

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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MEN WITH GOD

F.C.Mutton

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I wish to emphasise the immense advantage that lies with one who is habitually in the presence of God. Moses represents that. He had two extraordinary periods of forty days and forty nights with God.

Each would be a period of nearly six weeks with God. Dear brethren, our holy privilege, which is open to us and which we should seize, is to be in the presence of God; through Christ by one Spirit we have access to the Father. One of the most wonderful facts of Christianity is that we have access to the Father at any time. We should of course make regular opportunity for this. There were set times for drawing near to God in the Old Testament. What a fine expression that is! It is in the footnote about the feasts in Leviticus 23: 4; 'fixed times for drawing near to God'. Let us not forget them; they are of special importance and value. But at the same time the fact remains that to go into the Father's presence is open at all times; in any moment of need, or at any moment when we are free, our spirits can resort to where He is. The more we are characterised by being in the presence of God, the more ready we shall be (this is an incidental result of being with God) for any situation that arises.

One's tendency is that an emergency drives one to God, which in a sense is right, because an emergency casts us upon Him; but what I see in men of God in the Scriptures is that they are so habitually with God that they could be faced with a sudden emergency or crisis and be equal immediately to acting for God in that situation. It is so important in our local situations, or in situations that affect the saints universally, that you and I should be marked as persons who are with God, and can represent Him in these situations - speak for Him maybe in them, but at any rate in our spirits and outlook represent Him.

So in the first incident of which we read, in Exodus 32, Moses had had this extraordinary period in which God had granted to him a

complete unfolding of what He was about to introduce, the glorious tabernacle system. This glory, of course, does not compare with the glory of that to which we are brought, but it is glorious in so far as it speaks of and looks forward to what is established in Christ. It is splendid in its varied glories and we love to go over every part of it whether it be the ark, or the mercy seat, the veil, the boards, the curtains, the altars, the pure table, the lampstand; all these concepts, the whole design, and every detail entering into it, came straight from the mind and heart of God, expressing both in its detail and its wonderful unity and completeness the final holy order of things in which God would find His rest in Christ, finding His abode in a scene established by virtue of the shedding of the blood of Christ, and filled with the fragrance of that blessed Man. He was to have, too, a priestly family to draw near to Him, suitably attired, gloriously attired, in garments of glory and ornament; not men approaching in any sense in unworthiness or unsuitability, but men secured through the work of Christ in dignity and glory, able to present to Him in great variety and immense abundance what spoke of Christ.

Now Moses had had all this unfolded to him. How impressed he must have been as to it, and what anticipation he must have had in looking forward to the actual establishment of this divine pattern among the people of God, and the setting up and functioning of the priesthood, the high priest having his unique glory and distinction.

One of the items spoken of is that gold plate engraved "Holiness to Jehovah!" which was to be on the forehead of the high priest. Then the breastplate of judgment: that was one of the things described, and in it were to be the Urim and Thummim, 'light' and 'perfection'.

All this had entered into the soul of Moses and laid hold of him in its glory and attractiveness. Nothing like it had ever been heard of before, it was out of heaven. In a sense perhaps there is a link with Luke 3: 22 where in the fullest sense heaven was opened and all heaven's glorious thoughts and concepts for this dispensation began to move forward. So here, in the type, all this came out of heaven, the light of God's pleasure, and here was the great mediator, Moses, whose privilege it was faithfully to establish it all.

Where we read in Exodus 32 "Moses turned and went down from the mountain, with the two tables of the testimony in his hand".

What must have been his feelings! What a sense he must have had of the glory of what had been committed to him, its holiness, the need for the maintenance of the spirit of judgment that this holy system might be set up and established! Then, as he draws near to the camp, it says in verse 17, "And Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, and said to Moses, There is a shout of war in the camp. And he said" (Moses said) "it is not the sound of a shout of victory, neither is it the sound of a shout of defeat; it is the noise of alternate singing I hear". That was his trained ear, the ear of a man of God, the ear of a man who had been with God, a man who could detect sounds and put a name upon them, a man who, you might say, in a moment, could sum up the situation, have the mind of God as to it, and act for God in it. This was certainly not the product of Moses' upbringing in Egypt; it was the product of his whole course of education in the school of God, including his finishing education on the mount with God. So he acts for God in this critical and solemn situation of idolatry. There is no record of his turning to God here; he acts in the instincts, the immediate, righteous, holy, instincts of a man who has been in the presence of God. What need there is of such men and women! He moves with right feelings into this situation. Anger is a divine attribute; God's fierce anger is spoken of. It says here that "when he came near the camp, and saw the calf and the dancing, that Moses' anger burned, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and shattered them beneath the mountain".

Then he takes the initiative; what a man he is! - a man who can act for God. Beloved brethren, we have been reminded earlier of what is princely. A prince is one who acts for God in dignity and moral power, and here Moses acts as a man of God on behalf of God. He takes the immediate initiative; he takes issue with what had come into this area, the people of God, God's inheritance. At great cost God had intervened, typically the cost of the shedding of the blood of Jesus, and delivered His people from Egypt. He brought

them through the Red Sea and He was going to plant them in the mountain of His inheritance, His sanctuary. Now they have turned to idolatry! Moses is possessed of God's own feelings as to this situation; he took the calf that they had made, and burned it with fire, and ground it to powder. You might have thought that it would be sufficient to have burned it with fire, but no, he ground it to powder; you might have thought that that was sufficient, but no, he strewed it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink it. You see the power of the man to deal with all that had risen up against God, and also to bring inward conviction as to its character to the people. This is a man who comes out from the presence of God and acts for God effectively and powerfully; then immediately he places the responsibility where it belonged, to Aaron.

I do not dwell on this, dear brethren, I bring it forward as emphasising the immense need for us to be with God. We rejoice in being together; we find great strength and edification in that, but we also need, though we prove the presence of God, of course, in our comings together, to frequent the presence of God ourselves personally, so that you and I as individuals, in a day of general breakdown and departure, may be able to act with God and for God in relation to every situation. I would urge that we reach our judgment of matters in the presence of God, that our judgments and our standards may be formed there. We so easily, especially perhaps in relation to things that seem doubtful or borderline, find excuse. I may say, So-and-so is free to do it; or, So-and-so allows his children to do it. There should not be diversity of judgment or outlook among us. What I covet to see is a man or a woman, or a young brother or a young sister, who has been with God and can say, That is wrong; I am not touching it. It has the character maybe of idolatry about it, and without counsel or advice - though they are available when needed - you can act as being with God, and act for God, putting a name on things, especially on what has the character of idolatry. How many idols there are! How many different forms they take, all cunningly devised by the enemy to divert us from God and from the glorious system of response and praise and service

and testimony in which He wants each of us to function. Idolatry in any shape or form disqualifies us, or at any rate seriously impairs our being for His pleasure in that glorious system.

In chapter 34 we have a wonderfully positive aspect of being with God. Moses had been active for God in the earlier crisis with divinely-given instinct; he had taken the tent and pitched it outside the camp and everyone who sought Jehovah went to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. Moses had had wonderful divine confirmation in verse 9 of chapter 33: "when Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the entrance of the tent, and Jehovah talked with Moses". What wonderful confirmation! God stands by the man who had stood for Him, and God will always stand by those who stand for Him and give them His own confirmation. Now that crisis had been met, and Moses had again been on the mountain with God, and again he was there forty days and forty nights. Where we read in chapter 34 Moses was coming down from the mountain and the two tables of testimony were in his hand. God in His mercy and faithfulness was going on with His people; He was not relinquishing His thoughts. How thankful we are for that; and let none of us, dear brethren, be in any sense shaken as to that glorious fact that, though there has been terrible breakdown and turning aside, God is proceeding with all His thoughts. It was not a modified tabernacle system or a modified law that Moses brought down; not at all; it reaffirmed God's committal to His original thoughts and purposes, and Moses had been with Him as to that. May we be with God as to His committal to His own thoughts in their entirety. He is filling them out, proceeding with them; and in the day of display they will be seen secured in their entirety and glory.

Now there is additional glory; how encouraging that is! There is nothing about the skin of Moses' face shining in the earlier section we read, but there is here; in fact it is a dominant thing, that "Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone through his talking with him". What a blessed thing this is! how attractive! How good it is to look upon the dear brethren and see shining faces! I am not referring to

any natural amiability, but it is one of our great joys surely to look upon the faces of one another and see in the countenances of the brethren the product of having been with God. Now, dear brethren, we owe this to one another, that in this sense our faces should shine through our communion with God. This will be the effect with anyone who frequents the presence of God; the skin of his face will shine through his talking with Him. What a way to come among the brethren! What a way to be in the testimony! I remember a comment of Mr Taylor's as to Paul's reference to the new covenant - which would link with this, how we are transformed from glory to glory - he said that you can see the change even in the countenances of the brethren (see Vol 46, p.189). This change will not occur save as we frequent the presence of divine Persons, but as we are in Their presence the effects of it will be manifest.

I think it is very attractive that Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone through his talking with Him; he was not conscious of it. He had been very conscious, blessedly conscious, of the presence of God, but this was the product of that communion brought down among the people of God. It says "when Moses came down"; this is what happened when he came down. Do we come down thus? Do we come among the brethren, do we fill out any little part we have in the testimony, as those who have come down from the presence of God? May we know more of that holy presence; it is really the atmosphere of heaven; it is where the Father is, where Jesus is, and we have access there. I have not the slightest doubt that anyone who spends time there will bear the marks of it; you can tell in that sense where a person has been. You can certainly tell where an earthly or worldly Christian has been; they have a pinched look, an undernourished look; but I love to see the appearance of a person who has been with God; it bears the shining. So we can shine on one another, in that sense bringing in something of the atmosphere, the glory, the affections of heaven. It cannot but be that if we are in the presence of love's economy in its own realm we shall bring something of the spirit and atmosphere of it among the beloved people of God. May we do so, to enrich the situation! Here, of

course, the imperfection of the old dispensation comes into view because they were afraid to come near to Moses, so he put a veil on his face. How delightful what follows: "And when Moses went in before Jehovah to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out"; no veil there! "We all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory", 2 Cor 3: 18. Thank God we can say very simply, very thankfully, that in our comings together we experience this shining.

This faithful man, Moses, this shining vessel and servant, would answer to what Paul speaks of in our day as a competent new covenant minister. It says he spoke to the children of Israel what he was commanded (see chap 35: 1); what a fine thing that is! There is a very great need of service of this character; a great need of it on Tuesday nights. Brethren should come to those meetings as having had to do with God, with shining face to speak what they are commanded. That is not an optional matter at all. If the Lord lays something on a person, then he is under love's obligation to convey what has been given to him. It is a matter of the greatest sensitiveness. You may come to the meeting with an impression and it may not be required at all. It has rightly been said that it will keep. But if something is laid upon you to speak as we are together let us be like Moses who spoke to the children of Israel what he was commanded. That would be the word of God. This is the economy functioning. "And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone". What a ministry! What a minister! We would see it in Paul when he departed in Acts 20; how they sorrowed that they would no more see his face. What that face expressed! How high he had been! He was caught up to the third heaven, given peculiar privilege. What communications he had, whether there as "a man in Christ" or in the prison in Rome. He was a competent new covenant minister, not only entrusted with a ministry but suited through his relations with God, with Christ and with the Spirit, to convey it competently, and to exemplify gloriously what he communicated.

In Acts 20 "there were many lights in the upper room where we were assembled". It was a place of shining, there were named personalities there - their names are given in verse 4 - and Paul was there. What a fine occasion it would be; what varied shining! We are often reminded of what is astronomical, Paul speaks of it in Philippians 2: 15; "among whom ye appear". I know that is more in testimony; but we are to shine among the saints too in heavenly lustre. The many lights in the upper room suggest a precious representation of the work of God in these various localities.

This was, you might say, the top storey; the discourse was profitable and intensive; there was an urgency about it. "Paul discoursed to them, about to depart on the morrow". There was much to be conveyed and he prolonged the discourse till midnight.

Then something quite unexpected happened: "a certain youth, by name Eutychus, sitting at the window opening, overpowered by deep sleep... fell from the third storey down to the bottom, and was taken up dead". What a thing to happen in a meeting! - a meeting of such character and distinction, when Paul was doubtless urgently enticing the brethren into the higher regions of the truth. You would like to have heard the enquiries of such men as Sopater and Aristarchus.

The meeting was going along and prospering and then this unexpected disaster occurs. A young man, with all the potentialities of a young man, "fell from the third storey down to the bottom, and was taken up dead".

Then we see Paul's immediate action. I refer to this because I think it shows the action of a man with God, with God in the higher levels in relation to what He was opening up and setting up, but with God now in a sudden, critical emergency. "Paul descending fell upon him"; you catch the sense of the immediacy and urgency of Paul's action. Paul was under the Father's influence. Did not the father fall upon the neck of the returning prodigal and cover him with kisses? This is the divine economy finding expression in Paul, the descending mind, the immediate readiness to act. I believe this enters into our meetings, dear brethren. There is the aspect in which, in our occasions together, the Lord would open up to us what

is greatest and highest and richest - and may we have an appetite and interest to press forward with the exploration of it. As we well know, everything in one sense is out, the revelation is complete, but in another sense the frontiers of what you and I have entered into and enjoyed are constantly being pressed forward - just as there are places in the atlas; you can see them there, but they have never been explored. So the Spirit would entice us and encourage us to explore and penetrate into what still lies beyond us in the realm of what has been revealed - a most important aspect of our comings together.

But another important aspect is that the current state among us is met by a man who is with God. These things go on together, and I believe that the headship of Christ and the presence of the Spirit enable both ends to be served, that the word would bear on the current state among us and on dangers among us. So Paul for the moment breaks off his ministry and attends immediately in the spirit of the Father and of Jesus to this young man. It says "But Paul, descending fell upon him, and enfolding him in his arms". This is the action of a man who had been with God. Can we do this, dear brethren? I think it is very important that relations between younger brethren and older ones should be of this kind. Can we do anything of this nature: "enfolding him in his arms"? May the younger people have a sense that they are deeply in the affections of the older brethren; may they have liberty with them. We may perhaps at times unintentionally appear to be a bit aloof, we may forget young people's names, and that kind of thing, but let them be assured that they are in our hearts. I read a remark of Mr Taylor's the other day in which he said that when he looked upon the young men and women he said, 'They are the hope of Israel'. Oh the potentialities and possibilities of the work of God in the young people; they are the hope of Israel. If the Lord tarry, everything depends upon them. Let them have a sense that they are loved and cherished. May there be an attitude with those who are older which makes them available so that they are free to speak of difficulties; and if they get into real trouble as Eutychus did, may there be these resources of love. Paul

"enfolding him in his arms, said, Be not troubled, for his life is in him". That is the crucial thing. A young person's appearance may perhaps be unpromising; you may say there is little there. Paul says, with the discernment of a man who had been with God, His soul is in him, there is life there. And that life was revived. This incident finishes, "And they brought away the boy alive, and were no little comforted". This is the operation of a man with God. So it says "And having gone up, and having broken the bread, and eaten, and having long spoken until daybreak, so he went away"; the service is completed. Well, may the Lord greatly help us in these things. May each of us be much more familiar with the presence of God so as to be able to come out in His grace and power and act for Him, for His glory, in His Name.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

29 April 1978

GOD FOR US AND WE FOR GOD

C.R.Byng

Romans 8: 31,32; Exodus 32: 26; Joshua 5: 13-15

The Spirit of God often seeks to help us by raising questions; not to bring in doubt but to cause us to consider and arrive at conclusions for ourselves. Having opened up the scope of the teaching of the glad tidings of God concerning His Son, the Spirit of God, through Paul, brings in this question: "What shall we then say to these things?" That question would arise whenever God has said something to us. God never speaks without something definite in mind by way of blessing, and if we are to come into that blessing we have to consider what He says and understand the bearing of what He has in mind in saying some particular thing at some particular moment. The Spirit of God would strengthen us in the inscrutability and the perfection of divine timing.

The next question is "If God be for us, who against us?" There surely can be no question of uncertainty as to that, as to whether God be for us. If any element of doubt comes into our hearts at any time as to whether God really is for us or not, we need not waste any valuable time in discerning the source of such a thought. Such a thought would immediately be discerned as coming from the enemy. The Spirit of God would assure us that God is always for us. It is a wonderful thing, beloved brethren, that we can be steadied and assured, frail and failing as we are in ourselves without divine help, sinners brought into the light of a Saviour God through infinite and sovereign grace, that God is for us. If we pondered over the past we might perhaps wonder, but God would assure us that He is not only faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins but is able to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He is able to deal with the past in the light of the cross. The great testimony to the universe that God is for us was Jesus hanging on the cross at Golgotha's hill. Man's efforts culminated in the place of a skull and God was beginning to show the vastness of His own thoughts and purposes as He shone forth in

all His mighty love at such a time. What a time that was, when men might have wondered whether God was really for them or not. God could have brought in judgment immediately, but instead of bringing in judgment as men rejected Christ, He immediately proceeded to bring in blessing in the very city where Christ had been rejected.

The gospel was to begin there: "to all the nations beginning at Jerusalem", Luke 24: 47. When we speak of God being for us, let us understand that He is for all men. He is not for men in their sins but He is for men that they might be saved from their sins, and the great assurance of this is that Christ has not only died but is living and is interceding on high. This assurance will come into the very fibre of our lives that God is for us so that we may be preserved from coming to a point where like Jacob we say "All these things are against me", Gen 42: 36. The answer of God would be that He "has not spared his own Son... how shall he not also with him grant us all things?" The scope of "all things" would include the Father's care for us, and in our experiences here we prove the help of the Father in difficulties at school in examinations that have to be passed and grades that have to be achieved, difficulties in the office and in the factory, difficulties in the home, difficulties in every detail of life; and what do we find? - God is granting us "all things". It is the Spirit's touch to preserve us from anxiety. Men are anxious and careful about many things but we can be restful as assured that God is for us. It brings in the whole scope of God's wonderful purposes. There is to be a universe of bliss, and we are going to enjoy God Himself and be restfully in the very presence of God, God all in all. God's most wonderful thoughts in relation to the saints in purpose are being worked out in a way which affects us, with the wisdom and grace and power of our God who is always for us.

Now as we are affected by that the question would immediately arise, as we read in Exodus 32, whether we are prepared to be for God. It was a time of public breakdown, when everything in relation to God's thoughts and purposes seemed to have summarily come to a terrible end; Moses had cast the tables out of his hand and idolatry and sin were in the camp. Everything seemed to have gone

although God was still for the people. There was a need for persons who were ready to stand for Jehovah at such a time. So Moses, representing Christ, stood in the gate of the camp and said "He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me". I believe that is the word from God for everyone of us today. Are we prepared to be for God? Not for ourselves or for any other man, or any interest or sect or doctrine or anything of that sort, but who is to be available for God? What a word! What a privilege, in the very midst of a world which is truly Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was crucified, to stand for Jehovah! This involves movement: "He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me". It means we have to move maybe out of conditions that are not in keeping with the holiness of Christ. It may be that we have to leave things which are out of accordance with the holiness of the Spirit, to come out of associations and everything which will be out of keeping with God Himself. Is God going to be able to look on each of our hearts today and say that each of those persons is standing for Me? The time for being faithful to Christ is nearly gone.

The moment when we are going to depart to be with Christ is so near, but in these last closing moments of the history of the assembly on earth God is counting upon persons who are affected by His wonderful goodness in being for us. The faithfulness of the love of Christ took Him through sufferings and death, through the grave and into the glory. As we are conscious of the power of the Spirit of God to open up to us the very purposes of God in their unchanging stability, let us avail ourselves of the opportunity that we may be for God. He is counting upon faithful men and women, persons who are prepared to stand for the truth in the spirit and grace of Christ in a way which will bring glory to God Himself. All the sons of Levi, it says, gathered to him; that is, not persons who want a place for themselves but persons who are ready to serve in relation to the saints being preserved to God.

Now when we come to Joshua, this is an experience which Joshua had at a very critical point. God was acting to bring the people into the land, just as He is acting today to bring the saints into the joy and experience of the inheritance; that is, the knowledge of

Christ in heaven and all that is related to the purpose of God. They had reached a point where Jericho stood in the way. The whole land was beginning to open up, behind them was the Jordan and Gilgal, and immediately ahead lay Jericho itself; that is, not only the world and the things of the world but the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life stood in the way. The whole entrenched system of the enemy in the world stands in the way of the saints moving into the joy and liberty of the reality of the inheritance of the land. Just at this critical point Joshua lifted up his eyes and saw this man before him with his sword drawn in his hand. He represents, no doubt, the Spirit Himself as coming in, but not to take sides. That is what Joshua immediately asked "Art thou for us, or for our enemies?". It would signify that there might be one side or there might be another. There are never any sides when God is acting. If there are two sides it must be that both are wrong. God is always acting in relation to His own thoughts and glory, and it is a question of being with God in what He is doing so that He can be with us in what we are doing. The Spirit, as signified by this man with the drawn sword, shows that He is coming to take control. He is not coming in to support a certain line of things, or another line of things; He is coming to assert His own personal control over matters. So this man proceeds to give directions as to the ark moving around Jericho. He draws attention to the movements of Christ in all His greatness, seen typically as the ark. The ark goes round one day and it goes round a second day. The people of Jericho must have wondered what was proceeding. There were the priests and the blowing of trumpets and the ark and the rear-guard. Rahab no doubt was looking out from her house on the wall with the scarlet line bound in the window. The ark goes around six days. It starts the seventh day and goes round six times, and on the seventh time the word comes. The shout of the people is heard and the wall of Jericho falls down flat. That was all in relation to directions from the man with the drawn sword. We are to understand that God is in complete control. As we come under the control of divine Persons in the conflict that God is waging against the enemy we shall always find that the enemy is vanquished according to God's timing. The

wall fell down flat; it was not a question of scaling the wall or bringing up weapons against it; it fell down flat. It was seen in the early days in the book of Acts when the apostles were divinely given power to move; the walls of Jericho came down flat. The people who led in Jerusalem were conscious there was a danger of the blood of Jesus being brought upon them. They did not understand that God in His blessing was moving to throw down the walls of Jericho that all might come into blessing. It is the same position today. In the very midst of breakdown in the world, God, by the Spirit, is operating and Christ in His triumphant movements as the Man of war is moving with a view to bringing down the whole world's system, and is bringing the saints through into the glory and greatness of God's thoughts for Himself.

As God gives us some fresh impression that He is for us in an infinite way, the Spirit would beget fresh desire in our hearts to fill out the part that the Lord may entrust to us. Each of us, sisters and brothers, younger and older, has a part to play in the great things that God has on hand. As we become available to God under the Lord's patient and skilful touch we find that divine Persons are taking control. The whole world's system is to be judged in the hearts of the saints, as it is going to be publicly judged in the day so soon to dawn. God is counting upon the saints to have a judgment of the world so that when He comes they will be in relation to His own judgment of things that will be overthrown. The true Ark of God will be seen in all its glory, when Christ will be triumphant in relation to securing a scene which will be for God eternally. May God bless the word for His Name's sake.

CALGARY

2 December 1977

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

A.J.E.Welch

John 4: 6-19

It is a very precious moment in our history when we find Jesus near to us. He can use such a season as this, simple as it is, to have to say to us. Although this passage, often referred to, relates to what happened in point of time so long ago, this same glorious Person is still having to say to men, dear brethren, young persons, with the same precious promises as this woman received. What a moment it was for her when she learned that One was ready, despite who she was, to speak with her with words of blessing. The situation is just the same this evening. It is a wonderful moment when we find that this same Person is having to say personally to us. What He eventually has to say to this woman searched her conscience, and I shall come to that, but what was in His thought for her was blessing. What could be more precious than what He speaks of here? "Every one who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever". How attractive that is to any soul! to have an exhaustless spring of supply, to be set free from the domination of sin and death, and to know the living springs of refreshment and supply and attachment to Christ, and know the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is what the Lord Jesus is speaking of - the gift of the Holy Spirit. He has in mind blessing for this woman; He has in mind blessing for you. He is speaking to you with blessing in mind.

This woman's history is disclosed to be a dark one, but we find no word of rebuke to this woman. He still proceeds, even after the passage I read, to speak to this same woman in words of blessing; He is proceeding to bless her. I wonder how many of us have sought blessing, have sought peace, have sought satisfaction outside of Christ and never found it. We may have thought for the time that we had found it but we soon discovered that we had not. What a spring of satisfaction, abiding satisfaction, in the knowledge of this glorious Person, Jesus! What a spring of life and satisfaction

we are given to prove in the gift of the Holy Spirit! It is in the heart of God to set men up in peace and enjoyment of His richest thoughts, and what we see in Jesus here is the expression of that to yourself.

The Lord's word to this woman, which I dwell on, is very simple: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water". There is no question of the living water being refused, notice; He would have given her living water. Such is the heart of Jesus towards you. There is no question as to the giving of it to the one who seeks it with genuineness of heart. But He says "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink". He has drawn near to some precious soul tonight to find what is for the satisfaction of His heart: "Give me to drink ". Did you ever think of that? This is not a one way matter, though God is supremely the giver and His heart is towards you; but the Lord Jesus seeks something from these hearts of ours: "Give me to drink". But the word is "If thou knewest" who it is. Do you know who it is? Is Jesus some personage who is just brought into mind by the words of the preacher, or is He a real living Person known to our hearts, entering into every point of our history? That is Jesus. Who is He? God's beloved Son, the Son of God, the only begotten Son - this is who He is. But then you may rightly say, and I would seek to answer the question in the fullest possible way, Whom is He to me? If you have a Saviour, this is your Saviour. There is no other Saviour for man. If you know a Saviour, it is this same Jesus; there is no other to be known for man. There is no other basis for salvation, no other basis for forgiveness, no other basis for peace, no other basis for the gift of the Spirit than the work of Jesus on the cross, "this same Jesus". Do you know who it is that is speaking to you? Have you weighed this sufficiently, who it is that is speaking to you and why He is speaking to you, and what He is opening out to your heart as He speaks to you? It is Jesus. You think of that precious life of which much is said to us in the Scriptures. Some of us have been dwelling this day on the uniqueness of that life of Jesus in which no sin came. The scripture says He did no sin (see 1 Pet 2: 22). He was absolutely unique amongst men in that sense. That can be said of

no other. The greatest man in the greatest nations of this dark scene is nevertheless one who has sinned. I am not saying that to accuse; I am saying it because it is the truth, and because the Lord Jesus is dealing with matters that relate to the truth, what is true and absolutely established concerning you; not with possibilities but with truth. That is how the Lord Jesus is speaking to us. He would call attention to what is the truth, and the truth is that I was lost in my sins; what is it as to you? The Lord Jesus in His wonderful skill and in the grace of His appeal to this woman brought out what the truth was concerning her, what the true facts of the situation were, and that is what He is doing. Why is He doing it? *To bless*. He is not for one moment of time in this day of blessing bringing out these facts to condemn; no, He brings out the facts to bless, because there is the ground of blessing in what He has effected on the cross. This is Jesus. This is who it is that is speaking to you. God's beloved Son is speaking, maybe to all of us tonight, speaking to men about the real facts of the situation.

Well, this woman needed the Lord Jesus as Saviour, and so do you. You may have found in Him your Saviour, and that is why He would speak to you. He brings out the facts. The preacher does not know the measure, the character, of your sin; he knows something about the measure and character of his own sin, and his sins are forgiven, absolutely finished and done with because God has had to say to those sins in the death of His Son. Can you say this? This is who it is that is speaking to you. That is why I emphasise that verse in the passage that I read; who it is is Jesus the Saviour, Jesus the Lord. Have you heard His voice? I come back to my point; why is it that He brings up the case of this woman and her history? It is not in any sense to condemn, it is to bring out what the facts are and to bless her in spite of what the history is. But you say, How can He do this? He has done it by going through the shame and suffering of the cross, and that for you. He did no sin; how should it be that He should die? - for He did die - and He died on that cross of shame and He died on your account that the blessing, the promised blessing of this passage, might flow richly into your heart, that you

might know Him, that you might have to say to Him and find in Him in your own experience, as this woman found, infinite blessing in having to do with this same Lord Jesus. O the attractiveness of all that is coming out in Him, the way in which God's grace is towards men, the way in which His mercy is in exercise towards the needy case like mine, like yours maybe.

But the Lord would have to say to you for blessing. The facts must stand and they have to be faced, and save as a person faces the facts they will never have peace. No, there will still be the lurking fear that something is not yet fully met unless the facts are really faced of what anyone is as a sinner. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3: 23) - wonderful statement that!

The glory of God is in view. The manhood of Jesus is presented to us as that which sets forth in the moral sense the glory of God, perfection in manhood exposing every other man, and yet attracting every true heart of man to Himself. There is no indication that this woman was repelled by the reference the Lord Jesus makes to her case when He speaks of her sins; she was the rather attracted to Him, and He would attract you too; He would draw you to Himself because the answer of the whole need in which you stand is in Him and nowhere else. In no other shall you find the answer to your need as a sinner, in no other, and yet the only One in whom the whole situation is answered for you is having to say to you just as you are this evening for blessing. On what does the blessing depend? The shame and suffering of the cross. From whom did the shame come? From men who rejected Him, from men who said "Crucify, crucify him". Why did they say that? Have you ever thought of it? What was there in that glorious Person of Jesus to occasion resentment or hatred in the hearts of men? Nothing but blessing had shone in that precious pathway of His. If a sick person came to Him there was healing; if a poor widow brought out her dead son in His presence, He raised that son and gave him back to the woman.

Blessing, blessing, blessing, all the time; but under the power of sin they rejected Him. That is how the shame came. From whom did the suffering come? Not alone from the activities of man for He

suffered under God's mighty hand. Think of His being forsaken on the cross on my account and yours. Think of His being the bearer of divine wrath and judgment. What a solemn thing it is to speak about, but it is the glorious facts of the glad tidings that we seek to present. Think of His suffering under God's mighty hand on your account and mine, suffering for sins. Whose sins? There were none of His own; I say that in all reverence and simplicity. Those sins were mine; those sins, if you will believe, were yours. That is why He suffered. Has it never moved your heart that so much has been effected in suffering to secure your blessing? If it has never moved your heart before, does it move your heart today that the blessed God has gone to such lengths as this to meet your case? Does it not stir something in you? It surely does. He suffered there rejected of men, the bearer of divine wrath, a wrath that was justly due to me and you. I do not say that to you in any accusing sense; it is just the fact of the situation, that you may be clear in your links with Christ as to what He has done and how He has provided for your case.

Myriads have believed on Him. Yes, thank God they have, but even so He has provided for the case of every one, and now He has provided for your case absolutely, and He went into death. His precious body has lain in the grave. He had delivered up His spirit, He had laid down His precious life on your account and mine. Did He remain in death? He did not remain in death; He lives. After three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, as the scripture says (see Matt 12: 40), He rose from the dead, the grave was opened, disclosed to those who loved Him as being empty; Jesus was risen on that first day of the week after He died. What a moment that was when Jesus was risen from among the dead! And He lives; the glorious Saviour whom we present with such joy is a living Saviour, a living Person who has broken the whole power of death; yes, on your account that you might never know death in the sense of what is punitive, that you might never know death in the awfulness of its full power, but that you might come into life because He lives. This is who it is: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink"; this is who it is, the Lord

Jesus, the One whom God has established in the place of power. After forty days which He spent among His beloved disciples - what days those must have been! - He was raised up, exalted to the place of power. He is there still. The very fact that there is a preaching of God's word in Croydon tonight is the expression of the place that He fills. There is power in His hands to effect the blessing of men. The very fact that you and I are here really depends on the place that Jesus is in, that God has exalted Him into the place of power. He would be thus known in your history, the history in your soul, a living glorified Saviour, having suffered untold suffering (for who shall fathom those sufferings on your account?), One to whom God directs you that you may bow the knee to Him and come into the blessing of which He is the glorious administrator. Come into the blessing. You say, how do I come into the blessing? Bow the knee to Jesus, the One whom God has made both Lord and Christ, the One who has been to the cross on your account, who has been into death on your account, who has come out of death on your account, and lives up there in glory in the place of power that you may know forgiveness, justification and peace, that you may experience these things. You say, how can I come into it? It sounds so attractive, and yet how can I come into it? Bow the knee to Jesus. It is not a question of bowing the knee to the memory of a dead person, if I may say so plainly but of bowing the knee and acknowledging the authority of a living glorified Person, Jesus, and giving Him a place in your heart.

We are not presenting a dead saviour, though He has died; He has lain in death but He lives, and we delight to present this glorious living Person as the One who is needed to meet the want of that heart of yours; yes, to be an object of your heart. Who can claim a place as your object as Jesus can? Who has done for you the extent of what the Lord Jesus has done for you? He is putting in His claim. What a claim it is in the sense that to have Jesus, the Lord Jesus, as the object of your heart is the greatest possible portion for a man or a woman or a young person, a satisfying object. Here was this poor woman going day by day to the well to draw the water for this

waterpot, a limited thing. How she must have longed for deliverance, for some source of supply, some point of satisfaction! Have you found in Christ your satisfaction? If you have a Saviour, He is your Saviour, there is no other. If you have not a Saviour, Jesus is just waiting to have to do with you. He is the Saviour, He is the One whom God has made Lord and Christ. He is supreme in power and His supremacy shall be disclosed to the whole wondering scene of men; as the scripture says, every knee shall bow to Jesus, every tongue shall confess Him Lord. What a Person to fill your heart! the One who has been the means of blessing to you which could be secured in no other way, the One who has not stopped at the most intense suffering but endured it in love on your account. See how His heart is towards you; see how the heart of God is towards you; see that blessing is in mind: "If thou knewest... who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink". Do you know who it is that says here "Give me to drink"?

But then the Lord Jesus speaks of living water; "thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water".

Notice particularly, I call attention to it again, there is no question about the willingness to give. The Lord Jesus is speaking for blessing, speaking to you, and He would have you know in blessing what it is to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, this precious gift which is to be known by those who bow the knee to Jesus. The Spirit connects your heart with Him where He is and is to be known by you as the spring of refreshment, bringing you into the sweet consciousness of the love of Christ in all the strength and activity of it, giving you to know the love of God shed abroad in your heart, giving you to experience what love is, not in man but in God. It is a wonderful thing to learn how, God loves you, to learn how the Lord Jesus loves you, to have this immediate connection with Him where He is in the gift of the Spirit: He *would* have given thee living water.

And so this woman makes the request: "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst nor come here to draw". Have you ever made such a request of Jesus? It is not for us now to go into the detail, but He raises the whole question of her history: "Go, call thy husband"; and

this brings out the whole case of this woman. It is, as I said, that the Lord Jesus is bringing out the facts. But the whole question of this woman's need has been met. He had not actually met it as He spoke to her, He was on the way to the cross; that cross would be the answer to her case as it is to yours; and He brings up the whole matter, but for blessing. What a wonderful thing it is to realise that He knows all about you, yet He loves you just the same, His heart is towards you just the same, His disposition towards you is just the same, it is to bless. It would be hard to find a more complex case than that of this woman; she is no doubt brought forward for that very reason, but the Lord has met the whole situation, and the thought for you tonight as you have to do with Him is to ask of Him His precious gift of living water, and find flowing into your soul the immensity of the gift of the Holy Spirit, to link your heart with Jesus where He is, to link your affections with others who love Him in this scene of testimony as having the same Spirit, drinking into the same Spirit, linked with the same glorious Lord, and rejoicing together and celebrating together the knowledge of Himself, and moving on in the knowledge of the glory of God's beloved Son and all that is to be known in the experience and appreciation of such a love as His.

May you know that love, know it in its fulness. Its fulness is wonderful, as many of us have proved this very day, and it is for you to prove it to find what a lover Jesus is. May you do so, for His Name's sake.

CROYDON

26 September 1976

THE CHILDREN'S LEISURE

It often happens, especially during the school holidays, that children say 'What shall I do?'. A good thing to do then - or sooner - is to write down all the people in the Bible who have asked the same question, and why. It will occupy your mind and develop your soul.

At least seven very different persons have uttered this and with none of them was it through idleness, but often in very deep feeling.

In one of His parables Jesus spoke of the lord of a certain vineyard, when all his messengers had been illtreated, as saying "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son". But when his son came to the vineyard he also was cast out and even killed. How deeply Jesus Himself must have felt this! As God's Son, sent into this world when a Man He suffered and was crucified. Yet to this we owe our salvation, so marvellous are God's ways! Pilate in careless doubt asked what he should do with Jesus: to the unbeliever the question really is 'What shall I do without Him?'

A religious young man asked the Lord what he should do to gain eternal life. The answer in effect was to deny self in exchange for treasure in heaven now, and to follow Jesus here on earth. An infidel man was so prospered by his Creator that he asked what he could do with all his goods. His answer to his own question showed that he thought only of his property and not at all of the Giver. Like everyone else he had to leave all, but God gave him a very short time - as He has given you - to consider urgently the eternal welfare of his own soul. Another man who also talked to himself was a worldly-wise man; he wondered what he could do to avoid the consequences of his own unfaithfulness. One lesson for us is to use what we have for God's glory. The poor widow did not have to ask what to do with her two mites - she knew!

How many loving and longing fathers and mothers are just now saying "What shall I do for my son?" - or maybe 'my daughter'? How many persons in deep anxiety of soul are asking what to do to be saved? With the jailer at Philippi there was no time to consider

alternatives. He said " What must I do to be saved?" There was and is only one answer. Have you believed on the Lord Jesus? Yes, well then as a baptised person even simple duties like laying the table can be done for Him.

J.C.Evershed