

his people. But now, as of old, "They are not all Israel who are of Israel." The children of the flesh these are not the children of God. It is related of a great defender of the faith,* that as he lay a-dying, when his chaplain read, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief"; "Strange," said the dying man, "that I never saw that to be so true to me, as I see it now!" This is not quoted as if any suspicion of his Christian standing were in the remark; but only as showing how near to the saving truths of Christ, a heart and mind may continue to live, and fail to see them as they are to be seen, in their instant connection with Christ himself.

Nor (to come closer to personal experience still) is *that* the knowledge of Christ here spoken of, which goes no further than an acquaintance with his power upon the conscience. Contact with Christ's power

MAY NOT BE CONTACT WITH HIS SALVATION.

The convicted are not always the converted. This narrative shows that our Lord's own preaching convinced of sin, before he was known as a Saviour. This woman owned his power to search the heart, and condemn the life: yet, for a time, she knew no more. "Sir," said she, "I perceive that thou art a prophet"; yet she did not know him, *yet*, as a Saviour. See the effect upon her—she listens, she inquires about God, she leaves her water-pot, she runs to tell others of what she had heard. Here is attention, anxiety, absorbing interest; and yet not until a future time, have we the hopeful proof of her discipleship.

What is it, then, that our Lord alluded to? We have excluded *information* about him; acknowledgment of his influence; owning him, as, in some sense, *divine*: a mere personal acquaintance with his power upon the conscience. It remains to say, that this "knowledge" appears to be the discovery and acknowledgment of him

AS THE DIVINE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL BLESSING.

I say, "the discovery and the acknowledgment"; for one may discover, and not acknowledge; and one may blindly acknowledge, and not discover. If we put this statement in place of the words in the text, we shall see that this is a fair explanation of it: "If thou hadst discovered and acknowledged that he who speaks to thee, is the divine source of spiritual blessing, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee what cleanses and refreshes the soul." The emblem is just at hand; and so he calls it "living water." We come next to observe

HOW JESUS LED THE WOMAN

to this knowledge of himself. (1) By a kindly personal address. He did not attack her life. See his inimitable kindness. Knowing how to grow in her esteem, he asks a *favor of her*. One of the most winning ways in getting near a heart, is to get oneself put under some obligation to that heart. Christ must be pressed upon people—one by one—and, if this picture has anything worthy of imitation, they must be

SPOKEN TO WHEN FOUND ALONE.

(2) By revealing her sins to herself. The most disagreeable thought to this woman was the one that first showed her Christ's power! *He read her heart!* He understood her thought. And this is of the Gospel. For unless sin, and its guilt, and its consequent misery, and the loss of the soul, be preached, how can pardon, and peace, and salvation, be preached? Of what use is a Saviour to those who never see their need of him? If we say we have no sin, we virtually say we need no salvation; and hence no Saviour. Christ did not keep the woman in ignorance of her sinfulness, and discourse eloquently on

"THE GLORIES OF THE JUDEAN NOON";

or "The pleasures of Rest"; or "The delights of water, as a physical refreshment"; or "The honor due to Jacob for digging the well"; or any such secondary or trivial themes; else it might have been long before she or the villagers of Sychar had been brought to God in penitence for sin, and been led into the joys of the forgiven!

(3) THE STIRRING OF HER MIND,

by presenting God to her as a Spirit, requiring spiritual allegiance. The doctrine of God is in almost all the discourses of Scripture. Sometimes we may begin with God, and end with sin; or begin with sin, and end with God. God without, and sin within, is the sinner's experience;

GOD WITHIN, AND SIN WITHOUT.

is the saint's experience! The faithful preacher will wield *both* these powerful truths. When all is ready,

(4) THE SAVIOUR PRESENTS HIMSELF.

"I that speak unto thee am He." Without that sentence, here had been a sinner brought, in her guilt, to know a spiritual God, but without a Saviour to come between! The Good News is never fully told, unless Christ, the Son of God, is preached.

What may be expected to follow this knowledge of Christ, as thus secured? (1) Prayer will be offered. A lady was sorely tried as to whether she might ask spiritual blessings from Christ, himself! One day the question was pressed on her,

* Bishop Butler.