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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 8 June 1930

JOHN 4 v 4

"And He must needs go through Samaria"

He was going to Jerusalem. There was jealousy, real or pretended, with respect to Christ making and baptising more disciples than John, and Jesus left that part, and His way lay through Samaria. Samaritans were not Jews, they had no dealings with Jews, and therefore it was a matter of great surprise to the woman of Samaria who came to draw water, when Jesus should ask of her water to drink. Jesus was weary; a Man of sorrows, a real Man experienced physical weakness, and physical thirst, and He asked this woman to give Him to drink. The request astonished her, and she expressed her astonishment by asking how that He, a Jew, should request of her water, "for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4 v 9) He told her that if she knew - O, if she only knew - who it was that was before her, and that made this request, she would have asked of Him, she would have made request to Him, to give her water; not such water as she could give to Him, but living water which, if she had received, would cause her never again to thirst. What an amazing statement that must have been to her, never to thirst again. Then said she, give me that water that I may not have to come again, and again, and again to draw from this water, but He said it was living water. Now it was this woman in particular about whom He was concerned, and for whose good it was needful that He should go through Samaria. The need was in the woman, but not first; first of all it was in the purpose of Christ. That makes it so wonderful that there should be a need in God for a sinner. When the Lord would go into Jerusalem on an occasion then He sent His disciples to loose an ass, a colt, the foal of an ass, whereon never had man ridden, and if the owner asked why they were taking such liberty with his property, they were to say - "The Lord hath need of him". If Christ has need of any of us, if He has need of our hearts into which to pour His mercy, and His love; if He has need of our guilty consciences that therein He may put the efficacy of His death; if He has need of our naked, ragged

condition that He may give to us a covering, an everlasting righteousness, what can we say, but - "Unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever". When God will work deliverances He has in His Own mind need of instruments. When He will deliver Israel out of Egypt, He has need of Moses. Moses is raised up, a deliverer, a mediator, a lawgiver, and a guide to the very border of the land of promise. Moses must needs be raised up. When the time has come for Israel to enter into the land of promise, then the Lord had need of another man, and he raised up Joshua, a type of Christ, to lead the people into the land of promise. And when Israel had sinned and provoked God to place over them for seven long years the Midianites, and that long oppression caused them to cry, then the need that God had was in the person of Gideon. He gave them Gideon and 300 men with him, to deliver them out of the power of the host of the Midianites. And when He will have a king, whose seed should for ever sit on the throne, then He raised up David, raised him up, took him from following sheep, and made him the king. His Own king, a lively, beautiful type of the Lord Jesus. And when He would deliver Israel from the idolatry they had long been indulging in, worshipping Baal, He raised up Elijah who put the people and the 450 prophets of Baal to a test. All these are proofs that God must needs do such, and such things, the need being two-fold, first His Own purpose, and then the condition of His people. We cannot separate them because they merge into each other for the glory of God. What an amazing thing took place in respect to some of us when it was needful, according to divine purpose, that our madness, and ignorance, and alienation, and death, should be ended, as to their dominion, and a new life should be imparted, a new light should dart into the understanding, and new desires should be wrought by the Holy Spirit. The Lord who had need of the ass, had need of some of us, and for a little while, as enabled, this shall be the line I will take this evening in speaking of this word - "He must needs go through Samaria" He must needs go to sinners. He cares for them, He loves them He died for them, He wrought for them an everlasting righteousness, and He received for them, as well as for Himself, the Holy Spirit without measure, that after His resurrection, and ascension into heaven, He might shed abundantly that Holy Spirit upon people who were dead in trespasses and sins. This will bring us to one or two important questions. God is great, and His religion is great, His dealings with men are great, but also they are particular,

personal. Personal election is in the Bible, and personal quickening and teaching we have set forth in the Scripture and it has been illustrated in myriads of sinners; God's need of them; He must go where they are. He must go where they are. And where they are, the Scripture tells us. "The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God". He goes to their graves, He speaks life to them, and it is very wonderful how that the invincible work of the Spirit is made manifest in the most unlikely cases. He must needs go here and there.

Now I shall take, first of all, the view of God the Spirit going to a sinner, ignorant, blind, worldly, caring only for the things of this life, and breathing a breath of life into his soul, and shedding heavenly, unerring light into his understanding, and whenever that work is done two objects are before that sinner. First, God; that is the first. No man will ever fear punishment for his sins until he sees Him who is able, after He has killed the body, to cast into hell. Sin seen in God's light is sin indeed. Natural repentance has reference to self. Spiritual repentance has reference to God. And so it is vital that when one is born again he should see God. Some of us will never forget the sight, the first sight we had of God. I do not want to obtrude myself on your notice, yet I remember now that when a young man wanting only the world, and determined to have it, suddenly, on a day never to be forgotten by me, a light shined into my heart, and I heard the Word of God, I heard that Scripture - "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God", and I instantly saw Him and said out of my heart, Where that God is, I shall never be. Did there ever come a day to you, any of you, wherein God came, and you saw Him, holy, just, omnipotent, and were convinced of sin. He is the first Object and that will always be in the experience of a sinner. It will stand out with a pre-eminence; there is that about it which is above all else for the moment. And then the second object is self; wicked, sinful self, lost self. Ignorant self, wayward, hard-hearted, proud, lustful self; worldly self. And what a sight, what a sight. A holy God, a sinful man. A glorious Being seen in the light of His holy law, and a wretched creature seen in the same light. Seen, so as to bring this conviction, the sinner is lost. God has need of this person. Grace has need of him, love has need of him, mercy has need of him, righteousness has need of him, for all these

things are provided for, and he must have them. But forgiveness is only joyful to sinners who feel themselves to be sinners. Justification is only joyful to those who are guilty. Mercy is only comfortable to those whose sins make them miserable. So there is a need for a teaching, a divine teaching that shall make God great, necessary, glorious. Now this is a point of experience not to be given up, held fast. Those of you who have had this beginning - it might have been obscure to you; it might sometimes be now obscure - hold fast what you are not able to deny, that a change, radical, great, unexpected change, came. Different views you had of God then from what you ever had before. Strange feelings about Him, and about Eternity. Convictions of hell, as a deserved punishment, as a terrible place; the reality of God, the reality of His truth, His law, a sinner began to feel; you began to feel. And the reason that God came to you in this way is here in the text - "He must needs go through Samaria". And when mercy is needed, when it is felt to be needed, when the sinner knows, and acknowledges in his conscience, and in his confessions, that nothing short of mercy will do for him, then the Lord must needs go to him. He says to the person, Come forth. He gives eyes to the sinner to see what he never saw before. It is an amazing thing that a sinner is led to see that the omnipotence that was a terror to him to think about, he is able to look on in the Person of the Son of God incarnate, and even pray for a touch of it, whereas before he dared not think of it, or could not think of it without terror. I shall never forget the time I saw, the first time I saw how God could be honoured in saving me, and how that, that omnipotence which I had dreaded, could sustain, and support, and bless me, and take me to heaven. There is a reality never to be expressed when such a mercy falls on the sinner's heart. Need, here again, is two-fold. They come together - God's purpose to have the sinner, and the sinner's desire to be God's. The Lord must needs go. Why, He has gone to many a poor person in the field, and met with him. Gone to many a poor sinner, afflicted, and met with him, and spoken to him. Well is it put by Erskine

Dost mind the place, the spot of land
Where Jesus did thee meet

Here begins hope, real hope, living, good hope through grace. Here a

sinner begins to feel that his heart pants after manifestations of mercy. Begins to realise that if Jesus Christ but be his, he has nothing else comparatively that he can desire. He can say, and he does say, sooner or later - "Whom have I in heaven, but Thee". O, what poor things creatures are. What poverty, what death, what vanity, faith sees in all creation, and what reality, and goodness, and desirability a sinner sees in the Lord, and in His great salvation. That is a point in religion - Good hope through grace; it is connected with everlasting consolation, but that consolation is only occasionally felt at this stage, and never without interruption while the sinner is here. There is a need, a felt need of union and this is on the part of God first. "I in them". Then their souls pant for it, pant for the manifestation of Christ, and of union, felt union with Him. This comes about by a death. This comes about by a real, an experimental death. You have it in the Romans - Know ye not (I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from his law and she is at liberty to be married to another man (Romans 7). Now Paul takes this and puts it into the gospel. He says, Ye are dead to the law; therefore you can be honourably united to the Lord Jesus. That is a great point in experience, to be so dead to God's law in your conscience, by its powerful operation upon you, so dead to its demands, so dead to its curse, indeed so dead to it as that it has no longer any dominion over you, that you are free, free from that law. Free from it as a law of life, a law of death, a law of blessing, a law of curse. Free from it, and therefore, when another comes and says I have need of you, you are to be one with Me, says Paul, you can be married to the Lord Jesus, and this is that union that is so wonderful, and so powerful, and so sweet, that the sinner finds himself willing to lose himself in Jesus quite. Is it not amazing that Christ should ever need a sinner when you consider His eternal blessedness as the Son of God? when you consider that He had no need of creation, no need of its beauties, no need of the obedience of a sinner to make Him more blessed than He was in His Own Person eternally. Then to know in your own case that He had need of you, that He could not be perfect without you, that His happiness could not be complete without you, that His heaven would not be full without you, that His glory would not be complete without

you, this is amazing. This dissolves the sinner into amazement, and raises up in him the sweetest contrition that ever he should have had a thought against this gracious Person. And now in his soul's experience that takes place - every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. A fountain must pour itself out, a spring must be rising and go somewhere. Now this fountain of life must pour itself out, and it does so into the hearts of sinners. "He must needs go" And perhaps some of you can say, I remember when He came to me in a certain place, and I was in a certain condition, and the reason will be found to be this - the Lord had need of you. He must needs come to you for the fulfilment of the divine purpose, for the manifestation of mercy, for the sanctification of your soul, and for what I have just named, for union with Himself.

In the next place we are to notice this. He has need of witnesses, and if some people did not speak to His praise the very stones would cry out against them. And where are these witnesses? In various places. What is their witness? That God is. A grand thing to know that. What is the witness? That God is good. The Lord is good and doeth good. The witness is that justification is a free thing, given, and imputed, and imparted by the Holy Ghost. The witness is that the Lord Jesus died and rose again. Died for our sins and rose again for our justification. "Ye are My witnesses" What a wonder that a sinner should ever have a word to say for God. Now every child of God is to the praise of the glory of His grace. Zechariah bore witness when he said, an angel showed him - and he saw - chariots coming out of mountains of brass, and these, the horses, went into the four quarters of the earth, and then said God, these have quieted my spirit. They have fulfilled my purposes, they have accomplished My designs, here and there, one for death, another for life. These are the witnesses. God's people are graciously taught so as to bear witness to Himself. "He must needs go through Samaria".

And now I would take just another view of it, that God has need of a minister. He has need of a church; He has need of officers in His church. Not unimportant. You may say, My own personal case is what I am troubled about, and may you never lose that trouble till you lose it in the flood of God's goodness manifested to you. Later you may be led to see the thing I am to say now, that He has need of a church. "Ye

are My witnesses". You shall stand and be men wondered at. Wondered at because God has separated you from the world, and made you part of a visible church. This is the only witness God has. This Book, if I may speak of it as this silent Book, men hear not, and they will not allow it to be God's inspired Word today. But there are people wondered at, not believed in, or respected particularly, but there is that about them, and in them, that will be a witness for God. We had a great man here when the church was formed, Mr Marshall. There were others too, very godly men, but he was singularly great in grace, as well as blessed with a wonderful mind. Now he was on an estate, and men said to him, You will never get on with the Squire. After a little time the Squire said, I do not know what it is, but there is power about John Marshall I cannot understand, but John Marshall was a witness for God, and a witness in this church, and he was an instrument in the hands of God of bringing this church into being, a great instrument, and it will be well for us to remember him. I remember him as I have good need to do, good reason to do, for he was wonderful to me in my beginning here as a minister. God has a church, and He has need of one, that it may witness to Him. A church of God is not a building, not a place, but a people formed for His Own praise. "This people have I formed for Myself, they shall show forth My praise." Do we as a church? God has need of this. He could do without it, but it is not His plan. He could glorify Himself in other ways if He determined so to do, but it is not His way. This is His way, to raise up sinners in regeneration, guide them in His providence, and bring them together in heart union, and form into visible churches and so they are for the praise of God. The need lies in Himself to love a people. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise". He has officers in His church, two kinds, two distinct officers, the minister, and deacons. These were divinely ordained and sent out. Wonderful that God should ever have need of a minister to send him into a district, a village, a town, and send him to speak to a person, to speak really to a person. A proper view of preaching is not an exercise for an hour of a man in the pulpit, but that God has something to say to some person or persons while the man is preaching. That is a very important passage in Haggai - "Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message" (Haggai 1 v 13) Not about it, but in it. An unction, an authority, a directness, a distinct message to some person, or persons, while the man is

speaking, and this does not rest on his knowledge of the cases, but in God's directing him. He searches out cases he has known nothing about. It is the greatest ambition or desire of a sent minister that it may be so with him, that God may have need of him to speak to cases, distinct words to cases, so that the poor of the flock shall say to him mentally, if not otherwise, Now know we that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true. Of what use would it be for you to go away and say, Well, he preached a fairly good sermon, and yet it went no further. But if one could say, I could not follow him much, but I did hear a word, and it entered into my conscience, and I cannot get it out; the arrow sticks, the sentence remains, there is an unction, there is an authority, a life, and a light that can never, never be got rid of; so the minister is as the Apostle Paul says, a savour of life unto life, while solemnly the same sermon may be to some a savour of death unto death. I cannot deny, I would not deny, that God has had need of me in some cases. May we thank Him for His great condescension.

In the next place He has need of providence. Calvin says, the secret purposes of God are only known when the time for their fulfilment comes. When the time for a fulfilment of a judgement comes, it falls on the head of the wicked; no escaping it. If judgement falls on the head of any of you - you might see some portentous clouds threatening - you could not escape it. You might say, I will try to keep out of the trouble, but you wont be able. I saw a cloud many years ago before I knew Brighton, and I said I will keep away from that, but God had need of it for me, and so I had to go into it. You will find God has need of providence to guide you somewhere, to guide you into some things and there is no escaping. All God's ways are, to those for whom they are purposed, inescapable. Watch His hand, watch His dealings. He has need of this, He has need of that. He has need of adversity. "In the day of prosperity be joyful, in the day of adversity consider." Consider whose hand is in it; consider what need there is in your case for it. Consider the voice that may be speaking to you. Consider the effect of the providence on your heart. Does it soften you? Does it convince you of your need of chastisement? Does it tell you that there is some reason why God has something against you? You have left your first love or you have forgotten His exhortation. There is a needs be for adversity, and there is a needs

be for mercy to come on adversity less the souls which I have made should fail before Me. So He says, I will not always chide, neither will I be angry for ever. He must needs show tender compassion. "I wound and I heal." So God speaks to His people. I wound in My providence, and I heal by My mercy. In My wrath I smote him and he went on frowardly. Then I said, I will restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. He has need of providence because He eternally purposed to reveal Himself as the Provider of all - "In Him we live, and move, and have our being". And if He is your God, He will make you value your need of Him. If you need a friend, God will find you one if He has need of him for you. When you need deliverance, He will work it. He commands deliverances for Jacob. In a word, whatever is done in the holy, wise, awful providence of God, He has need of. Whatever you may feel when conflict comes, there is need for it. Whatever comfort you may receive from some providence, there is a need for that. Paul needed Titus, and God sent Titus to comfort him.

Now may the Lord open this to us, if I have been enabled to express to you what was in my mind - the two-fold need - the first being in God. Do not forget that. We are so apt to get self-centered, even in our own exercises, and to think that it is alright here, but it is not alright there. The need is in God first, because of mere mercy He sovereignly condescended, may we say, to put it there in Himself. Then it is in yourself. Need of mercy where He is determined to show it. Need of love where He has fixed it. Need of power, where it cannot be dispensed with. All, all the need is there first, and then in your own self. And O, how sweet it is when these two things meet in one person; they make a little heaven in him. This poor woman she got two things; she got conviction of sin, and she got mercy. And so may it be with us, that it may be said when we look at our circumstances, when we look at our graces, when we look at our needs, when we look at the church of God, and the minister, and the officers, we may say, the Lord had need and He must needs go to this town, and to that village, to this place, and to that, and to certain persons. May He grant that it may be so with us.

AMEN.