



Scriptures and Doctrine :: What would the Puritans have done with these two women?

What would the Puritans have done with these two women?, on: 2008/5/14 20:55

I have read a lot about the Puritans on sermonindex in the last few days. I personally do not share the consensus view (no surprise there:) There is a book called "Mary Dyer." Not a bad read and gives a real insight into what it meant to actually live in a Puritan society in those days. I have been blessed by many Puritan writings over the years, I particularly like their notion of Providence, seems to be lost in today's Christian world. Yet, I have to say, having studied their world and their teachings, that they would have probably hung me along with Mary Dyer and Ann Hutchinson. (Mary Dyer was memorialized by "The Voice of the Martyrs," in one of their calendars)

I speak to God and He speaks to me. He speaks to me through His small still voice, He speaks to me in my spirit, I know His voice. If I would have made that claim 400 years ago, I would have been in real trouble. Not only by the Puritans, but also by the Catholic world as well.

Madam Guyon ended up in the Bastille for similar problems. When I went to Baptist seminary, I was almost thrown out because I believed in the sign gifts. So there can often be a religious spirit that sounds and looks wonderful. "Believers," come in many guises, below I have written about the "believers," of John chapter 8. Read this and give me your opinion of what the Puritans would have done with these two women.

John 4:13-14 Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks from the water which I will give him will never thirst. But the waters that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

This is a well known story from the Bible. The woman at the well has come at such a time when there would be no one at the well. She is a woman of notoriety and would have been shunned by her community in her day. What a blessing to know that the Lord reaches out and meets people right where they are. Not only is she a Samaritan, which would have been bad enough for a regular Jewish person, she is also a "loose" woman. Being a Samaritan means that she would not be pure Jewish, but a mixture of different peoples introduced to Northern Israel when it was conquered several hundred years before.

So here is Jesus picking someone who has three strikes against her in the Jewish culture. First of all she is a woman, secondly a woman of disrepute, and lastly she is a Samaritan.

And what is the Lord going to do? He is going to cleanse and refresh her this day. So He tells her about the living water. She responds in practical terms and Jesus ignores her observation that He has nothing with which to draw the water from the well. He goes right to the heart of this woman, right to the deepest part of the wells of her heart.

He tells her to go and get her husband. She now has to acknowledge that she has no husband. This in and of itself was a shame for this woman and she stops there, only going as far as the Lord's question. Then Jesus speaks a word of knowledge and tells this woman her life story in a few short sentences. She is now standing in the light of God and tries to run by bringing up the controversy of where the proper place of worship should be. Again Jesus ignores this religious question. He tells her that God must be worshipped in Spirit and in truth, revealing Himself in the process.

When the Disciples return they urge Him to eat, but Jesus has already been fed by doing the will of God. It is God's will that all of His people come into His presence. He has invested in every true believer a desire to know Him. Yet they must come in humility and repentance, acknowledging and bowing to the revelation of who Jesus is.

If we confess our sins and lay them on His altar, then we are cleansed and refreshed in the living waters. We can stand in the light of the all-seeing Jesus and not be ashamed to be fed in His presence and then we can truly speak to Him. We are fed spiritually by participating in the harvest. When we have a divine encounter with our own "woman at the well," then we are moving in the will of God and we will be energized.

The difference between physical food and spiritual food is that physical food is only good for the body while spiritual food, moving in the spirit, nourishes our spirit and our physical bodies. It is a mystery but when we are moving in the Holy Spirit

pirit, we are never more alive physically. We can run and not grow weary. One of the reasons why there is so much sickness in the Body of Christ today is because we are not moving in the Spirit, we are mal-nourished and it effects not just our spirits but our bodies too. If we are to be nourished and healthy, we must be moving in our Spiritual gifts, whatever they may be.

It is interesting that while the other Samaritans were interested enough in what the woman said about Jesus, it was not until they had their own encounter that they believed. Every one of us today must have our encounters with the Lord, yes initially to be saved, but also as Christians we must be continually encountering Jesus through His Holy Spirit by coming into His presence. The word "receive," in the Scriptures means to "lay hold of, or possess." Have you received the Holy Spirit? Did you press on and lay hold of Him? Does He have possession of you? Did you draw back from His all knowing gaze? Submit yourself to His gaze today. If you do, you will encounter the manifest God, and in His presence you will be energized. Then, and only then can He truly use you.

It is a great wonder that some of the most riveting and memorable stories in the Bible are not about "good folk." The Lord had come down from heaven to highlight love and grace and mercy and redemption. How better to do that than on the canvas of some of the greatest sinners. Against the blackness of these lives we see the brilliance and the total majesty of grace. When one goes into a jeweler and looks at diamonds, most times they are shown against black velvet. The blackness of the background only highlights the beauty and perfection of the gems. In much the same way Jesus chose those folk with black backgrounds to highlight the utter beauty of a love that ignores the vileness of the gutter, the sewers of life, to demonstrate the indescribable grace and mercy of God. He would not only condescend to come to a dark earth, but would go right into the hells of our society, not with condemnation but with open loving forgiving arm. Praise God I speak not from theory.

In Chapter eight of John we see one of the greatest demonstrations of love and mercy and wisdom and justice to be found almost anywhere in the New Testament. Jesus is talking to those "Jews who believe Him." I want you to remember that. These Jews are the believers of their day. Jesus is the Truth and you have to know Him personally. We all know that as Christians, yet we are not coming to Him. Most Christians met Him once or twice or forty-nine times. It is not enough. You have to abide in Him and that is a continuous action verb. You must be "abiding." Now look at what we have today. People profess to be Christians. Almost all Americans would claim to be "believers." Jesus is talking to "believers," in this chapter. And to them He makes one of the greatest statements in the New Testaments. "If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free."

Isn't that fantastic? What "believer," would not say amen to that? Yet we see that in the context of chapter eight, the term "believer," is not a term of endearment. We will see that these "believers," probably represent most of what is called "believers," in America today. They turn around and say to Jesus that they are "Abraham's descendants," and have never been in bondage to anyone. Has that scripture ever puzzled you? It puzzled me. These are "believing Jews and Jesus has just stated one of the great truths of God, who could argue with that?

In order to understand what is going on, we must look at the context. It is called the "Spirit of Conviction," and it is extremely dangerous. When Spirit and Truth and Love speak with one voice it is the power of the universe. Jesus is Truth and Spirit and Love and when you "know," Him then you walk in liberty. This is the "intimate know," not the "head knowledge know." One can know and acknowledge that Napoleon existed and that he was the ruler of France. In the same way one can know and acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God. No one alive today knows or knew Napoleon. We acknowledge his time and space in history because we believe what was recorded about him.

We can also believe and acknowledge that Jesus walked this earth, died, rose again and took His rightful place at the right hand of God as His only begotten Son. We can believe all that, believers, but not "know," Him personally. One cannot know Napoleon because he is dead and long ago turned to dust, but you can know Jesus because He is alive. If you just believe that He is the Son of God but do not "know," him then you are a believer and are still lost in your sins and your "Father is the Devil."

How can we know who is who? I am not sure that is important in and of itself. Yet, if you genuinely care about humanity you will not want to see anyone who is lost, saved. We can never know the state of someone's heart but we can see what's on the outside. Jesus says that those who "practice sin," are slaves to sin. It is important to note the phrase " "

practice sin.Â” Whenever you see in scriptures Â”sin,Â” in the singular we know that it is talking about the root. So while all men have a Â”sin nature,Â” when they come to Christ they are no longer bound by it. Those who Â”practice sin,Â” will produce the Â”fruit from the root,Â” and it will be clear to all who are around them. You see their foundation, their root, is the flesh, the sin nature, the old man and they will act accordingly, it will be the thrust of their lives. Those who have overcome in Christ, whose old man has been crucified are no longer bound by the curse of sin. Yet, because they still have a sin nature in their corrupt flesh they will not be sinless, but they are not slaves because their foundation is Jesus and this is not the thrust of their lives. Occasionally they will sin and it will be an occasion for great sadness.

Those who are merely believers, who are slaves of sin must dwell in the Â”Court of the Gentiles.Â” They cannot come in to that intimate place, that inner sanctum. When someone who Â”knows Jesus,Â” Â”knows the Truth,Â” is confronted by Spirit and Truth and Love, that someone will be broken and contrite and changed. Oh it might take a little time, a little doing but ultimately they will be broken and changed. It's all about the change. The woman at the well met Jesus, was confronted with who she was, resisted a little then was broken and converted. The lady that was thrown at the feet of Jesus came into that same all powerful Spirit of conviction and Truth. It was so powerful and all exposing that all those hardened stone throwers, every single one of them, threw down their stones and scuttled away, just like the bugs under the rock when it was lifted and exposed to the light. Yet what of the woman? She did not run. She stayed there in the light of the Spirit of Truth, on her face before the majesty and the glory and the power of Holiness. Oh I imagine she wanted to run. She lay there as good as naked before the living God, all her sins exposed, every man she ever slept with, all of her debauchery, exposed and revealed in the light of Justice and conviction. What will save her? What does the Law call for? She is a slave to her fornication and all this is brought to bare right there in the Temple.

Oh the glory of Grace, Oh the majesty of mercy. I imagine Jesus counted out the number of all the men she had ever slept with. He told the lady at the well how many men she had been with, but there was only the two of them there when He did this. He had no intention of humiliating this woman that lay at His feet. Can I suggest to you that this position, at the feet of Jesus, for the humble and contrite, is the safest place in the world. He was not going to humiliate this woman any more, the self-righteous had done enough of that this day. You see when Jesus forgives us our sin, they are remembered no more. He does not seek to humiliate us, He seeks to restore us, to reconcile us to the Glories of our God and Father and so He rubs away the number of her lovers from the dust and it is no more. Her sin is hidden from the Â”believers,Â” that were still around. Jesus had exposed one bunch of hypocrites, He was just about to expose another group, the so called Â”believers.Â”

And so He states a great Truth, Spirit and Truth working together. The believers do not receive the Truth. Instead of rejoicing in the salvation and liberty that Â”Knowing truth,Â” leads too, they reject the notion that they need freedom. They know in their hearts that they are not free so they start to talk about political freedoms thus avoiding the freedom that Jesus was offering, the freedom that the woman at the well received, the freedom that the woman at the feet of Jesus had just received. The woman at the well had tried to raise a religious controversy to avoid the probing of Jesus, but she did not continue to resist but submitted to that all knowing gaze. These people, these Â”believers,Â” would not submit to this same gaze. They talk about political freedom and make a bizarre claim, they claim they have never been slaves to anyone. This is the actions of the human spirit under conviction. You will either run, be converted or you will crucify the Lord and you will do it with lies and with a great anger. These same people who claimed to never having been slaves were at that very moment under the heel of the Roman boot, not to mention anything of the Babylonians or, most incredibly, the slavery they were delivered from of the Egyptians. Oh how blind and deceitful is the heart of the stiff-necked man.

Jesus is not interested in any of that, He knows that this is a group of people angered by the truth, blinded by their sin and enslaved by it. So, rather than give these people a history lesson, He goes straight to the heart of the matter. He tells them that they are not even Jewish and that their father is not Abraham, but the devil. He tells them that they seek to kill Him and they do not love Him. He finally stands there, Spirit and Truth and reveals who He is, He is Â”I am.Â” And now the conviction that led one group of men to throw down their stones, the conviction that led a woman to stay and find mercy and grace and salvation at the feet of Jesus, that same conviction now leads another group of men to pick up the very stones that had been meant for the woman, stones that represent mercy and grace and love and justice and use them to attempt to kill grace and mercy, righteousness and justice. How ironic that it is the Â”believers,Â” who do this.

So, are you broken by Truth and Spirit or will you run from it, perhaps even try and destroy it? The folk who dwell in the Court of the Gentiles are the folk who will pick up the rocks when confronted by Spirit and Truth. The woman at the well, the woman at the feet of Jesus, King David, Jacob, Peter, Moses, Abraham.....all of these and many more found broken

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ness before God, they were "broken and contrite" when confronted by the Lord. These are examples of people willing to be transparent under the gaze of God, not running, not hiding but prostrate at the brazen altar. They all came face to face with Jesus, they were all willing to confess and repent and sacrifice their pride at the brazen altar in order to move in close, draw deeper to that glorious burning heart of Jesus.

Re: What would the Puritans have done with these two women? - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/5/14 21:40

Quote:
----- I have to say, having studied their world and their teachings, that they would have probably hung me along with Mary Dyer and Ann Hutchinson.

Brother, with all due respect, if this what you've gleaned from studying Puritan literature, I can't help but wonder if you've been reading the right books. A glittering ring is not always a golden ring, and not all who say they are Christian are truly Christian. The term "Puritan" was just as general those days as the term "Christian" is today. The government of the Bay Colony in the early 17th century was predicated upon Puritan persuasion, though this doesn't mean the governors and mayors, judges and constables back then were truly *Puritan* in the *pure* sense of the word and genuinely born-again of the Holy Spirit. Such terminology - Puritan - eventually came to signify nothing but a expedient, societal label by default. The true Puritans we reference here on SermonIndex in articles and devotions were those mainly of the English, Scottish and Welsh non-conformists and reformers, who were themselves persecuted by the Catholics, the Presbyterians and the Anglicans.

When we generalize all the Puritans in making them out to be witch-hunters and Quaker-hangers, we can find ourselves in the same boat as those who label all Pentecostals as snake-handlers, all Baptists as cessationists, all Lutherans as Jew-haters, all Calvinists as Servetus-burners. I cannot, for example, see the likes of a gentle, meek Samuel Rutherford motivating a lynch mob to hang the Samaritan woman. Many of the English Puritans and Nonconformists had to congregate in secret under fear of prison and violence. Puritans like John Flavel, for example, had his services and preached his sermons to his listeners in the woods and forests under the glow of candlelight for fear of being found out and arrested.

Re:, on: 2008/5/14 21:56

Hi brother Paul. God bless you man. What we have here is a genuine disagreement. I have simply put forward my own opinion, based on a mountain of research. Do not assume that because I differ in my opinion, that it means a lack of knowledge or research on my part, that is not worthy of you my friend. For the record, I love Samuel Rutherford. I know all about Scottish and Welsh non-conformists as you probably know.

I think we have to be allowed to disagree on certain subjects and put forward different ideas on these subjects, would you not agree? I would never dream of asserting that it was a lack of knowledge or research that led to your own personal opinion, for I would guess that not to be true based on our previous correspondence.....Frank

PS For those who do not realize this, just because I disagree with a man on a certain subject, does not mean I do not respect him as a person.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/5/14 22:04

Brother, I meant no disrespect, please forgive me if you've interpreted my post as such. I, too, have read much of the Puritans...they are my specialty, so to speak :). I think, however, that you may be basing your insinuation (opinion, as you've admitted) of Puritanic oppression more on the societal label of "Puritan" - the New England theocracy of *Puritanism* - and not as much on the actual spirit and theology that bleeds forth from the humble champions of their own literature

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Re:, on: 2008/5/14 22:19

Hi Paul :) (The smile is to show the spirit of this reply, I appreciate your smile too)

In answer to youperhaps :)

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/5/14 22:34

:-) Love you, man

You sure this hasn't anything to do with William Wallace or some old, family-clan ties with the Scottish Presbyters?

:-P

Re:, on: 2008/5/14 22:47

You know us Scottish? We have long memories ;-)