

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 52

John 4:39 *“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.”* ⁴⁰ *So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days.* ⁴¹ *And many more believed because of His own word;* ⁴² *And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”* (John 4:39-42)

AN UNEXPECTED HARVEST IS REAPED

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to God influencing people by leading them to Himself, He has revealed this to be through several different means. The faintest voice, which men generally ignore, is found in **nature** which *“Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge”* (Psa 19:1-2), making known His *“power and Godhead”* (Rom 1:20). Then there is **the conscience** which can accuse – something that is intuitive (Rom 2:15). On a slightly higher level, **the Law** is a *“schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ”* (Gal 3:24). There is also exposure to **individuals who are noted for their identity with God**, like the Jews and their synagogues that attracted some Gentiles (Lk 7:2-5; Acts 10:1ff; 13:42). There is **godly reasoning** concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:25). There is also **the light that emits from those in whom the Lord dwells** (Matt 5:14; Phil 2:15). The more immediate means is **the preaching of the Gospel**, which is the power of God unto salvation (Mk 16:15; Rom 1:16). There is also **the testimony of those who have themselves been exposed to the Lord** – something that is seen in our text. **There is not a person who has ever lived who has not been exposed to enough to provoke a search for the Lord.** Working through all of these means is God Himself, who draws people to Jesus. As you can see, the experience of salvation is not wholly the work of men. There are influences higher than men, and deeper than men, that are speaking to the hearts of men. Over and above that, there is God drawing, the Spirit convicting, and Jesus seeking – employing all of the means that have been set in motion by heaven. No reason we read statements like this: *“Salvation is of the Lord”* (Jonah 2:9), *“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen”* (Rom 11:36), and *“Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb”* (Rev 7:10). Were it not for Divine activity, Satan would successfully neutralize every human effort to disseminate the Gospel and turn men from darkness to light.

MANY BELIEVED FOR THE SAYING OF THE WOMAN

John 4:39 *“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.”*

MANY OF THE SAMARITANS BELIEVED. Remember, the Samaritans of that time had not been exposed to the preaching or teaching of anyone sent from God. So far as we

know, the Jews had no synagogue there. John the Baptist did not preach there. There is no record of anyone coming from Samaria to hear John (Matt 3:5; Mk 1:5). Jesus had not preached there, and there is no record of anyone from Samaria who went to hear Jesus (Matt 4:35; Mk 3:7-8). So far as the record is concerned, up to this point in Jesus' ministry, there has not been any mention of Samaria, the Samaritans, or a Samaritan.

FOR THE SAYING. The Holy Spirit tells us why *"many of the Samaritans of that city believed"* on Jesus. It was because of what the woman who met Jesus *"testified"* – which was rather brief: *"He told me all things that ever I did."* So far as the record is concerned, that consisted of Jesus telling her she had five husbands, she was living with a man who was not her husband, and her religion was pointless. However, in Jesus' words, her heart was laid bare before her conscience, and she knew the Man who had spoken to her really did know everything about her.

Now, I maintain that words such as those the woman spoke do not have enough power to move any person, let alone *"many"* who will believe on Christ. **It was the unseen activity of the Holy Spirit who worked on the hearts of the people.** It is as though they, because of the Spirit's influence, reasoned that if this Man knew everything about this woman, He also knew everything about them. This being the case, they would have concluded He was the Messiah that was going to come and tell them *"all things."*

THE NATURE OF HER TESTIMONY. It is important to notice the nature of this woman's testimony. She did not tell them what she had done as a result of confronting Jesus. She did not testify to the redirection of her life, or of her new resolves. She testified to what the Lord had done: *"He told me all that ever I did."* Other versions read, *"everything I ever did."* ^{NIV} I suppose if an ordinary person would have said this, it would not be as weighty as when she said it. While the Scripture does not particularly comment on her moral behavior, it leaves the impression that it probably was anything but exemplary.

A powerful and effective testimony is not particularly pointing out where **you** were, and where **you** have come. If the person was a devout religious person, such a testimony would have some weight, for the status of the person was not apparent. That is why Paul testified, *"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."* (1 Tim 1:13), and *"And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women"* (Acts 22:4).

Here is one of the first examples of someone believing who had not seen. After Jesus rose from the dead He said, *"blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"* (John 20:29). This may very well have been the first example of not seeing Jesus, yet believing on Him – because of what He SAID to a less-than-honorable woman!

What does that tell you about the power and influence of the Person of Christ. Everything that **He did** (John 5:36; 9:4; Heb 10:7-9) , **and said** (John 5:19; 8:28,38; 12:49-50) was under the specific direction of His Father. **That means that God worked through what Jesus did and said.** Divine influences were brought to bear upon those who saw or heard of what Jesus had said and done – because those were the works and sayings of God Himself. **This is the reason it is so important to preach the Word** (what God said; Rom 10:15; Col 1:28-29; 2 Tim 4:2), and **declare His wonderful works** (what God has done; Ps 78:4; 111:4; Acts 2:11). It is not that we are merely fulfilling an obligation in preaching, declaring, or testifying. If God Almighty did not work through such activities, they would of themselves be powerless to effect anything that would bring glory to God.

God does not work through things concocted by the wisdom of men. Routines and procedures authored by men may appear extraordinarily successful, but they play absolutely no role in the work of God. If there was not a *"Savior"* (Acts 5:31; Phil 3:20), a ministering Holy Spirit (John 16:8-10), and a predetermined purpose (Eph 1:11; 2 Tim 1:9), we might consider such plans. But all of those realities not only exist, but are operational and supported by heaven.

To me, there is no other way to account for the response of *"many"* Samaritans that believed on Jesus because of *"the saying of the woman."* This also instructs us to take note of how we seek to influence people for Christ. If, for example, we testify concerning ourselves, and the impact Jesus has had upon us, it must be the unvarnished truth. I have heard testimonies that appeared to be exaggerations. It is evident that the *"woman"* of whom this text speaks had not overstated her experience with Christ; otherwise God would not have used it. The text also suggests that this woman was known well enough, and that her testimony was fervent enough, that it could be believed, and provoke people to obtain the same benefits she had experienced.

THEY WANTED HIM TO TARRY WITH THEM

"⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of His own word.

Jesus apparently remained at the well, for that was the woman's point of reference. In other words, **Jesus made Himself available to genuine seekers.** There were some to whom Jesus said, *"ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come"* (John 8:21). But such was not the case here. Also, if you have found Christ, He did not hide Himself from you, but made Himself available, so that when you sought Him, you found Him. Blessed be the name of the Lord!

WHEN THE SAMARITANS WERE COME TO HIM. Other versions read, *"When they came out to see Him at the well,"* ^{LIVING} and *"when the Samaritans arrived."* ^{MONTGOMERY} Here was a body of people whose religion was futile, for, as Jesus Himself said, *"Ye worship ye know not what"* (John 4:22), or *"you worship that which you do not know,"* ^{NASB} or *"You give worship, but without knowledge of what you are worshipping."* ^{BBE} **Yet, their quest to see the One of whom the woman spoke enabled them to overcome their religion!** It is still true that the *"love of the truth"* (2 Thess 2:10-12) will enable the person possessing it to overcome all misconceptions and delusions concerning the things of God.

Satan could not hinder them. Also, Satan could not retard or abort their quest. Remember, Satan is *"seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet 5:8). Those who *"would see Jesus"* (John 12:21) certainly rank high on the devil's list of *"whom he may devour."* But such are protected from heaven, by superior wisdom, authority, and power. Holy angels, who are *"ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation"* (Heb 1:14), protect those who are determined to see and benefit from the Lord Jesus Christ. If we could see the scene before us, the Samaritans walked unhindered out of a misdirected city, and made their way through hostile enemies to get to Jesus.

Times when Satan hindered. There have been times when Satan was allowed to *"hinder"* the people of God. Concerning his desire to go to the Thessalonians Paul wrote, *"Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us"* (1 Thess 2:18). However, in spite of the efforts of the wicked one, the Lord kept the Thessalonians from falling, even though they had been exposed only briefly to the

truth.

The desires of their hearts were granted. It has been revealed, *"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart"* (Psa 37:4). Our text is an example of this taking place.

THEY BESOUGHT HIM THAT HE WOULD TARRY. Other versions read, *"they urged Him to stay with them,"* ^{NKJV} *"They were asking Him to stay with them,"* ^{NASB} *"made request to Him to be among them for a time,"* ^{BBE} *"they begged Him to stay with them,"* ^{NJB} *"they begged Him to stay at their village."* ^{LIVING}

Those who want to be with Jesus are not willing to settle for brevity or transience. Some pretentious worshipers are willing to have brief and infrequent exposure to the influence of Jesus. But it is not so with those who have a good idea who He is, and what He can do. I have participated in a number of spiritual renewals, and brevity and infrequency was absent in all of them. Those who have truly *"tasted of the Lord"* want Him to stay – they want fellowship with Him to be prolonged.

HE ABODE THERE TWO DAYS. Confirming that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled, Jesus remained with these inquirers for two days. A considerable part of Christ's ministry took place *"the next day"* or *"the day following"* – and in another place (Lk 9:37; Lk 11:12; John 1:43; 6:22; 12:12). There were even times when He sent people away (Matt 14:22; 15:39; Mk 6:45; 8:9). But here, near the city of Samaria, because the people wanted Him to remain, *"He abode there two days."*

It is my persuasion that many people forfeit available teaching and illumination from Jesus because they are willing to settle for a little – for only brief exposures to the truth. They are too easily distracted, and easily become involved in things that have little or nothing to do with life and godliness. It is also possible for families to engage their children in so many activities that they have little or no time to expose them to the truth of God. Wherever this circumstance exists the people themselves must work the matters out so that the things of God are not neglected, while life is lived out in holy particularity.

MANY MORE BELIEVED ON HIM BECAUSE OF HIS OWN WORD. Some of the people came, having already believed on Christ. In this case, upon personal exposure to the Savior of the world, *"many more became believers,"* ^{NIV} or *"came to believe on the strength of the words He spoke to them,"* ^{NJB} or *"Many more people believed because of Jesus' message."* ^{IE}

We are not told what Jesus said to them, but I do not doubt that it revolved around what He had told the woman – a message about *"the gift of God,"* *"living water"* and His propensity to give it; never thirsting again, a well within, and *"everlasting life."* He doubtless identified Himself as the Christ, for that is the persuasion that drives holy inquiry and godly living.

WE HAVE HEARD HIM OURSELVES

"⁴² And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

SAID TO THE WOMAN. I assume this woman was not popular, or considered a close friend by the regular citizenry of Samaria. If this is so, that circumstance was changed as she and the others centered in Jesus. She had spoken freely to them, and now they speak freely with her. Open dialog is always promoted by those who center their attention in Jesus.

NOW. Other versions read, *"it is no longer,"* ^{NASB} *"Henceforth,"* ^{MRD} and *"no more."* ^{YLT} The word translated *"now"* [ouketi] has the following lexical meaning: "NO LONGER, NO MORE, NO FURTHER," ^{THAYER} "NEGATING AN EXTENSION OF TIME BEYOND A CERTAIN POINT, NO LONGER, NO FURTHER, NO MORE," ^{FRIBERG} "THE EXTENSION OF TIME UP TO A POINT BUT NOT BEYOND - 'NO LONGER.'" ^{LOUW-NIDA}

This represents a certain spiritual phenomenon that characterizes all truly spiritual life. It is a kind of line of demarcation, where one condition ceases, and new one commences. It is always a progressive trait, never speaking of decline or retrogression from good to bad. In this case, those involved had believed the testimony of the woman. Now, however, they went to a higher level, believing because of what Jesus Himself had said.

The *"now"* view is seen in passing from death to life (John 5:24; 1 John 3:24); once being darkness, but now being light (Eph 5:8); once without Christ, now with Him (Eph 2:12-13); once not a people, but now the people of God (1 Pet 2:10); once *"servants of sin,"* but now *"servants of God"* (Rom 6:20-22). The new creation is described in the NOW: *"old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor 5:17).

Many professing Christians have apparently never experienced the **"now factor"** – one manner of life ceasing, and another commencing; one condition being replaced by another.

WE BELIEVE. Other versions read, *"we have faith."* ^{BBE} Believing involves being wholly persuaded, and completely convinced. When one believes, doubt is expelled, and inhibiting questions wither. However, believing is not the activity of the mind. Although the mind is involved in a subordinate sort of way, believing goes deeper than that. Therefore it is written *"with the heart man believeth"* (Rom 10:10). When the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip what hindered him from being baptized, Philip answered, *"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest"* (Acts 8:37). Where the heart is not involved in religion, a certain coldness and insensitivity accompany profession. With it comes inconsistency, a lack of wholeheartedness, and the tendency to draw back. No individual can abide in Christ by means of theological arguments, apologetics, and human reasoning. At some point the heart, which is the center and most essential part of man's being, must be persuaded that Jesus Christ is everything God has declared Him to be. Once that is believed, commitment, steadfastness, and spiritual growth will follow – but only if that is the case. Cold and lifeless religion is always the product of unbelief.

NOT BECAUSE OF THY SAYING. Now that they had heard Jesus, they did not discount what the woman had said. Rather, what she had said was confirmed and expanded by the words of Jesus. The testimony of the woman was like a nail placed in the wood and temporarily secured by a light tap to get it started. The word of Jesus was like a *"hammer"* (Jer 23:29) that shattered the crust of carnality, and drove faith down deep into their heart where it would survive and grow.

WE HAVE HEARD HIM OURSELVES. That is, they started believing because of the testimony of the woman, but now their faith has gone deeper, is more prevalent, and is associated with sound reasoning. They had gone *"from faith to faith"* (Rom 1:17). The fewer filters the truth passes through, the more secure it is in the individual. Some have believed because they have heard a general position that is true. Their faith advances when believe because they have become acquainted with the first people proclaiming that position. Ultimately, they must believe because they have been taught by Jesus Himself, as declared in Ephesians 4:20-21). All of this postulates sensitivity of heart.

THIS IS THE CHRIST, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD. What a persuasion for a Samaritan to have! They had been given no prophet, and had only officially accepted

Moses – who did not speak of *“the Christ,”* or a *“Savior of the world.”* The only place they could have learned of *“the Christ, the Savior of the world,”* was from the Jews, or the Jewish Scriptures, which included the Psalms and the Prophets (Lk 24:44).

Observe what a marvelous thing took place here. These Samaritans were apparently enabled to blend Moses, the Jewish Prophets, the testimony of the woman, and the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of these had a single focus, and the Samaritans were able to see it. **It is a glorious day when a person’s testimony, the writings of Moses and the Prophets, and the words of Jesus, are seen as bearing a single testimony.** Of course, there are those who have not heard much or any of those testimonies, and such people are unspeakably handicapped in both understanding and spiritual growth.