

to a judgment unto condemnation after this life. You will already have been declared just or righteous through His victory over sin and death in His resurrection.

ONLY TRUST HIM

How do you believe in Jesus as your Saviour? To believe is to trust. As you trust a chair to support the weight of your body, trust in Jesus to carry in Himself the burden of your sinful nature. To believe is to accept. If I offer to you a gift, it does not become yours until you accept it. Jesus offers you the gift of eternal life. But you must accept it. No one else can do it for you. No other person—your parent, wife, or child—can eat for you. Neither can they receive Christ for you. You must do it for yourself! To believe is to commit your soul, your life, to Jesus. Traveling by plane it is not necessary for you to be a licensed pilot. While such knowledge may enable you better to understand the experience, it is not a requirement for your reaching your destination. The only necessity is that you board the plane, and the pilot utilizes the power of the plane to take you there.

So it is with believing in Jesus. The

one basic need for you is not knowledge or understanding of the *process* of salvation. It is *faith* in the Saviour, leaving the process to Him. You do not wait until you understand the process of digestion before eating a meal. You do not wait until you are an engineer before riding a train, or a pilot before riding a plane. Nor do you need to wait until you understand the mystery of salvation before being transformed from your lost condition into a child of God. Your one need is to trust in Jesus.

After that, as a new-born babe, you will spend the rest of your life growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus. The one thing for you to do right now, wherever you are, whatever you are doing, is to place your trembling faith on Him who is the Rock of your salvation. Hear the Word of God in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Trust Him this very moment! Write me that you have done so! I'll send you some material to help you in your new-found faith. Again—what must you do to be saved? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!"

STEPPING STONES TO SALVATION

November 9, 1958

Scripture: John 4:1-42

Text—"Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World"—John 4:42.

Let us begin our meditation with a question. What is your attitude toward Jesus? Perhaps you have never thought seriously about it. Maybe you have, but have never found a satisfactory answer. At any rate you will do well to examine or re-examine this problem which Jesus presents to every thinking person.

It is impossible to ignore Jesus. His name is written too indelibly into every phase of life. Art, music, poetry, history, yes, life itself, cannot be fully mastered

apart from some conclusive answer to the question, "What do you think of Jesus?"

The fourth Chapter of John's Gospel presents such a situation as you face at this moment. As Jesus waited at Jacob's well for His disciples to return from the nearby town with food, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Usually women did so early in the morning and late in the afternoon.

SPIRITUAL THIRST

Immediately Jesus began a conversation by asking her for a drink. Physical thirst was a common ground between them. Also they had the common interest of spiritual thirst—Jesus' avowed thirst for her soul and her hidden thirst for a better

way of life. This simple request on the part of Jesus began one of the greatest quests of our Lord for the soul of a lost sinner. It is important that you see yourself in the person of this woman. For Jesus is seeking you also!

What is your attitude toward Jesus? Four possible answers are found in this chapter (one of which will doubtless characterize you). I ask that you consider them as you search your own heart.

First, there is the attitude of scorn. To Jesus' request for water the woman replied, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (v. 9). You may be sure that the word "Jew" was spoken with a note of derision, if not hatred. Back of this feeling were centuries of prejudice growing out of racial, political, social, and religious differences, the breeding grounds of the bitterest of hatreds. To say that this woman scorned Jesus is to put it mildly.

But you say, "I do not scorn Jesus! I have never held Him up to ridicule. There is not hatred in my heart toward Him! In fact, I have never seriously considered Him at all!" That is the point. You do not need to speak words of contempt for Jesus to hold Him in scorn. You have only to ignore Him. To say by your attitude that He is beneath the level of your consideration is to depreciate Him in the strongest of terms. Opposition to someone at least shows that you respect him as an opponent. But to ignore him demonstrates your utter contempt for him as a person of unimportance so far as you are concerned. Shakespeare speaks of a castle's strength laughing a siege to scorn. The siege was unworthy of the ability of the castle to endure it. William Cowper is more to the point in his couplet, "Of all the griefs that harass the distrest, surely the most bitter is a scornful jest."

IGNORING JESUS

This is exactly what your attitude of ignoring the claims of Jesus upon your life does to Him. In Matthew 12:30 He said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." There are so many

things which command your attention—business, home, sports, politics, social engagements, personal appearance, health, education—all because you consider them of prime importance in your life. But when it comes to Jesus you "sit in the seat of the scornful." Your refusal to face squarely His meaning for your life, both here and hereafter, is your way of saying, "I have time only for the vital and important things. Do not bother me with the non-essentials." And your attitude wounds Him more deeply than a knife thrust into His heart.

Look at the last day of Jesus' life before the cross. At least the Pharisees and Sadducees though Him of sufficient importance that He must be dealt with. Pilate, (regardless of His final decision,) recognized Jesus as a problem. But Herod Antipas only laughed at Him. In Luke 23:11 we read, "And Herod and his men of war set him at nought (considered Him as nothing), and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate." They said, "King indeed! Ha! Ha! Ha! Take him back to Pilate. He means nothing to us!"

In your fixed refusal even to consider Jesus you are saying the same thing. "Let others decide this matter if they will. I am utterly indifferent to His claims!" And what does this mean to Jesus? G. A. Studdert-Kennedy answers this question in his poem "Indifference:"

When Jesus came to Golgotha they
hanged Him on a tree,

They drove great nails through hands and
feet, and made a Calvary;

They crowned Him with a crown of
thorns, red were His wounds and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days, and
human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham, they
simply passed Him by,

They never hurt a hair of Him, they only
let Him die;

For men had grown more tender, and
they would not give Him pain,

They only just passed down the street,
and left Him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, "Father forgive them,
for they know not what they do,"

And still it rained the winter rain that
drenched Him through and through;

The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see, And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for Calvary."¹

ATTITUDE OF RESPECT

Second, there is the attitude of respect. In the course of their conversation Jesus told the woman to call her husband. To which she replied that she had none. In turn Jesus reminded her that she had had five husbands, and was now living with a man who was not her husband. In response she said, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet" (v. 19). Her scorn for a Jew gave place to respect for a prophet.

Whereupon she proceeded to enter either into religious debate or else into serious inquiry about theological questions as some scholars insist. In either case, for the present, but she held Jesus only in respect short of faith in Him.

Does not this describe the attitude of some to whom I speak? You respect Jesus, but you do not trust in Him as your Saviour. You look with high regard upon His character and upon his place in history.

(You are willing to admit that He is the greatest man who ever walked across the stage of time.) You even accept at face value the Biblical record concerning Him. You are willing to concede that He has affected for good the lives of multitudes who, in His name, have blessed the world. You accord to Him the praise of your lips, yet you withhold from Him the trust of your heart.

THE MOUTH—THE HEART

What does the Bible say about you? In Isaiah 29:13 we read, "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me . . ." Again in Ezekiel 33:31 we find, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."

¹*Christ in Poetry*, Thomas C. Clark and Hazel D. Clark, Association Press, New York, 1952, p. 168.

Putting these words in a modern context here is what God is saying. You live in a Christian environment. Because it seems to be the respectable thing to do, you go to church either regularly or occasionally. You assemble with Christian people as though you were one of them. You sing the hymns. You listen attentively to the reading of God's word. You bow your head during prayer. You even put something in the offering plate. You listen respectfully to the sermon. But when the invitation to trust in Jesus is given, you set your heart against Him. After the service you return to your covetousness, which is nothing more than a life based upon a purely material emphasis. You have paid your respects to God, but you have denied Him your faith, love, and life.

Can this suffice for your deepest needs? The Bible says that it cannot. The Samaritan woman asked Jesus about the *place* of worship, Mt. Gerizim or Mt. Moriah. Jesus spoke to her of the *kind* of worship. Said He, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (vv. 23-24). You cannot worship God in spirit if you refuse the Son of His love.

RESPECT NOT ENOUGH

When this woman displayed respect for Jesus she addressed Him as "sir." This is the same word which is translated "Lord." In Matthew 7-21 Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." The will of God, first of all, is that you receive His Son as your Saviour. To do less is to use for Him the respectful title of "sir" rather than the faithful title of "Lord." In Matthew 7:22-23 Jesus says of you who even endeavor to carry on His work out of respect rather than out of faith, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." I beg of you, my friend, that you not stop in an attitude of respect for Jesus, but that you press on to an experience of faith in Him.

Third, there is the attitude of timid faith in Jesus. Finally the Samaritan woman left her water pot, ran into the town, and said to the men, "Come, see a man, which told me all things which ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (V. 29). "Is not this the Christ?" She did not say, "This is the Christ." There is every evidence that she believed so in her heart. Yet, to avoid opposition from her companions in sin, she so phrased her statement as to refrain from an open avowal of her faith.

I daresay that her attitude is that of many who hear me now. You are convinced that Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. In your heart you have accepted Him as such. Yet you keep the secret locked within yourself. To such I would point out two awesome facts.

EMPTY FAITH

Beware of relying upon such a faith. A faith which is sufficient to save you will be strong enough to embolden you. In James 1:20 the Bible says, "But wilt thou know, O vain (empty) man, that faith without works is dead?" This does not mean that you are saved by faith plus works. Rather it says that a living faith will manifest itself through works.

The first work of life-giving faith will be confession of Jesus as your Saviour. In Romans 10:9-10 Paul says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus (or Jesus is Lord), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." To confess "Jesus is Lord" in that day could well mean the loss of your life. Paul, then, is saying to you that the faith in your own heart must be such as to overcome your timidity and fear as gladly you own your Lord.

Jesus Himself said in Mark 8:38, "Who-soever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him shall also the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Whatever else this means it carries a warning to you not to rest in a faith which stops short of a full and open

confession of your faith in Jesus as your Saviour and Lord.

SAVED TO SERVE

Even if such timid faith should save you, it does not promise a happy and fruitful life of service for Jesus. We are saved to serve and to bear fruit in God's vineyard. Your union with Christ, the Bible teaches, is a spiritual marriage. Secret marriages are never happy and are seldom fruitful. Such will be the fate of your life in Christ and your reward in heaven. The Bible in I Corinthians 3:14-15 says of the final judgement, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ . . . If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." You have the foundation, Christ; but how will you build upon it unless you openly acknowledge Him as your Saviour?"

Fourth, there is the attitude of open avowal of your faith in Jesus as your Saviour. On the strength of the women's timid testimony Jesus was invited to visit in their town which He did for two days. Because of His teaching many more believed on Him. Said they to 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 Saviour of the world*" (v. 42, author's italics). Open confession of their faith in Jesus! The word "know" is a word meaning a conviction of the soul. It was more than a mere acquaintance with Jesus. More than scorn, respect, or timid faith—it was the eruption of the volcano within their souls. Their faith was the lava which flowed forth.

That is the experience which I pray will be yours right now! Make your confession in church. Write and tell me about it. Be done with the scorn of your indifference! Rest not in a cold-hearted respect and admiration for Jesus! Do not be satisfied with a secret, timid faith in Him. Openly, boldly, completely say to God—and man—"This is indeed . . . the Saviour of the world. He is my Saviour too!"