

WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO'

And Other Radio Addresses

by
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CHAPTER FOUR

DRIVEN BY THIRST

IT WAS high noon on a dreary sun-scorched day. A lone, sin-burdened divorcee, five times married and now living with a man who was not her husband, wended her way southward from the city of Sychar, along the eastern slope of Mount Ebal, in Samaria. High on her head, as was the custom in her country, stood an earthenware water pitcher, with which to draw water from the one-hundred-foot well, famed the country over as Jacob's well, whose location was designated as "**near to the parcel of ground which the patriarch Jacob had given his favorite son, Joseph.**"

One heavy thought, dragging at the heart of the woman, a thousand times heavier than the jar filled with water would be, was the futility of life itself - the dreariness of it.

Tired . . . tired . . . tired . . . If only she did not have to come again and again and again. If only there were some way water could be furnished to the home without this everlasting, repeated daily trip, along the mountain side and back up the weary trail to her home.

Home . . . There was no happiness in a home five times broken, no peace of conscience in a deliberate breaking of Almighty GOD's seventh commandment. "**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**"

And yet she was bound to her sin, as she was also bound by the drudgery of toil, the semi-slavery of womanhood. Someday, perhaps, Messiah would come, for whom the Jews and her own people, the Samaritans, were looking and waiting; and when He came, He would be omniscient . . .

He would know and He would explain all things; He would untangle the problems of where and how to worship - and He would surely know some remedy for heartache . . .

She sighed. It would be cool at the well, and she could rest a moment before beginning the toilsome trek back to the city through the dust and the heat waves, to . . . Home . . . Rest . . . There was no rest - and there was no release from the bondage that enslaved her . . . Oh, sin had held out alluring arms many years ago when in the first blush of her young womanhood she had swerved from the pure path of morality. Sin had promised happiness. Sin . . . Sin . . . SIN . . .!

How attractively it presented its wares! And afterward . . . afterward, like strong drink itself, **"it biteth like an adder."**

In the shadow of night, its glow was lovely; but in the day, in the terrible afterward, it cut and stung and bit and lacerated her spirit, and made her hate herself with bitter hatred . . .

When Messiah, GOD's anointed Holy One, should come . . . The dreary downhearted woman stopped abruptly at the edge of the well. Sitting there in the shade, resting, was a young man, a Jew evidently, clear of eye, nobility on his brow, gentleness in his demeanor and in his voice as he requested courteously, **"Give me to drink."**

She started. Jews generally had no dealings with Samaritans. To accept a drink from a Samaritan woman would be sacrilege, defiling . . . **"How is it that thou, being a Jew . . .**

Listen! The young man with the gracious manner and the clear eye is speaking strange words-mysterious words:

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

Living water . . . How well he knew her aching heart, her longing for the truth, for a satisfaction that could quench the terrible thirst within her soul - that could blot out the awful memories of sins committed, blot out the sins themselves . . . BLACK SINS . . . could fill the awful void within her heart, the gnawing hunger of her spirit which all the wells of earth's pleasures could not satisfy - could only intensify, and afterward smile with the sword of remorse . . .

But she does not know, not yet, who this man is - this God-Man. Not until afterward . . .

She drinks only the surface meaning of his words, not from their depths, as she says, in essence, **"The well is deep, and you have nothing"** - no water jar with which to draw, no cord long enough to reach one hundred feet to the water.

Again he speaks - strange, mysterious words, burning words, the very fire of which awakens within her again the thirst of her spirit - **"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life . . ."**

One drink of the water of life, and, within the one who drinks, there is born an artesian spring that flows forever. One drink, and an eternal spring is born!

What is he saying? . . . Who is this man? Perhaps after all he is only speaking of material water to satisfy the natural thirst of the appetite . . . Foolishly, she speaks in reply:

"Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

And then, like a sword, the words leap from the man's lips - like a sword piercing, because they tear a gaping wound within, and in one swift stroke lay bare the ugly, festering sin of her life - **"Go, call thy husband"**!

Go call thy husband! Strangely then, her eyes are opened.

Those words are like the light of a blazing sun, as they cast the shadow of her sin across her memory, and in that light she sees . . . **"Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet."**

A prophet was a man of GOD gifted with supernatural knowledge. He would know how to worship GOD. He would know where - whether in this mountain which her own people claimed to be the right place, or in Jerusalem, the Holy City.

Listen again: It is not essential where, but how, and whom, and by whom.

The place was insignificant - neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem - not where but HOW and WHOM.

True worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth . . . Anywhere, in the house, in the desert, in the field, at the well, in the sanctuary, whenever and wherever the heart bows upon its knees. Wherever the heart bows . . . GOD is a Spirit. They that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth . . . This man. talks as the Messiah will talk, when he comes -

"I know," she announces seriously, **"that when Messiah cometh . . . he will tell us all things."**

Then it was that the startling revelation came - to a mind already prepared by hunger for divine truth, and prepared also by the sense of her own sinfulness, by the thirsting of her spirit for satisfaction, by the sighing of her soul for rest-puzzling, throbbing, terrible words - revealing and thrilling words they were, as the stranger made his great announcement there at the brink of the rustic old well.

The words would ring in. her mind all the way home, all the way along the singing slope of Ebal, all the way up the trail of life itself. She had said, **"I know that when Messiah cometh . . ."** and he had replied: **"I - THAT SPEAK - TO - THEE - AM - HE"**!

"I that speak to thee AM HE . . . I - AM . . ."

Dazed, beautifully bewildered, she stares for a moment into the masonry-lined shaft of the upper part of the well, and into the soft limestone-walled lower part.

And then, suddenly the interview is over. Twelve strange men appear upon the scene, evidently friends of this prophet - this Messiah! Swiftly, she turns, forgetful of why she had made the hot dusty trip under the blazing sun, not understanding, perhaps, why she had providentially come to the well at this hour rather than at some other - forgetful of the water pot itself. She left it standing there, and hurried away to the city.

Was there a song within her heart, perhaps? It was a song of the water that was the gift of GOD - **"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."**

My friend, you stand now at GOD's well. Let me ask you, "WILL YOU DRINK NOW?"

Believing and drinking are the same thing. Will you leave your water pot and begin today to carry within your heart a flowing well?

The woman, five times divorced, her conscience stabbed awake by the fact of her sinfulness, stood for a moment looking down into the masonry-lined shaft of the ancient well - the well designated to tourists as **"Near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph."**

The strange young man, sitting so calmly there upon the edge of the well, has just announced - has just declared that He is the Messiah - the One whom both Jew and Samaritan, had been anticipating for many weary years. Messiah?

Could that be true? Her thoughts for a moment were deeper than the well. She sent them deep into the meaning of the strange pronouncement, and drew up for herself great bucketfuls of truth - great heartfuls -.

If he were the Messiah, the anointed one of the Father, He knew all things. Already he had told her the woeful secret of her broken life. Already he had announced that in the worship of the true GOD - true worship - it was not essential where, but how - Neither in this mountain - beautiful Mount Ebal, as was claimed by all her family and her race, nor yet in the great Holy City of Jerusalem -

Not Where, but HOW. Not Where, but WHOM . . .

"God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship in Spirit and in truth."

She could worship GOD anywhere, on the hard packed trail to and from this well - in the home, under the rasping leaves of the palm tree, along the sloping banks of muddy Jordan . . . Downtown in the busy shopping district, midst the swish and rustle of tasseled garments, the clatter of wooden sandals on the stone pavements . . . Anywhere, everywhere. GOD the Father was Omnipresent. And he had sent from heaven at last the Messiah . . .

Her thoughts, still drinking at this wonderful new well which had suddenly burst forth within, reach out to the city, and to the hundreds there who do not know, whose lives, like her own, had been barren and desert - drinking only of the wells of this life - not of eternal life. They had been companions in worldly pursuits, in the breaking of GOD's laws. She must tell them she had found the Messiah. A strange urge wells up within, flowing almost FIERCELY, as it fairly drives her to go to tell them . . .

And then, abruptly, the interview is over. Twelve strange men appear on the scene, following the same footpath on which she has just come.

Quickly then, her heart still drinking, she turns, and moves hurriedly up the path, through the heatwaves, the pathway bordered perhaps with wild flowers - the lovely creamy yellow flowers with the purple stamens, later to be known throughout the world as Christ-thorn, *Sisiphus Spina Christi*, the wild violet-colored Susan, the sweet-scented lily of the valley, whose myrrh-like perfume filled the air with its fragrance . . .

She understood now, why she had waited until the noon hour to go to the well, rather than this morning early. The GOD of Heaven had arranged it so!

She had had an appointment with the Messiah, and had not known of it - an appointment made by the Father . . . He had caused her to make the trip at noon for the water . . .

And now, she stops, abruptly . . . bewildered. Her hands are empty. She has forgotten her water pot. Oh, well, she thinks it doesn't matter. She was leaving now every water pot of her past - she was to drink no more at earth's well. He had promised that within the one who drinketh, an artesian spring would flow forever.

Soon now, she will be home - able to walk much faster without the water pitcher. She would use her influence which, heretofore, had been for the gratification of her own selfish plans and ambitions, to spread the news of the Messiah . . .

And now, while the woman disappears over the edge of the hill, another scene is in progress at the well.

It is time now for the meal. Hungrily the twelve strong men prepare the food, bought only a little before at the stores in the city, whither the woman has gone. But the Master, the God-Man, stands - or sits - aloof, as if in deep meditation showing no inclination to eat. Is He meditating, perhaps, upon the tremendous purpose for which He had come into the world?

Is He thinking of Himself, the Mighty Rock of Ages, who had come to earth, to be . . . CLEFT . . . AT . . . CALVARY . . .?

That from His wounds might flow forever, an eternal spring of the Water of Life for whosoever will stoop and drink? Perhaps of the invitation which some day, the beloved disciple, John, banished on the isle of Patmos will write for the whole world - **"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst Come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely . . . "Master!"**

It is his disciples calling him - reminding him of the needs of the body of His humiliation which at Bethlehem He had taken upon Himself, in which He now was imprisoned - which the Father had prepared, and in which He was to be the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world . . . He had come to do the will of the Father . . .

"Master." Again, the disciples. **"Eat, Master."** Eat? . . . **"I have meat to eat that ye know not of."**

Therefore said the disciples one to another, "**Hath any man brought him food?**"

"And Jesus said unto them, 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish HIS WORK.'"

Finish the work . . . The Father's Work.

Soon, only a little while now, just as soon as His teaching ministry is finished - He will go yonder - to the cross - for which cause He had come into the world - and there finish the work - there, He will cry in a voice to be heard round the world - to be echoed throughout heaven itself, . . . **IT . . . IS FINISHED . . .**"

It is finished "**My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.**"

And so, friends of the gospel, listening in, I want you to believe that. That on the cross He did finish that work.

There is a fountain opened for sin - and there is a fountain of life at which you may drink. Let me emphasize. To drink, is the same as to believe. It is as simple as that. But GOD wants you to tell Him that you believe. He wants you to dare to open the lips of your heart and speak audibly to Him, and say, "Lord, I do believe."

And to you, who have believed, hear this also, "**Say ye not there are four months and then cometh the harvest. Behold I say unto you Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest.**"

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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