

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SOURCE.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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“The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?”—John iv. 11.

THIS was a sensible and very important question. May the Holy Spirit graciously enable us to answer it aright! Our Lord's great object, in his talk with this woman at the well, was not to convince her of his oratorical power, for he spoke to her as simply as one would speak to a child. Many sermons are far too elaborate in their construction; they are evidently intended to display the preacher's own powers. But if we would imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Prince of preachers, we should not strain after effect; and we should get a better effect, without any straining, by taking the living truth, and telling out, as simply as possible, the story of salvation.

Jesus Christ's sole object, in talking with this woman, was to bring her to salvation. That is also my object with regard to my hearers and readers; and, my dear unconverted friend, if you shall agree with me in that object, and shall breathe the prayer, “Lord, help the preacher so to speak to my soul that I may find Christ,” there will be joy among the angels of heaven over sinners repenting and returning unto the Lord.

Our Saviour, in seeking to win this woman to himself, was completely successful. He hit the mark he aimed at; his shot struck the very centre of the target. Only one sermon was preached to her;—nay, it was hardly a sermon,—just a brief talk with her, and the woman received the living word. Alas! there are some of you, who have had a great many affectionate talks, from godly mothers and fathers, or from earnest ministers, teachers, or other Christian friends; but, so far, they have not been so successful as Jesus of Nazareth was on this occasion. You have heard many sermons;—you cannot tell how many you have heard, and some of them have

produced some effect upon you; but, up to the present, you have not been slain by the sword of the Spirit, nor quickened by Jesus Christ the Life-giver. I hope the Lord is about to do what has not been done before; and, with the accumulated responsibility upon you of having heard the gospel so often in vain, I think you should the more earnestly breathe the prayer to God, "O Lord, let this be the effectual time of speaking to me! Call me as thou didst the Samaritan woman. While the preacher is speaking, and I am listening to thy Word as it shall be proclaimed, graciously grant that Jesus may be revealed to my soul, and that he may say to me, 'I that speak unto thee am he.'" If you are brought to pray that prayer from your heart, I believe that it will be answered, and so, as I have already said, there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God over you. Our Lord aimed at this woman's conversion by simply instructing her, and also by bringing the truth home to her conscience. Let us see whether, if we do the same thing, trusting in the same Spirit that anointed our Master, similar results will follow here as followed at the well of Sychar.

First, then, I am going to *expound the teaching which preceded the woman's question, and suggested it*; then, secondly, I will *answer the question*; and then, thirdly, I will *draw some inferences from it*.

I. First, then, WHAT WAS IT THAT LED THIS WOMAN TO ASK OUR SAVIOUR THE QUESTION, "From whence then hast thou that living water?"

Jesus Christ had told her that, had she known him, she would have asked of him, and he would have given her living water. There was Jacob's well; they were both of them close to it, and they could look down into it. There was some water in it, but the well of Sychar was not a well of "living water." You probably know that the expression which is translated "living water" refers to water that springs up from a fountain; but the well of Sychar is not a well of that kind. The water in it is surface water, the gatherings of the neighbouring hills; land water, not spring water. Jesus Christ seemed to draw his illustration from that fact: "The water in that well *runs* into it, and is drawn out from it; but if you had asked me, I would have given you water that bubbles up,—water that is full of life, very different from this well-water,—water from the great deep that 'coucheth beneath.'" You know the difference between those two sorts of water. I have illustrated it before by the two wells which are in the courtyard of the Doge's palace at Venice. One of them has its copper or bronze margin worn with holes cut by the string by which little cans are let down to fetch up the water that wells up from the spring; it is so precious because it springs up from a living fountain. The other well, which looks very like the one I have mentioned, is not worn at all. Very few people care to draw from it; and the reason is, because it is simply filled with water brought into the city. It is flat, dead water, not "living water" at all. So Jesus Christ had used this illustration in speaking with the woman: "You have come here, to draw this water out of the well,—the mere rain water that runs into Jacob's well; but if you had asked of me, I would have given

you water of a far better sort,—water with life in it,—water which would be life unto you,—water which would be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

The woman caught the figure, though she did not at first understand its spiritual meaning. Its spiritual meaning is this,—that *Jesus Christ has grace in himself,—grace to give to sinners,—grace to give to those who ask him for it*; for he said to the woman, “Thou wouldest have asked of *him*, and *he* would have given thee living water.” In the Lord Jesus Christ, then, there is a deep fount of grace always springing up within himself. “It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;” and it does dwell in him. To him, the Spirit has been given without measure. There is no meagre supply of grace in Christ. He hath an abundance, and I might almost say a redundance for ever springing up within himself. And this he has on purpose to give away. He has it not for himself, for he needs it not. Almighty and ever-blessed as he is by nature, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, he needs no grace for himself; but what he has is all for him to give away. He came into this world to open up channels by which he might distribute all his grace to thirsty souls.

And he gives it all away for the asking,—almighty grace to be had for the asking! No human merit can demand it, and no performance of any earthly ceremony is required in order to obtain it. Here it is in a nutshell: “*Thou wouldest have asked . . . , and he would have given.*” “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God;” and if any man lack pardon, let him do the same. If any man lack anything that is essential to his purity, to his happiness, to his present life, or to his future life, it is stored up in Christ, and it can be had from him for the asking. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

The teaching of the text, to you unconverted people, is this:—if ever you are saved, it must be by the grace of God. That grace is in Jesus Christ; it has been put into Jesus Christ, not because he needs it himself, but that he may distribute it; and he does distribute it, and whosoever asketh it of him receiveth it from him; “for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” And when you receive this grace, it will remain in you. It will not be like ordinary water, which you drink, and which then is done with, but it will abide in you. It shall turn into a well of living water; inside your soul there shall be an ever-springing well of life, which never shall cease to flow, either in summer or in winter, and which, in glory, shall enable you to understand what that eternal life was which Jesus gave to you, and of which he said to his Father, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

II. Now, secondly, I am going TO ANSWER THE QUESTION THAT THIS WOMAN PUT TO CHRIST.

Her question was, “‘From whence then hast thou that living water?’ How didst thou come to have it? If thou hast living

water, how is it that thou hast it? It is not in that well; and even if it were there, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: 'from whence then hast thou that living water?'" What an important question this is to put in a spiritual sense! Lord Jesus, we hear that thou hast an abundance of grace, treasured up in thee, which thou dost freely distribute amongst those who ask thee for it; but how camest thou by it? How is it that thou hast this grace? In what way did it come to be stored up in thee? "From whence then hast thou that living water?" While I am asking this question, I pray every unconverted one, who desires to find peace with God, to say to himself or herself, "I am now to hear how it is that Christ can save; I am now to learn why it is that he is the Giver of grace to the guilty." Perhaps, dear friend, while you are listening, you may see something in Christ which you never saw before, and faith may spring up in your soul almost insensibly to yourself; and ere you go out of this place, you may be able to say, "I cannot fully explain this great mystery, but I know sufficient of the Lord Jesus Christ to believe in him; I cannot but believe in him now that I see how it is that he is so mighty to save."

The first answer to the question, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" is this:—*He has it in his very nature.* Jesus Christ is able to save because he is divine. "With God, all things are possible;" and Jesus Christ is God, so all things are possible with him. "God is love;" and Jesus Christ is God, so he, too, is love. God possesseth all things; and Christ is God, so he hath all things freely to distribute among the sons of men. Jesus of Nazareth, as he sat on the well at Sychar, seemed to that woman, at first, to be only an ordinary Jew, and she wondered that he, being a Jew, should speak to her, a woman of Samaria. But veiled under the form of that Son of Mary, there was God himself made flesh, and dwelling among men. Oh, it is glorious to think that he, who has come to redeem you, is no mere man, but over all God blessed for ever! If a man were to tell me that he was going to take the world upon his shoulders, I should distrust his power to bear such a burden, even though he were as strong as Samson. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can not only bear up this world, but the entire universe, upon his hand, for all fulness of power dwells in him. If any man were to say that he would take upon himself the sins of the whole world, I should be even more diffident than if he proposed to play the part of Atlas, and to bear the world upon his shoulders. But when Jesus, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, takes upon himself the form of a servant, and yet has the iniquity of us all laid upon him, I can understand how he can bear the tremendous load, for he bears the earth's huge pillars up, and spreads the heavens abroad. When we think of Jesus as divine, nothing seems to be impossible to him. The strength of sin, which is the law, is not too great for him who made the law, and kept it, too. The sting of death, which is sin, shall certainly not be able to destroy, or even to resist, the almighty power of him who hath the keys of death and of hell.

If you commit your soul, my dear friend, to the keeping of a man, or of an angel, you will have made a fatal mistake. If all the angels in heaven were to band themselves together to save a soul, and were to ask me to be the soul that they would seek to save, I would have nothing to do with them. Nobody who is less than Deity can save sinners, and Jesus is "mighty to save" because he is God as well as man. This is a basis upon which the soul's hope may well be founded and established for ever. If the interposing Mediator be indeed "very God of very God,"—and he is,—we see whence he hath this living water, and we can come to him with the utmost confidence, knowing that he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

Another answer to the Samaritan woman's question is that Christ has this living water *by the divine purpose and appointment*. It was the divine plan that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity, should be appointed to be the treasury of grace for all his elect ones. In the council chamber of eternity, it was ordained that the Son of God should, in due time, come into this world, and take upon himself our nature, and also our sin, and he was set apart, in the eternal purpose, so to do; and, in the proclamation of the gospel, that decree of the Lord is published to the sons of men. The Lord God hath set forth his Son Jesus as the one propitiation for the sins of men; he is authorized by God to be a Saviour, and he comes here, by divine appointment, to bestow upon us the blessings of his grace. When an ambassador comes to this land from another country, he brings credentials to prove that he is duly accredited by the authority that he represents, and our Lord Jesus Christ comes to men with credentials which prove that he was appointed by God to this service before all worlds were made, and that he will be divinely sustained in that appointment till time shall be no more; and then, having completed his mediatorial work, he will surrender the Kingdom to his Father, and God shall be All-in-all. So now, as Mediator, he stands, appointed by the Most High, to distribute the blessings of his grace, which is the living water of which our text speaks.

To me, this truth is inconceivably sweet; for, when I trust in Jesus Christ to save me, I rejoice to know that he is no amateur saviour, who has come on his own authority, and at his own bidding. But, behold, the Father himself hath sent him. He is the Messias, the Sent One, the Anointed, the Christ of God. God must accept his Son, for he sent him into the world for this very purpose. If I bring to God the blood of Jesus as the atonement for my sin, he must accept it, for he himself ordained it as the medium of reconciliation. My blessed Saviour, if I hide in thee, I cannot be either dragged or driven from thee, for God has set thee apart to be the City of Refuge to which my poor soul may flee for protection and shelter. God hath appointed Jesus "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." It seems to me that these are two grand answers to the question of the Samaritan woman, "From whence then hast thou

that living water?"—first, from his own natural and essential Deity; and, secondly, as the Mediator appointed and sustained by the eternal Father.

But, thirdly, the Lord Jesus could give a further answer to the woman's question by referring to *the anointing which he had received from the Holy Spirit*. On the day of his baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit descended upon him, like a dove, and abode upon him. He could truly say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for the work of distributing the living water to the sons and daughters of men. He was God's CHRISTOS,—God's "Anointed." Those are two very precious titles which are often put together,—Jesus Christ,—the anointed Saviour; they describe both his office and his qualification for that office. Well, then, behold Jesus Christ, with the fulness of the Spirit abiding upon him, coming into the world endowed with all those divine gifts which, as Mediator, he needed, that he might be able to carry out the work which the Lord had of old appointed him to do. The Spirit of God is still with him, and he gives the Spirit to those who seek him. This, then, is the third answer to the woman's question, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" He has it because the Spirit of God is upon him.

There is another answer, which may convince some, who have not been comforted or enlightened by the previous ones; it could not have been given to the woman, at the time she put the question, except by way of anticipation; but we can now say that Christ has this living water *because his redeeming work is finished*. He had it, virtually, during his life on earth, in foresight of the work which he had undertaken to finish. Hence it was that multitudes of souls went to heaven long before Christ had paid the ransom for them, his pledge and promise being a guarantee that the great deed would surely be accomplished. Think of this, that the Son of God, whom the holy angels worshipped without ceasing, should have come hither in the form of a babe, who nestled in a woman's arms,—that he might save us! Oh, let the joy-bells ring as we think of God in human flesh! Does not the thought of Christ's incarnation bring hope to the lost? May not sinners see, in it, how the living water finds a channel in which it can flow down to them in the person of the incarnate God,—“Emmanuel, God with us”? “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” He lived for thirty years, in this world, a quiet, humble life, working out a righteousness for all his people, fulfilling all the relationships of life into which he was brought; and so, when he came to be baptized, he openly revealed the work that he was doing all his life, namely, fulfilling all righteousness. Throughout the whole of his earthly career, he was living

for us, and working for us, and the merit of his unique life stands to the credit of all who believe in him. At last, the time came for him to die, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission." The living water could not come to us unless Christ's heart was opened to let it out. He must give his life a ransom for many, or else there could never be any ransomed souls. You know the sad, sad story. Jesus goes forth from the place where he had instituted the memorial supper, he enters Gethsemane's garden, utters a series of agonizing prayers, in the course of which a shower of his precious blood falls upon the earth where he kneels. He rises from the ground, meets his betrayer, and receives his cruel traitor kiss. He thrusts aside the sword with which his too eager disciple would have defended him; and he is led like a lamb to the slaughter; and like a sheep dumb before her shearers, he opens not his mouth to answer his accusers. He gives his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that pluck out the hair; he hides not his face from shame and spitting. Yea, though he is Lord of all, he voluntarily yields himself up to a felon's death, and gives up his immaculate body, which had never been stained by sin, to be pierced with the nails, and every bone to be dislocated by the jar as the cross is first lifted up, and then hurled down into its place. He hangs in the burning sun, parched with fever. He has no friend or comforter, for even God has forsaken him while he is bearing his people's sin, and his enemies mock and laugh at his agonies. He yields up his soul unto death without a murmuring word. He knew that the price of pardon was his blood, but his pity ne'er withdrew; and, until he could say, "It is finished," he held on to life. When it was finished, he submitted himself to death, and the Lord of glory was laid in the new tomb in the garden. Now, if you ask me, "From whence, then, has Jesus of Nazareth, God incarnate, that living water?" I answer in three words,—“Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha.” Put these three together;—the place where he sweat great drops of blood, the place where he was scourged, and the place where he died,—and you can comprehend whence he hath this living water.

Another answer to the woman's question, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" is that he hath it in the reward which his Father promised to him for his mediatorial work: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son is to receive a full reward for all that he endured, and all that he has so far received of his Father is not for himself, for he needs nothing; but he has received it that he may distribute it amongst the rebellious children of men. The psalmist truly sang, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." And this is whence he has that living water. Poor soul, groping in the dark, and trying to believe in Jesus, ought not this to enable thee to believe in him? Christ has lived, and loved, and bled, and died, and now there is

a reward due to him which can only be met by the salvation of all for whom he died. See, then, how he has the living water, and come and trust him to give it to you freely.

There is one other answer to the woman's question, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" It is this. *Because of his intercession at his Father's right hand in glory.* Jesus, the God-man, the Mediator between God and men, ever liveth to make intercession for us: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Look at him, my brethren, the risen Christ at God's right hand, if you can; see him standing there, in his robes of glory and beauty, for he is no longer a sacrificing Priest, for his one sacrifice, in which he offered up himself, is finished for ever. Now he has put on the royal robes of the High Priest, for he is both a Prince and a Priest; and there he stands, with our names engraven upon his breastplate, each glittering jewel dear to the eyes of God. Wherever he moves, the bells and the pomegranates upon his glorious garments pour forth sweet music in the ear of the Most High, for Christ is altogether lovely in the eyes of his Father, and he is ever dear to the heart of his Father. There he stands as the great representative Man, fully acceptable to God;—nay more, dearly beloved of God; and, for his sake, God looks upon all who are in him with infinite love and divine complacency. Some of you may know what it is to have a beloved son away in America or Australia for many years. By-and-by, he comes home, and he brings his wife. You have never seen her, but you love her for his sake. Possibly, he also brings home a dozen children. Well, that is a large addition to your family, but you welcome them all for your boy's sake, do you not? I am sure you do; and you seem to see his image in them all. All who belong to him are dear to you for his sake. So, the ever-blessed God looks with unspeakable love upon the whole family of Christ, because of the love which he bears to their covenant Head, and Lord, and Surety. This eternal life that is in him,—this boundless love that God gives to him,—this intercessory power that he hath with the Father, and that he uses on our behalf,—this is whence he hath that living water.

III. Now may God the Holy Spirit specially aid us while we briefly notice, in the third place, THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS TRUTH.

If this is whence Christ hath this living water, then *he is able still to bless the children of men.* If he had received grace from some temporary source of supply, it would have been exhausted long ago; but, since he received it from his own divine nature, from the purpose and plan of God, from the anointing of the Holy Spirit, from his own finished work, and from his ever-living power and infinite merit, since all these fountains of grace are as full to-day as ever they were, and since they always will be just as full, from the same source the stream of grace will continue to flow. If the deeps, from which a well draws its water, are always the same, then depend upon it, the supply in the well will be always the same. If, therefore, the great deeps from which Christ draws

the living water cannot be supposed to be lessened, the living water is in him, at this moment, as much as it was eighteen hundred years ago.

The remembrance of this truth should bring consolation to the soul of anyone who may have said, "I wish that I had lived long ago, when Christ was upon this earth in visible form." You should not speak so, for you may as readily receive grace from Christ as did the woman of Samaria. The very words, which Jesus used to that poor fallen creature, he also addresses to thee, "If thou knewest the gift of God, . . . thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Ask, and thou shalt have, even as she asked and received. It is abundantly clear that there is an ample supply of grace stored up in Christ Jesus for all who trust him.

It is equally clear that *he needs nothing from us*. If he had drawn the living water out of the well at Sychar, he would have wanted to borrow the woman's water-pot; he would have said, "Now, mistress, you must lend me your rope, and your water-pot, for, otherwise, I cannot get at the water in the well." But, as the living water comes only from himself, he needs nobody's water-pot or rope. This is a very important matter, because you, sinners, will persist in bringing your water-pots and your ropes to help Christ. You want to aid the Lord Jesus Christ, in some way or other, in his work of saving you. "Ah!" you say, "I know that he is a Saviour, but then I must"—Well, what "must" you do? "Oh!" says one, "I must do this," and another says, "I must do that." I will tell you all the "must" there is about your case; you must be willing to be nothing, and let Christ be everything. You must be the emptiness, and he must be the fulness. You must be the poverty, and he must be the riches. You must be the poor miserable beggar, and he must be your great Enricher, your All-in-all. That is all that is needed.

Then, once more, since this living water comes to Christ from his essential Deity and all the other grand things of which I have spoken, *it is not exhausted at this present time*. There is an abiding fulness in Christ since the living water comes thus to him. Millions of happy spirits are now in heaven, who have drunk of this living water; but Christ is just as able to save millions upon millions more; and your sins cannot exhaust Christ's fulness. I remember, when the thirst of my soul was so strong, by reason of my acute sense of sin, that I compared myself to behemoth, of whom the Lord said to Job, "He trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." Well, now, if your soul's thirst is so great that it will take more than Jordan to satisfy you, and the rivers of Abana and Pharpar after that, and Kishon after that, and the Mediterranean sea after that, and the Pacific and Atlantic oceans after all those,—if you could drink up all that is good in the whole universe, and still thirst for more, if you will receive grace from Christ, he will fill you to the full, yet he will still be just as full of grace as he ever was.

There was a sailor, who, if I remember the story rightly, once

called at Lubbock's bank, to cash his pay notes. I think he was to draw £50, so he said to the clerk, "I don't like to be hard on anybody. As you have to pay out all this money, I will take ten pounds now, and I will call again, another day, for some more, as I don't want to break you up." Of course, you may imagine how they smiled at the simplicity of the man who thought that he might break the bank by drawing out such an enormous sum of money as fifty pounds all at once! You smile at the illustration, yet that is just exactly how many sinners treat the Lord Jesus Christ. They seem to think it is too much to expect to receive from him the full and free forgiveness of all their sins; they imagine that it is too much for Christ to give all at once; but they do not know that the Lord Jesus Christ has already pardoned enough sinners to make heaven as bright with redeemed spirits as the sky is with stars, and yet that he has as much pardoning mercy left as ever he had. After you draw from a perennial fountain as much water as you need, it still springs up as copiously as ever; so is it with the living water which is stored up in Christ, and you may have it, poor thirsty soul, as much as you need. I will not underestimate the greatness of your sin; it is indeed enormous; but since Christ has borne it, in his own body, on the tree, he knows its weight, and all about it; and, as soon as you trust in him, you will realize that he has for ever put it all away.

So I think that the final inference to be drawn is that *we should all take of this living water, which Christ so freely gives.* "Ah!" says one, "I bless God that I drank of it years ago." Never mind, brother; never mind, sister; come and drink of it again. Keep on receiving Jesus Christ again and again, continually looking unto him as the Author and Finisher of your faith. Let us all go to him, saints and sinners, saved and unsaved, this very moment. May the Holy Spirit draw us, and may we all, as one man, say, "I give myself up to thee, O Saviour, to save me; and I trust thee to cleanse me from all my sin, and to present me at last, faultless, before the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy. I am nothing, and I have nothing that I can bring to thee to merit thine esteem. I am nothing but a mass of sin and misery,—not even feeling my sin as I ought to feel it. Look upon me, O Saviour, in love and mercy, and give me the grace to drink of the living water this very hour, if I never drank of it before; and if I did drink of it long ago, let it spring up within me just now, and may I be conscious of its power, to my own comfort and to thy praise and glory!" If this be your prayer, my brothers and sisters, God will bless you, and we shall meet in heaven, by his grace, still to drink of the living water for ever and ever, and to his blessed name we will ascribe all the praise and glory for our salvation, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN IV. 1—34.

Verses 1—4. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself*