying out, *We have laboured in vain*; the apostles *reaped in joy*, saying, *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph*. Note, From the labours of ministers that are dead and gone much good fruit may be reaped by the people that *survive* them and the ministers that *succeed* them. John Baptist, and those that assisted him, had *laboured*, and the disciples of Christ entered into their labours, built upon their foundation, and reaped the fruit of what they sowed. See what reason we have to bless God for those that are *gone before us*, for their preaching and their writing, for what they *did* and *suffered* in their day, for we are *entered into their labours*; their studies and services have made our work the easier. And

when the ancient and modern labourers, those that came into the vineyard at the third hour and those that came in at the eleventh, meet in the day of account, they will be so far from envying one another the honour of their respective services that both *they that sowed* and they that *reaped* shall rejoice together; and the great Lord of the harvest shall have the glory of all.

IV. The *good effect* which this visit Christ made to the Samaritans (*en passant*) had upon them, and the fruit which was now presently gathered among them, v. 39-42. See what impressions were made on them,

1. By the *woman's testimony* concerning *Christ*; though a single testimony, and of one of no good report, and the testimony no more than this, *He told me all that ever I did*, yet it had a good influence upon many. One would have thought that his telling the woman of her secret sins would have made them afraid of coming to him, lest he should tell them also of their faults; but they will venture that rather than not be acquainted with one who they had reason to think was a prophet. And *two things* they were brought to: —

(1.) To *credit Christ's word* (v. 39): *Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman*. So far they *believed on him* that they took him for a *prophet*, and were desirous to know the mind of God from him; this is favourably interpreted as believing on him. Now observe,

[1.] Who they were that believed: *Many of the Samaritans*, who were not of the house of Israel. Their faith was not only an *aggravation* of the *unbelief* of the Jews, from whom better might have been expected, but an *earnest* of the *faith* of the Gentiles, who would welcome that which the Jews rejected.

[2.] Upon what inducement they believed: *For the saying of the woman*. See here, *First*, How God is sometimes pleased to use very weak and unlikely instruments for the beginning and carrying on of a good work. A little maid directed a great prince to Elisha, ~~1~~2 Kings 5:2. *Secondly*, How great a matter a little fire kindles. Our Saviour, by instructing one poor woman, spread instruction to a whole town. Let not ministers be either *careless* in their preaching, or *discouraged* in it, because their hearers are *few* and *mean*; for, by doing good to *them*, good may be conveyed to *more*, and those that are more considerable. If they *teach every man his*

neighbour, and every man his brother, a great number may learn at *second hand*. Philip preached the gospel to a single gentleman in his chariot upon the road, and he not only received it himself, but carried it into his country, and propagated it there. *Thirdly*, See how good it is to speak *experimentally* of Christ and the things of God. This woman could say little of Christ, but what she did say she spoke feelingly: *He told me all that ever I did*. Those are most likely to do good that can tell what God has done *for their souls*, ^{<366>}Psalm 66:16.

(2.) They were brought to *court his stay* among them (v. 40): When they were come to him *they besought him that he would tarry with them*. Upon the woman's report, they believed him to be a prophet, and *came to him*; and, when they *saw* him, the meanness of his appearance and the manifest poverty of his outward condition did not lessen their esteem of him and expectations from him, but still they respected him as a prophet. Note, There is hope of those who are got over the vulgar prejudices that men have against *true worth* in a *low estate*. Blessed are they that are not offended in Christ at the *first sight*. So far were they from being offended in him that they begged he would tarry with them;

[1.] That they might *testify their respect* to him, and treat him with the honour and kindness due to his character. God's prophets and ministers are welcome guests to all those who sincerely embrace the gospel; as to Lydia, ^{<415>}Acts 16:15.

[2.] That they might receive instruction from him. Those that are taught of God are truly desirous to learn more, and to be better acquainted with Christ. Many would have flocked to one that would tell them *their fortune*, but these flocked to one that would tell them *their faults*, tell them of their sin and duty. The historian seems to lay an emphasis upon their being Samaritans; as ^{<213>}Luke 10:33; 17:16. The Samaritans had not that reputation for religion which the Jews had; yet the Jews, who saw Christ's miracles, drove him from them: while the Samaritans, who saw not his miracles, nor shared in his favours, invited him to them. The *proof* of the gospel's success is not always according to the *probability*, nor what is *experienced* according to what is *expected* either way. The Samaritans were taught by the custom of their country to be shy of conversation with the Jews. There were Samaritans that refused to let Christ go through their town (^{<415>}Luke 9:53), but these begged him to tarry with them. Note, It adds much to the praise of our love to Christ and his word if it conquers

the prejudices of education and custom, and sets light by the censures of men. Now we are told that Christ granted their request.

First, He abode there. Though it was a city of the Samaritans nearly adjoining to their temple, yet, when he was *invited*, he *tarried* there; though he was upon a journey, and had further to go, yet, when he had an opportunity of doing good, he *abode there*. That is no real *hindrance* which will *further* our account. Yet he abode there but *two days*, because he had other places to visit and other work to do, and those *two days* were as many as came to the share of this city, out of the few days of our Saviour's sojourning upon earth.

Secondly, We are told what impressions were made upon them by Christ's own word, and his personal converse with them (v. 41, 42); what he *said* and *did* there is not related, whether he healed their sick or no; but it is intimated, in the effect, that he said and did that which convinced them that he was the Christ; and the labours of a minister are best told by the good fruit of them. Their hearing of *him* had a good effect, but *now their eyes saw him*; and the effect was,

1. That their number grew (v. 41): *Many more believed*: many that would not be persuaded to go out of the town to him were yet wrought upon, when he came among them, to believe in him. Note, It is comfortable to see the number of believers; and sometimes the zeal and forwardness of some may be a means to provoke many, and to stir them up to a holy emulation, ~~¶~~ Romans 11:14.

2. That their faith grew. Those who had been wrought upon by the report of the woman now saw cause to say, *Now we believe, not because of thy saying*, v. 42. Here are three things in which their *faith grew*: —

(1.) In the matter of it, or that which they did believe. Upon the testimony of the woman, they believed him to be *a prophet*, or some extraordinary messenger from heaven; but now that they have conversed with him they believe that he is *the Christ*, the *Anointed One*, the very same that was promised to the fathers and expected by them, and that, being the *Christ*, he is the *Saviour of the world*; for the work to which he was anointed was to *save his people from their sins*. They believed him to be the Saviour not only of the Jews, but *of the world*, which they hoped would take them in, though Samaritans, for it

was promised that he should be *Salvation to the ends of the earth*,
²⁸⁰⁶Isaiah 49:6.

(2.) In the *certainty* of it; their faith now grew up to a full assurance: *We know* that this is indeed the *Christ*; *alethos* — *truly*; not a pretended Christ, but a real one; not a *typical* Saviour, as many under the Old Testament, but *truly* one. Such an assurance as this of divine truths is what we should labour after; not only, We think it probable, and are willing to suppose that *Jesus* may be the *Christ*, but, We know that he is *indeed the Christ*.

(3.) In the *ground* of it, which was a kind of spiritual sensation and experience: *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves*. They had before *believed for her saying*, and it was well, it was a good step; but now they find *further* and much *firmer* footing for their faith: “*Now we believe* because we have *heard him ourselves*, and have heard such excellent and divine truths, accompanied with such commanding power and evidence, that we are abundantly satisfied and assured that *this is the Christ*.” This is like what the queen of Sheba said of Solomon (¹¹⁰⁶1 Kings 10:6, 7): *The one half was not told me*. The Samaritans, who believed for the woman's saying, now gained further light; for *to him that hath shall be given*; he that is faithful in a little shall be trusted with more. In this instance we may see how *faith comes by hearing*.

[1.] Faith comes *to the birth* by hearing the *report of men*. These Samaritans, for the sake of the woman's saying, believed so far as to *come and see*, to come and make trial. Thus the instructions of parents and preachers, and the testimony of the church and our experienced neighbours, *recommend* the doctrine of Christ *to our acquaintance*, and incline us to entertain it as highly probable. But,

[2.] Faith *comes to its growth*, strength, and maturity, by hearing the testimony of Christ himself; and this goes further, and recommends his doctrine *to our acceptance*, and obliges us to believe it as undoubtedly certain. We were induced to look into the scriptures *by the saying* of those who told us that in them they had found eternal life; but when we ourselves have found it in them too, have experienced the enlightening, convincing, regenerating, sanctifying, comforting, power of the word, now we believe, *not for their saying*, but because we have searched them

ourselves: and our faith *stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*, ^{<412>}1 Corinthians 2:5; ^{<619>}1 John 5:9, 10.

Thus was the seed of the gospel sown in Samaria. What effect there was of this afterwards does not appear, but we find that four or five years after, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, he found such blessed remains of this good work now wrought that the *people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spoke*, ^{<418>}Acts 8:5, 6, 8. But as some were pliable to good so were others to evil, whom Simon Magus bewitched with his sorceries, v. 9, 10.

^{<404>}JOHN 4:43-54

THE NOBLEMAN'S SON RESTORED

In these verses we have,

I. Christ's *coming* into Galilee, v. 43. Though he was as welcome among the Samaritans as he could be any where, and had better success, yet *after two days* he left them, not so much because they were Samaritans, and he would not confirm those in their prejudices against him who said, *He is a Samaritan* (^{<418>}John 8:48), but because *he must preach to other cities*, ^{<418>}Luke 4:43. *He went into Galilee*, for there he spent much of his time. Now see here,

1. Whither Christ went; into Galilee, into the country of Galilee, but not to Nazareth, which was strictly *his own* country. He went among the villages, but declined going to Nazareth, the head city, for a reason here given, which *Jesus himself testified*, who knew the temper of his countrymen, the hearts of all men, and the experiences of all prophets, and it is this, *That a prophet has no honour in his own country*. Note,

(1.) Prophets ought to have honour, because God has put honour upon them and we do or may receive benefit by them.

(2.) The honour due to the Lord's prophets has very often been denied them, and contempt put upon them.

(3.) This *due* honour is more frequently denied them *in their own country*; see ^{<414>}Luke 4:24; ^{<415>}Matthew 13:57. Not that it is universally true (no rule

but has some exceptions), but it holds for the most part. Joseph, when he began to be a prophet, was most hated by his brethren; David was disdained by his brother (^{497B}1 Samuel 17:28); Jeremiah was maligned by the men of Anathoth (^{241D}Jeremiah 11:21), Paul by his countrymen the Jews; and Christ's near kinsmen spoke most slightly of him, (^{487B}John 7:5. Men's pride and envy make them scorn to be instructed by those who once were their school-fellows and play-fellows. Desire of novelty, and of that which is far-fetched and dear-bought, and seems to drop out of the sky to them, makes them despise those persons and things which they have been long used to and know the rise of.

(4.) It is a great discouragement to a minister to go among a people who have no value for him or his labours. Christ would not go to Nazareth, because he knew how little respect he should have there.

(5.) It is just with God to deny his gospel to those that despise the ministers of it. They that mock the messengers forfeit the benefit of the message. (^{491B}Matthew 21:35, 41.

2. What entertainment he met with among the Galileans in the country (v. 45): They *received him*, bade him welcome, and cheerfully attended on his doctrine. Christ and his gospel are not sent in vain; if they have not honour with *some*, they shall have with *others*. Now the reason given why these Galileans were so ready to receive Christ is because they had seen *the miracles he did at Jerusalem*, v. 45. Observe,

(1.) They went up to Jerusalem at the feast, the feast of the passover. The Galileans lay very remote from Jerusalem, and their way thither lay through the country of the Samaritans, which was troublesome for a Jew to pass through, worse than Baca's valley of old; yet, in obedience to God's command, they *went up to the feast*, and there they became acquainted with Christ. Note, They that are diligent and constant in attending on public ordinances some time or other meet with more spiritual benefit than they expect.

(2.) At Jerusalem they *saw* Christ's miracles, which recommended him and his doctrine very much to their faith and affections. The miracles were wrought for the benefit of those at Jerusalem; yet the Galileans who were accidentally there got more advantage by them than they did for whom they were chiefly designed. Thus the word preached to a *mixed multitude* may perhaps edify *occasional* hearers more than the constant auditory.

3. What city he went to. When he would go to a city, he chose to go to Cana of Galilee, *where he had made the water wine* (v. 46); thither he went, to see if there were any good fruits of that miracle remaining; and, if there were, to confirm their faith, and water what he had planted. The evangelist mentions this miracle here to teach us to keep in remembrance what we *have seen* of the works of Christ.

II. His *curing the nobleman's son* that was sick of a fever. This story is not recorded by any other of the evangelists; it comes in ~~4023~~ Matthew 4:23.

Observe,

1. Who the *petitioner* was, and who the *patient*: the petitioner was a *nobleman*; the patient was his son: *There was a certain nobleman. Regulus* (so the Latin), a *little king*; so called, either for the largeness of his estate, or the extent of his power, or the royalties that belonged to his manor. Some understand it as denoting his *preferment* — he was a courtier in some office about the king; others as denoting his *party* — he was an Herodian, a royalist, a prerogative-man, one that espoused the interests of the Herods, father and son; perhaps it was Chuza, Herod's steward (~~4028~~ Luke 8:3), or Manaen, Herod's foster-brother, ~~4030~~ Acts 13:1. There were saints in Caesar's household. The father a nobleman, and yet the son sick; for dignities and titles of honour will be no security to persons and families from the assaults of sickness and death. It was fifteen miles from Capernaum where this nobleman lived to Cana, where Christ now was; yet this affliction in his family sent him so far to Christ.

2. How the petitioner made *his application* to the physician. Having heard that *Jesus was come out of Judea to Galilee*, and finding that he did not come towards Capernaum, but turned off towards the other side of the country, he *went to him* himself, and *besought him to come and heal his son*, v. 47. See here,

(1.) His *tender affection* to his son, that when he was sick he would spare no pains to get help for him.

(2.) His *great respect* to our Lord Jesus, that he would come himself to wait upon him, when he might have sent a servant; and that he *besought him*, when, as a man in authority, some would think he might have ordered his attendance. The greatest men, when they come to God, must become

beggars, and sue *sub forma pauperis* — as paupers. As to the errand he came upon, we may observe a mixture in *his faith*.

[1.] There was *sincerity* in it; he did believe that Christ could heal his son, though his disease was dangerous. It is probable he had physicians to him, who had given him over; but he believed that Christ could cure him when the case seemed deplorable.

[2.] Yet there was *infirmity* in his faith; he believed that Christ could heal his son, but, as it should seem, he thought he could not heal him at a distance, and therefore he besought him that he would *come down* and heal him, expecting, as Naaman did, that he would come and *strike his hand* over the patient, as if he could not cure him but by a *physical contact*. Thus we are apt to *limit the Holy One of Israel*, and to stint him to our forms. The centurion, a Gentile, a soldier, was so strong in faith as to say, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof*, ^{<408>}Matthew 8:8. This nobleman, a Jew, must have Christ to come down, though it was a good day's journey, and despairs of a cure unless he come down, as if he must teach Christ how to work. We are encouraged to *pray*, but we are not allowed to prescribe: Lord, heal me; but, whether with a word or a touch, *thy will be done*.

3. The gentle rebuke he met with in this address (v. 48): *Jesus said to him*, “I see how it is; *except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe*, as the Samaritans did, though they saw no signs and wonders, and therefore I must work miracles among you.” Though he was a *nobleman*, and now in *grief* about his son, and had shown great respect to Christ in coming so far to him, yet Christ gives him a reproof. Men's dignity in the world shall not exempt them from the rebukes of the word or providence; for Christ reproveth not *after the hearing of his ears*, but *with equity*, ^{<291>}Isaiah 11:3, 4. Observe, Christ first shows him his sin and weakness, to prepare him for mercy, and then grants his request. Those whom Christ intends to honour with his *favours* he first *humbles* with his *frowns*. The *Comforter* shall first *convince*. Herod longed to see some miracle (^{<423>}Luke 23:8), and this courtier was of the same mind, and the generality of the people too. Now that which is blamed is,

(1.) That, whereas they had heard by credible and incontestable report of the miracles he had wrought in other places, they would not believe except they saw them with their own eyes, ^{<403>}Luke 4:23. They must be *honoured*, and they must be *humoured*, or they will not be *convinced*. Their country

must be graced, and their curiosity gratified, with signs and wonders, or else, though the doctrine of Christ be sufficiently proved by miracles wrought elsewhere, they *will not believe*. Like Thomas, they will yield to no method of conviction but what they shall prescribe.

(2.) That, whereas they had seen divers miracles, the evidence of which they could not gainsay, but which sufficiently proved Christ to be a teacher come from God, and should now have applied themselves to him for instruction in his doctrine, which by its native excellency would have *gently led them on*, in believing, to a spiritual perfection, instead of this they would go no further in believing than they were *driven* by signs and wonders. The *spiritual* power of the word did not *affect them*, did not *attract* them, but only the *sensible* power of miracles, which were for those who believe not, while *prophesying* was for those that believe, ~~412~~ 1 Corinthians 14:22. Those that admire *miracles* only, and *despise prophesying*, rank themselves with unbelievers.

4. His continued importunity in his address (v. 49): *Sir, come down ere my child die. Kyrie — Lord*; so it should be rendered. In this reply of his we have,

(1.) Something that was commendable: he took the reproof patiently; he spoke to Christ respectfully. Though he was one of those that wore soft clothing, yet he could bear reproof. It is none of the privileges of peerage to be above the reproofs of the word of Christ; but it is a sign of a good temper and disposition in men, especially in great men, when they can be told of their faults and not be angry. And, as he did not take the reproof for an affront, so he did not take it for a denial, but still prosecuted his request, and continued to wrestle till he prevailed. Nay, he might argue thus: “If Christ heal *my soul*, surely he will heal *my son*; if he cure *my* unbelief, he will cure *his* fever.” This is the method Christ takes, first to work *upon* us, and then to work *for* us; and there is hope if we find him entering upon this method.

(2.) Something that was blameworthy, that was his infirmity; for,

[1.] He seems to take no notice of the reproof Christ gave him, says nothing to it, by way either of confession or of excuse, for he is so wholly taken up with concern about his child that he can mind nothing else. Note, The sorrow of the world is a great prejudice to our profiting by the word of

Christ. Inordinate care and grief are thorns that choke the good seed; see ~~(188)~~ Exodus 6:9.

[2.] He still discovered the weakness of his faith in the power of Christ. *First*, He must have Christ to come down, thinking that else he could do the child no kindness. It is hard to persuade ourselves that distance of time and place are no obstructions to the knowledge and power of our Lord Jesus; yet so it is: he sees afar off, for his word, the word of his power, *runs very swiftly*. *Secondly*, He believes that Christ could heal a *sick* child, but not that he could raise a *dead* child, and therefore, “O *come down, ere my child die,*” as if then it would be too late; whereas Christ has the same power over death that he has over bodily diseases. He forgot that Elijah and Elisha had raised dead children; and is Christ's power inferior to theirs? Observe what haste he is in: *Come down, ere my child die;* as if there were danger of Christ's slipping his time. *He that believeth does not make haste,* but refers himself to Christ. “Lord, what and when and how thou pleasest.”

5. The answer of peace which Christ gave to his request at last (v. 50): *Go thy way, thy son liveth*. Christ here gives us an instance,

(1.) Of his *power*, that he not only could heal, but could heal with so much ease, without the trouble of a visit. Here is nothing *said*, nothing *done*, nothing *ordered* to be done, and yet the cure wrought: *Thy son liveth*. The healing beams of the Sun of righteousness dispense benign influences from one end of heaven to another, and *there is nothing hid from the heat thereof*. Though Christ is now in heaven, and his church on earth, he can *send from above*. This nobleman would have Christ *come down and heal his son*; Christ will heal his son, and not *come down*. And thus the cure is the sooner wrought, the nobleman's mistake rectified, and his faith confirmed; so that the thing was better done in Christ's way. When he denies what we ask, he gives what is much more to our advantage; we ask for ease, he gives patience. Observe, His power was exerted by his word. In saying, *Thy son lives*, he showed that he has *life in himself*, and power to *quicken whom he will*. Christ's saying, *Thy soul lives*, makes it alive.

(2.) Of his *pity*; he observed the nobleman to be *in pain* about his son, and his natural affection discovered itself in that word, *Ere my child, my dear child, die*; and therefore Christ dropped the reproof, and gave him assurance of the recovery of his child; for he knows how a father *pities his children*.

6. The nobleman's belief of the word of Christ: He *believed*, and *went away*. Though Christ did not gratify him so far as to go down with him, he is satisfied with the method Christ took, and reckons he has gained his point. How quickly, how easily, is that which is lacking in our faith perfected by the word and power of Christ. Now he *sees no sign or wonder*, and yet *believes* the wonder done.

(1.) Christ said, *Thy son liveth*, and the man *believed* him; not only believed the omniscience of Christ, that he *knew* the child had recovered, but the omnipotence of Christ, that the cure was *effected* by his word. He left him *dying*; yet, when Christ said, *He lives*, like the father of the faithful, *against hope he believed in hope*, and *staggered not through unbelief*.

(2.) Christ said, *Go thy way*; and, as an evidence of the sincerity of his faith, he *went his way*, and gave neither Christ nor himself any further disturbance. He did not press Christ to come down, did not say, "If he do recover, yet a visit will be acceptable;" no, he seems no further solicitous, but, like Hannah, he goes his way, and his countenance is *no more sad*. As one entirely satisfied, he made no great haste home; did not hurry home that night, but returned leisurely, as one that was perfectly easy in his own mind.

7. The further confirmation of his faith, by comparing notes with his servants at his return.

(1.) His servants met him with the agreeable news of the child's recovery, v. 51. Probably they met him not far from his own house, and, knowing what their master's cares were, they were willing as soon as they could to make him easy. David's servants were loth to tell him when the child was dead. Christ said, *Thy son liveth*; and now the servants say the same. Good news will meet those that hope in God's word.

(2.) He enquired what hour the child began to recover (v. 52); not as if he doubted the influence of Christ's word upon the child's recovery, but he was desirous to have his faith confirmed, that he might be able to satisfy any to whom he should mention the miracle; for it was a material circumstance. Note,

[1.] It is good to furnish ourselves with all the corroborating proofs and evidences that may be, to strengthen our faith in the word of Christ, that it may grow up to *a full assurance*. *Show me a token for good*.

[2.] The diligent comparison of the works of Christ with his word will be of great use to us for the confirming of our faith. This was the course the nobleman took: *He enquired of the servants the hour when he began to amend*; and they told him, *Yesterday at the seventh hour* (at one o'clock in the afternoon, or, as some think this evangelist reckons, at seven o'clock at night) *the fever left him*; not only he began to amend, but he was perfectly well on a sudden; so *the father knew that it was at the same hour* when Jesus said to him, *Thy son liveth*. As the word of God, well-studied, will help us to understand his providences, so the providence of God, well observed, will help us to understand his word; for God is every day *fulfilling the scripture*. Two things would help to confirm his faith: — *First*, That the child's recovery was *sudden* and not *gradual*. They name the precise time to an hour: *Yesterday*, not *about*, but *at the seventh hour*, *the fever left him*; not it *abated*, or began to *decrease*, but it *left him* in an instant. The word of Christ did not work like physic, which must have time to operate, and produce the effect, and perhaps *cures by expectation* only; no, with Christ it was *dictum factum* — *he spoke and it was done*; not, He spoke and it was *set a doing*. *Secondly*, That it was just at the same time that Christ spoke to him: *at that very hour*. The synchronisms and coincidents of events add very much to the beauty and harmony of Providence. Observe the *time*, and the *thing* itself will be more illustrious, for every thing is beautiful *in its time*; at the very time when it is *promised*, as Israel's deliverance (^{<024>}Exodus 12:41); at the very time when it is *prayed for*, as Peter's deliverance, ^{<412>}Acts 12:12. In men's works, distance of place is the delay of time and the retarding of business; but it is not so in the works of Christ. The pardon, and peace, and comfort, and spiritual healing, which he speaks in heaven, are, if he pleases, at the same time effected and wrought in the souls of believers; and, when these two come to be *compared* in the great day, Christ will be *glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*.

8. The *happy effect and issue of this*. The bringing of the cure to the family brought salvation to it.

(1.) The nobleman *himself believed*. He had before *believed* the word of Christ, with reference to this particular occasion; but now he *believed in*

Christ as the Messiah promised, and became one of his disciples. Thus the *particular* experience of the power and efficacy of *one* word of Christ may be a happy means to introduce and settle the whole authority of Christ's dominion in the soul. Christ has many ways of gaining the heart, and by the grant of a *temporal* mercy may make way for *better* things.

(2.) His *whole house* believed likewise.

[1.] Because of the *interest* they all had in the miracle, which preserved the *blossom* and *hopes* of the family; this affected them all, and endeared Christ to them, and recommended him to their best thoughts.

[2.] Because of the *influence* the master of the family had upon them *all*. A master of a family cannot give faith to those under his charge, nor *force* them to believe, but he may be instrumental to remove *external prejudices*, which obstruct the operation of the evidence, and then the work is more than half done. *Abraham* was famous for this (^{<1818>}Genesis 18:19), and Joshua, ^{<1825>}Joshua 24:15. This was a *nobleman*, and probably he had a *great household*; but, when he comes into Christ's school, he brings them all along with him. What a blessed change was here in this house, occasioned by the sickness of the child! This should reconcile us to afflictions; we know not what good may follow from them. Probably, the conversion of this *nobleman* and his family at Capernaum might induce Christ to come afterwards, and settle at Capernaum, as his head-quarters in Galilee. When great men receive the gospel, they may be instrumental to bring it to the places where they live.

9. Here is the evangelist's remark upon this cure (v. 54); *This is the second miracle*, referring to ^{<1821>}John 2:11, where the turning of water into wine is said to be the first; that was soon after his first return out of Judea, this soon after his second. In Judea he had wrought many miracles, ^{<1822>}John 3:2; 4:45. They had the first offer; but, being driven thence, he wrought miracles in Galilee. Somewhere or other Christ will find a welcome. People may, if they please, shut the sun out of *their own houses*, but they cannot shut it *out of the world*. This is noted to be the *second* miracle,

1. To remind us of the first, wrought in the same place some months before. *Fresh* mercies should revive the remembrance of former mercies, as former mercies should encourage our hopes of further mercies. Christ keeps account of his favours, whether we do or no.

2. To let us know that *this* cure was *before* those many cures which the other evangelists mention to be wrought in Galilee, ~~☞~~ Matthew 4:23; ~~☞~~ Mark 1:34; ~~☞~~ Luke 4:40. Probably, the patient being a person of quality, the cure was the more talked of and sent him crowds of patients; when this nobleman applied himself to Christ, multitudes followed. What abundance of good may great men do, if they be good men!