Reality and power of conversion

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Preacher: Prof J.Douglas Macmillan

[0:00] And when you turn with me this evening to that portion of God's word which was at John chapter 4, and let us read again at verse 27.

And upon this came his disciples and marveled that he talked with the woman, yet no man said, What seekest thou, or I talkest thou with her?
The woman then left her water pot and went away into the city and said to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the kind?
Then they went out of the city and came unto him. Especially these words in verse 29. Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did.
Is not this the kind? I want to talk this evening about the reality and power of conversion experience.
[1:07] Conversion is not merely something that is necessary. It's something that is possible and it is something that is real in human experience.

And we have a very notable instance of it. And of its power to change the heart and the whole course of our life.
In the story of this woman of Samaria. Last week we were looking at how the Lord Jesus dealt with her. Our subject was turning conversation to spiritual benefit.
Clearly the Lord Jesus spent a lot of time on this woman. We have given, I am sure, just the outline of his conversation by the Apostle John.
The disciples were not present, of course. They had gone into the town to buy food. The Lord Jesus was left at the well. I was wondering the other day how John got all his information.
[2:16] Then I was thinking that, well, someone who had been, had such an exhilarating and thrilling experience of the love and power of God in Christ.

As this woman had had. She would have told the disciples, I reckon. And of course, the Lord Jesus himself too would have spoken of it. Turning conversation to spiritual benefit.
I hope that through the past week many of us applied God's word and tried to do that with all the various people we came into contact with. And let's look tonight at the issue of this conversation.
Lord Jesus, tired and weary though he was, took time to speak to one person. Especially in the day in which we live, we tend to be enamoured of big audiences and big congregations.
And I don't know how often people have said to me, it must be very easy to speak or to preach to, you know, a full church. Not very often I get the opportunity of speaking to a full church, but sometimes I do.
[3:29] And of course there is something, something in a church that's absolutely packed with people, there's something inspiring in it. So the Lord Jesus was content to take the gospel to an audience of one person.

And a fruitful, successful, blessed, blessed, conversation with one people would be far better than a long, unfruitful sermon to 2000, wouldn't it?
Well, the Lord Jesus spent time on one. What a lot. We have to learn from that fact alone. And he spent a lot of time with us. And he, he, he took time to lead around to spiritual things.
I was reading the other day, he was reading in the life of Wesley. I don't agree with some of his theology, but my word, that man had a seal for Christ and for talking to people about his soul.
And something gripped my attention. It was something he said about his mother. He remembered, once, his mother spending a very long time with one person, teaching them about spiritual things.
[4:55] And after this, he heard his father say to his mother, I don't know, he said, how on earth you could spend so much time on that blockhead? Pardon me, the question wasn't too bright.

I listened to you, and at one point, you know, you told him that one thing no less than 20 times. How could you be so patient? And Wesley says, I never forgot my mother's answer.

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She said, well, if I had told him only 19 times, all my labor would have been lost. That's why I told him 20 times. You see, she kept at it.
And you know, it's worthwhile keeping at it. The conversation in the earlier part of this chapter tells us that.
Perhaps the 20th time will come in our dealing with some person. And we'll feel then that we have not wasted our labor on them.
[6:02] The disciples came back into the picture, and as usual, the picture of Daskins a little when the disciples come. They marveled that Jesus was talking to a woman.

Well, there may be several reasons for that, but one is certainly this, that the wonder at the Lord Jesus standing or sitting on the well and talking just to a woman reflects the attitude of the day to women.
Reflects it very strongly. For a long time before this, I'm afraid that women became very neglected in spiritual things in Judaism.
And there are rabbinical sayings which show this very strongly. Let me just give you an example of the kind of thing. And ladies, I want you just to stop and think about how much the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you and for the female sex in general.
This is how the rabbis thought of them. It was like this. It said, He who instructs his daughter in the law of God is a foolish man.
[7:22] Ajahn. He who instructs his daughter in the law of God is a foolish man. And then they said this, Let no one talk with a woman in the streets.

No, a man should not talk even with his own wife in the streets. And then they said this, A true disciple of spiritual things will defile himself by talking with a woman.
That was the kind of attitude that had built up in Israel, in God's nation against women. Well, you see, the Lord Jesus is breaking this down. Here he is talking to a woman.
That surprises the disciples. And then not only is she a woman, but she's a Samaritan. Two things that are absolutely against her. John tells us the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.
So you see, Christ is cutting right through all the prejudices of men. You know, people accuse the Christians of being very prejudiced people.
[8:31] I wish people knew how many prejudices the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has really removed. Western society as the last four to five hundred years have known it would just not have been possible without Christian teaching.

the gospel is a liberating force and a liberating power and the power of God's love at work in human hearts does break down all kinds of prejudices.
So these men were, they marveled. And you know, often through the New Testament we get people just marveling, amazed at the things that the Lord Jesus is doing.
Remember the Pharisees recorded for us in the Gospel of Luke. They said, this man receives sinners and eat his wisdom. One of the finest messages that we have.
what a testimony about our Lord Jesus and it was left not by his friends but by his enemies. And how often that very message has encouraged people to go on in their search after truth and their search after Christ despite their sin and their own folly.
[9:56] For this man receives sinners and he does with them. And you know, I think that although we might be just a little prejudiced ourselves about the disciples and their amazement, you know it's this, that they didn't really say anything to Jesus.

And that shows us that although they had been disciples only for a short time, it shows us how deeply they respected him and revered him.
They marveled, yet no man said to the woman, what are you after? And no man said to the Lord, why are you talking with us? There was that authority about the Lord Jesus which was exerting itself over these men already.
So although they queried in their minds it didn't really come out. and you know, are we ourselves not sometimes just like these disciples?
How surprised we are, God help us, how surprised when we hear about the conversion of some sinners. these things ought not to be.
[11:23] Instead of being surprised when people are converted, said Robert Murray McChange, we should be surprised when they are not converted under the gospel.

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Perhaps it's a sign of the lack of gospel power in the day that we live, that we are surprised when people are converted. when we shake our heads and we say, dear me, never thought that person would ever be converted.
But there they are, they've been converted, unsurprised though we are. So somebody says, surprised, says, oh well, we'll wait and see how they do, and we'll give them six months, and we'll not let them do anything until they really prove their conversion.
Well, this Samaritan lassie didn't wait for six months to prove her conversion. She got going right away. That's really what I want to look at now with you.
The reality and power of conversion experience, and we see it in this woman. Don't you all look with me at the transformation that took place.
[12:32] The transformation that took place. And wherever conversion comes, it comes of a transforming power. power. It changes, I was going to say it changes things, but first of all, it changes people.

It changes bad people into good people. And it changes nice people into nicer people. Conversion is a transforming experience.
The power of God comes to work in the human heart, change takes place. The change, the transformation was so radical in this woman's life, that she forgot all about what she was doing.
Did you notice that? She went away and left the thing that had been central to her whole mission to this world. She left her water pot behind death.
Busy woman, occupied with all sorts of domestic cares, and coming to the well at the most awkward time of the day, midday. I'm coming for water, I'm being interrupted by this stranger, I'm being talked to about spiritual things, and you could see the resentment prickling out of her.
[13:58] But that is overcome. Grace works in her. And now, the moment she's converted and believes that this Jesus is the Christ, she forgets all the things that have been occupying her mind and occupying her hands before.

To the extent that she leaves the water pot behind her. I think that John has put this into the story, into the history, just to indicate to us something of the wonderful change that is facing people when conversion comes about.
it changes the desires of the mind and the plans of the heart. It does something else. It makes our passion get his or her priorities right.
And the things of this world begin to take a very secondary place. And the things of Christ begin to take a first place.
now he's a good indication for us as to whether or not this transforming power has ever worked in ourselves. What do we put first?
[15:13] Is it the water pot? Or is it the wonder on reality of God's grace and God's mercy? How are your priorities in life?

What are you really living for? that's the question that began. She had found a saviour.
And the saviour that she had found filled her minds and her thoughts. And she forgot all about the earthy things that had been occupying her before then.
Thomas Chalmers grasped that truth very strongly. prayed. He was converted after many years in the ministry. And he was so taken up with the saviour that he had found that preaching and ministering became an absolutely new thing for him.
He was not only a minister in Kilmeny, he was a professor of mathematics and philosophy in the University of St. Ambrose. The first thing he did when he was converted was to lay that aside and begin to be very earnest about the conversion of his people.
[16:32] Why? A new power and force had come into his life. And he made that very, that singular fact, that specific factor in conversion experience, he made a very powerful sermon that bent itself just to an illustration of that.

And his sermon was entitled, The Expulsive Power of a New Affection. One of the most famous sermons ever preached in Scotland. The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.
And in this wonderful way he showed how when Christ comes into the mind and the heart and his love fills the soul, then it drives everything else into a very minor and secondary position.
The expulsive power of a New Affection. When grace comes in, one of the first things it does is to drive out. It drives out all the vain, silly, worldly ambitions around which people tend to center their living.

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That's what was happening here. the same happened with the other disciples. Remember the story of Matthew?
[17:57] He was a tax gatherer, knew what taxmen are like. They're all out for one thing, aren't they? And it's a great job convincing them that you're already paying enough tax.

Well, that's the kind of man Matthew was. He was concerned about bringing in the tax from the Jews for the Romans. The Lord Jesus passed by and he said, Matthew, follow me.
And immediately he arose and followed Jesus. He left the receipt custom. He couldn't be bothered any longer with the thing that preoccupied his mind and his heart.
James and John and Peter, fishermen, Jesus said, come. And they all did the same thing. And that is the very essence of the Christian life.
It is following Jesus and putting Jesus first and having everything else in a very secondary place. I want to ask you now, has that transforming power ever worked in your heart or in your life?
[19:22] Let me drive home the question a little further. The reality and power of conversion experience, my friend, is it yours? Is it?

Then what's it all about? What is all your life about if you haven't had yet the experience which the Lord Jesus said as we were seeing when we were studying the story of Nicodemus?
What is your life really about if you've never yet been born again? The work of the spirit that issues in conversion. The transformation that took place.
And then let's go on and look at this, the invitation that suddenly concerned her. She wanted other people to find the Lord Jesus.
Jesus. It's as simple as that. And you know, again, I think this is one of the clearest and one of the strongest truths of conversion that a sinner can possibly have, that they want other people to have Jesus as well.
[20:37] one. And she was in such a hurry to tell her fellow townsmen, her neighbors, about the Christ and the Savior that she had found that she must have ran to do so.

And in her haste she left her water pot behind. And when you read the great stories of Christians of past ages, this is one thing that has dominated and changed, dominated their lives when the change took place.
They wanted others to find Jesus too. I think this is one of the great signs that grace has been at work in our hearts when we are earnest about the salvation for others.
Let me ask the Christian believers in this church, can you really be at rest in your mind and in your heart? about your loved ones who are not yet converted?
Can you be easy in your mind about them as long as they are unconverted? Can you be easy in your mind about the unconverted people who come to your services so often in this church?
[21:56] Can you be easy in your mind and your heart for them until they are converted? Surely not. hope. You want them to know the peace that you knew when you found Christ, the peace that passes all understanding.

You want them to know the love of God that has filled your own mind and your own soul. love of God. And so this woman was the same. So off she went and she became a preacher.
I think it's C.H. Spurgeon who says her sermon was very short. And he said if ladies, if women would keep their preaching as short as always as short as this woman did, we would have no objection to the preaching.
That was his rather humorous remark. And perhaps a lot of teachers have something to learn about the brevity of sermons from her remarks.
All she said was come see a man who told me all things that ever I did is not this the Christ.
[23:12] Do you notice how grace taught us? Take your mind back to our earlier studies in the Gospel of John. Do you remember the very fresh notice we have of a convert coming to the Lord Jesus and finding him?

Do you remember the disciple of John? They went to Jesus and they said to him Master where do you live? Where dwellest thou?
Do you remember the words of Jesus? Come and see. Do you remember these fellows when they were converted they went away looking for their own brothers? And their message was just this we have found the Messiah.
Come and see him. And here is this woman with the same essential method. Come and see. a man who told me all things that ever I did.

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You see this invitation is issuing out of personal experience. And every Christian who has experienced the love and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, every converted person feels like doing the same.
[24:30] You want to go to other people and say come and see the saviour that I have found and taste. Find out what our wonderful saviour is. Come and put this into a practical test.

Of course that's the thing to do. She was absolutely right. I think this is a wonderful way to preach the gospel. people. If only people would put Christ to the test.
Christ would not fail them. Come and see. Come and see a man. And she's pointing to one who is like themselves.
He was made like unto his brethren in all things. The saviour is a man. But he's an unusual man. He's the man she says who told me all things that ever I did.
But you know I was quite amused when I was reading some of the commentators through the week. In preparation for this evening. They spend a lot of time over this.
[25:41] See a man who told me all things that ever I did. Some of them accused the good lady of gross exaggeration. One says it would have taken Jesus not merely an afternoon.

It would have taken him weeks or months to tell this woman all that she had ever done. Imagine commentators spending time on that kind of thing but that's the thing that commentators sometimes do.
The woman of course means come and see a man who's revealed my heart to me. I was thinking when I was reading this I was remembering one night long ago walking in the country at home a very dark night perhaps this has happened to you sometimes too all of a sudden there was a terrific flash of lightning you know this the whole landscape lit up and for a very brief second I could see every rock and every tree and the outline of every hill I knew exactly where I was I could see the whole scene and it was like that with this woman the Lord Jesus put his finger on one thing in her life her own her own sin and by putting his finger on one thing he showed her her whole heart and it was then that she began to become serious and concerned about spiritual things because the Lord Jesus was showing her her sin you are a very uneasy a very unpleasant thing to be shown and yet it is one of the things which biblical preaching will always do it will show a person his or her own sin and it's one of the things which preaching must aim at it is one of the things that make people resent preaching of course it does and sometimes they even resent the preacher and they well I don't mind that one he's always talking about sin mess up more of the mercy and the love of God but what does the mercy and the love of God mean until we first are caught out mid of the mercy and love of God my friend when God shows you your own heart don't blame the preacher thank God for him because that is what preaching must aim to do to show you to show me to how we live and save you that's what he did for this woman and her implication you see was you go to him and you'll see your heart too he's told me that all that
I've done and he'll be able to do the same for you the invitation and notice this you see she didn't say now you people I was a great sinner but now I'm saved and you're great sinners too so you better go to Christ that wasn't her approach it was much more gracious how wonderfully taught she was she said come not go come see a man and this is the way the gospel invitation comes continually in the bible come with us and we will do the good and it carries the very essence that word come of what God requires of man and I think she was very unself conscious she didn't put herself forward at all her word singled out the Lord
[30:08] Jesus and herself she was very hidden come see a man who told me all the things that ever I did yet the emphasis was on the man I think from what we know of this woman that it would have been very difficult for her to have gone back into the village the town the city as it called where she was known and where people knew her past and her character and her reputation nowhere more difficult to witness than where people have known your sin and your weakness and your folly as they knew with this woman and yet she was right back to what grace she had a lot of these people knew much of what she had done and because of it didn't respect her and yet she used that very thing in her invitation to demonstrate to them that this is the crime and you know part of the testimony of the

Christian believer is this that they are sinners who have been saved by our wonderful saviour come and see one who revealed my heart yes that's there but there's something more come and see one who healed the heart that was bruised because of sin this is our great commendation of the Lord Jesus to you that he brings peace that passes all understanding the invitation of this woman really

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the invitation of the gospel and it comes out of the transformation that took place in her heart and finally the explanation she's not content just to point them to Jesus but she explains why she wants them to go to Jesus and part of preaching must not merely be the aim of conviction but part of preaching must be explanation the exposition of God's word the showing of the meaning nothing is more difficult to the preacher as he prepares to preach than just that preparing to try and show the meaning of God's word what was the meaning of it is not this the
Christ she said a man who can do this is no usual man as she was laying hold of knowledge that they already had these people the Samaritans with the Jews of the Old Testament scriptures and they believed that God was going to send a Messiah and part of the scriptures the prophecy of Isaiah among others told of the wonderful understanding of Messiah when he came he was to be the herger of half and she latches on one thing that the promised Messiah was to do he was to reveal the secrets of men and she says he's done it for me this must be him come and see and I think that there must have been a great deal of urgency in her invitation to them and in her explanation if this is Messiah then come and see him because if this is
Messiah and you do not come you may miss him forever and that urgency is always in the gospel preaching my friend there is no other savior but Jesus and if there is ever to be conversion in the biblical sense of the word it must be conversion to Jesus if there is ever to be salvation for you my unconverted friend then that salvation will be through faith on his name although there will be no salvation at all just recently I was talking to one of our ministers in the city here one of our city congregation and he was greatly encouraged when he was talking to me he was telling me about the encouragement he had for the first time he said in many months someone had been converted in his congregation young man who was engaged to one of the people in his congregation he was home from sea for a holiday and he came along to church one Sunday evening heard this minister he really had decided not to bother going back again but somehow on the next
Sunday morning he thought well I think I'll go and hear that freak minister again didn't really like him very much but I'll go and see what he's talking about today and he went and the minister had quite unexpectedly changed the course of sermons he was preaching on and had felt led to go to that great text in Corinthians we preach Christ and him crucified and this young man came and he was gripped and he was more than gripped he was converted and talking to him afterwards some weeks afterwards after he found out this the fellow was back again the minister was talking to him and he said you know he said Mr.
[36:09] Millen Millen I was really keen to find out what in his sermon had been blessed to the Lord what had laid hold of him and I asked him and I was sure he said that it would be something that I had said about the suffering of Christ for his sin but you know he said it was almost a chance remark I made it was this I happened to say in the course of the sermon it is not that you are going to be lost if you are unconverted it is not that you are going to be lost it is that you are lost already and only Christ crucified can save and that young man was suddenly arrested because a truth the explanation of a truth flashed home to his heart as it had never hidden before it was not that he was going to be lost when he died it was not that he was going to be lost on a judgment day it was that he was already under the wrath and curse of

God he was our lost soul and the sense of his lostness made him cry out to Christ and he found a saviour that's the urgency of the martyr not only had Jesus revealed himself revealed this woman to herself he had revealed himself to us you know that is the very heart of conversion Jesus revealing himself who he is and what he has come to do I said this last very often from this book I can never forget the night I was converted myself when I suddenly understood that my salvation would rest not in what I could do but in what Jesus had already done it was all done for me already and my friend it has all been done for you too
Christ has done enough for you salvation and if you believe on him ask Christ I'm blessed in his work you will never perish I was going to go on and look at the wonderful success she had did you notice it many many many people in the city believe for our word the power of the holy ghost was reversed and then others came out in the city to see Jesus and many more it says believed because of his own work wouldn't it be wonderful if you as if you experienced this kind raised just a quiet gracious testimony this week and even one passion was convesting and that one would go and tell somebody else and then you might have many in class who believed and then through them many more the

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God teacher to long for true real conversion experience and to look for it in others also to seek to win them for our own God and Savior let us pray our gracious God we thank you for the reality and the power of conversion we thank you for the marvelous illustration of it which we have in the life of that the modern woman we thank you that she although she was a sinner was not despised by the Savior of sinners indeed she was the kind whom he had come to seek and to save we thank you for the radical transforming power of his grace and love in our heart and for the impulse that was given us to go and seek others may that impulse work in many of us too and may we in his love and in his grace by our lives and witness and by our words and by our prayers may we through the days of this coming week invite others to come see this man also and may our testimony and witness be used and owned of thee bless each one of us oh lord and keep us in thy love with heart and all our sins for jesus sake amen

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