

## LIVING WATERS FOR LIVING SOULS

SERMON preached at Union Chapel, Bethersden, on Sunday, 8th February, 1959, by the Pastor, Mr. H. Dawson.

Isaiah 55: 1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

This a wonderful word in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Blessed Trinity, are all engaged in the issuing of the gracious invitation that it contains. It is a word that is wonderful, too, in the simplicity of it. More and more, in attempting to preach the Gospel, do I admire the beautiful simplicity of it. What could be more simple in describing the character interested in the things of God, setting forth one who is taught of God, than this description: "Every one that thirsteth". Yet, while it is wonderful in the simplicity of it, you and I need grace to think aright as to whether it is our mercy to be such a character. "Everyone that thirsteth" is everyone that is made alive unto God. "Everyone that thirsteth" means every sinner born again; living his or her life and concerned to "win Christ and be found in Him". "Everyone that thirsteth", and while it does not set up a rigid standard, it does set up a real standard, because "everyone that thirsteth", as I have said, must be one who is alive, the dead know not anything whatever of the thirst that the text refers to, "the living will lay these things to heart"; and it is a wonderful mercy if some of you are found before God at this time, and you answer to the character referred to in the text: "Everyone that thirsteth." Not only is this word wonderful in its simplicity, it is wonderful also in its suitability. It includes all ages who have the mercy to be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, young or old are included, every one,

irrespective of any denominational label whatever; "Everyone that thirsteth". I like to think that this word also is wonderful, not only for its simplicity and suitability, but for its blessed sufficiency. What I mean is this, as God shall help me to make it plain: you and I are gathered together this Sabbath morn, and many of you are one with the character referred to in the text; God has granted you that mercy to be "one that thirsteth"; and while hundreds of millions of people down through the ages have drunk of these waters, and slaked their souls' thirst to the full, the waters are still running in the Gospel of the grace of God, as full as ever, and there has been no diminution whatever. The Psalmist speaks of it: "The river of God which is full of water."

"A fulness resides in Jesus, our Head,  
And ever abides to answer our need."

I want, as the Lord shall help me, to look at this subject from two or three view points. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Oh that God in His infinite mercy would make this word to be a good word to some of you; a word acceptable in your souls' experience, and that as never before you might be favoured to drink of the waters the text refers to, and feel that matters are indeed right between God and you, and say:

"O Christ, He is the Fountain,  
The deep, sweet well of Love,  
The streams on earth I've tasted,  
More deep I'll drink above."

I said at the outset that, in this wonderful word, the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are concerned. God, the Father provided these waters, and at a great cost was the fountain set up for poor sinners, "every one that thirsteth", to come to. "God so loved

the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The dear Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, came down into this world to be made manifest as verily Man, verily God, and there is a great word describing that which Jesus Christ was pleased to do that "everyone that thirsteth" might come to the waters, and drink to their souls.. eternal joy: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell", and connected with this there is another word no preacher can say much about, because it is so tremendous in its truth, and is awful in the solemnity of it. It becomes preachers not to say much about it beyond what the Scripture declares: "In Him there dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily", - the God shines gracious through the Man, and the dear Saviour said, when He dwelt on earth awhile, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink"; and that is the good tidings of great joy which makes the Gospel to be what it is. Then, the Spirit of God has His work in the issuing of this great invitation, because it is the Spirit of God alone Who can deal with a poor sinner, and make him to be one that thirsteth for the things the text sets forth. Oh that the Spirit of God could be more known in His blessed, wondrous operations in convincing poor sinners of sin, and bringing them to be the character in the text, "one that thirsteth", and to say with the Psalmist: "My soul thirsteth for God."

"This prayer and this ambition mine,  
Living and dying to be Thine."

Think how the Spirit of God was poured out on the Day of Pentecost. It is good reading how the blessed Spirit came down on the Day of Pentecost, and how three thousand in one day had this thirst wrought in their souls, and they were satisfied with the waters the text tells us about; they gladly received the word of God; they were pricked in their hearts, first of all, and brought in guilty before God, and then enabled by

living faith to drink of the waters, and to "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory" in having an interest in the things of God. How good it would be to see another Pentecost, and the Spirit of God poured out. I wonder if any of you ever find any moving in your hearts to ask God to bring it about. "I will be enquired of by you, O house of Israel, to do these things." Wherever you go amongst our people, in our Denominational life, you find a universal lament that the things of God are at a low ebb amongst us as a people, and each one, every one, can tell his own tale, and make his contribution toward the general report, but, when all is said and done, the word of God says: "I will be enquired of you, O house of Israel, to do these things", and the Holy Spirit is still available; the Holy Spirit is still approachable. There is that great word you often hear the Pastor quote, let not the familiarity of it be a means of you missing the importance of it: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." What a mercy it would be if the preacher could sometimes preach more than he oft-times seems to do with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. It would do you people good that do thirst for an interest in things divine, but I quote that word again: "I will be enquired of by you, O house of Israel, to do these things." This is an approach to the subject setting forth what is the background of it, and now let us, as grace is given, search out the character referred to. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money;" "Everyone that thirsteth", the starting point to know something about this subject is: "Ye must be born again." There is a thirst that I would define as being negative thirst; the man in the street possesses it, and so do you, as you were born. "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh," and in the carnal mind which you brought into the world with you, there is an insatiable thirst for what this earth affords, and yet that carnal mind is never satisfied with what is obtained with drinking at earth's polluted streams. The thing is impossible for that

insatiable thirst to be slaked at earth's polluted streams; remember that. A negative thirst has this characteristic, that it is always to do with time, the things of this life, and it can be just summed up as being the flesh, and the longings of it. It is this negative thirst which is driving mankind, nowadays, and you see people possessing this thirst in the queues at the pictures, and the theatre, and to be at the sports, here and there, and to be found wherever earth offers some so-called pleasure. People will be there, if so be they can get this negative thirst satiated, yet they are ever disappointed, and remain dissatisfied and discontented. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, and neither indeed can be." I want you to remember this negative thirst is that which each one, every one, coming into the world, is the subject of, which makes them to be living their life "after the flesh, the things of the flesh"; and if that is the only thirst you are ever the subject of, a negative thirst, at the end of life's journey, you will not only be disappointed and discontented, but disillusioned, and you will be lost. Let us come to the thirst in the text: "every one that thirsteth". Now this thirst, that is known and felt, when a sinner is born again, is a positive thirst, and it is a thirst more to do with eternity than it is with time; it is a thirst, not like the man in the street, with his negative thirst, a thirst for that which will please, comfort, ameliorate the body; the thirst of the character in the text is a thirst to do with the soul, and the salvation of it. "Say unto my soul, I am thy Salvation". This will help you to understand it, whereas the negative thirst always proceeds from the carnal mind, the positive thirst in the text, ever proceeds from a spiritual mind, when it is made lively in things divine. "Every one that thirsteth". "To be carnally minded is death," and that is the inevitable outcome of the negative thirst which

man possesses as he is born. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace", and that is the inevitable outcome of the thirst which one possesses who answers to the character in the text, "Every one that thirsteth". It might help you if I set forth some things that one that thirsteth will be thirsting for. In the religion that is of God there is an aim. A sinner born again, from the time he is born again, has got a motive that actuates his soul's desires, and that is: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." I want, as the Lord shall help me, to emphasise one aspect of the text, - "Everyone that thirsteth" is put in the present tense. It is what you will know something about if you are the character referred to, as long as you live, and good it is when you can be "one that thirsteth". I might liken it to an exercise unto godliness. Thirst is a reality. Thirst is real, painful, especially if for quite a while, you are deprived of water to satisfy it, and so you read in this same book of Isaiah: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." You can read how Eastern travellers tell that in going across the desert waste, when there has been a lack of water, and the tongue has failed for thirst, it swells up, so that it is impossible for one to articulate and speak, and it is painful beyond words to describe. People taught of God are sometimes in a like experience, in a spiritual interpretation of it:

"I thirst, O Lord, I come to Thee,  
Some living waters give to me  
Or I shall droop and die."

When the tongue fails for thirst, poor sinners, though they would be the character in the text, one that thirsteth, they feel they cannot say anything whatever about the dealings of God with their souls because they are brought down to such a low state in their souls' experience. All they can say is what they say inside before God: "Leave not my soul destitute"; "Make not my soul bare"; and such-like petitions:

"O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." "Every one that thirsteth", and I do want you to have what I ask God to give me, a present-tense religion. It is a wonderful mercy not to be left in an unexercised state, and to be kept exercised unto godliness in all that comes upon us in journeying through life, is a mercy to prize.

"Trials make the promise sweet;  
Trials give new life to prayer;  
Trials bring us to Christ's feet,  
Lay us low, and keep us there."

Remember this

also, - thirst is an exercise unto godliness, and drinking water is an experience. You could not write an essay on drinking water, and get people to understand much about it, and yet, let water be drawn from a well, and you take a few sips, it will tell you all there is to be known about the experience of drinking water; - how cool refreshing, and cheering, and desirable it is, and that is how you must know the things of God. First of all there is the thirst, which is an exercise unto godliness, and then there is the experience in drinking the water, which is the gracious fruition of that necessary exercise. "Every one that thirsteth". Let us look then at some things that sinners taught of God do thirst for. Go back, if you can, along life's way, seek to analyse your soul's exercises, if you know what soul trouble is. "Every one that thirsteth" will be thirsting to be born again. The sinner is one that is born again to be one that thirsteth, but he cannot take it for granted that he is, and he is brought down before God that the matter may be made plain to his soul's joy.

"Assure my conscience of her part  
In the Redeemer's blood;  
And bear the witness with my heart  
That I am born of God." "Every one that thirsteth"

will be thirsting to be right. Everything hinges on being right with God; having matters right between Him and you; and you will sometimes have some solemn searchings of heart for you may think of this Scripture: "There is a way that seemeth to be right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death;" and it will trouble and concern you lest you should only seem to be right. You will think it a solemn thing:-

"...A saint to appear,  
Grow up with wheat, and be a tare."

You will be thirsting then:

"Lord, hast Thou made me know Thy ways?  
Conduct me in Thy fear;  
And grant me such supplies of grace,  
That I may persevere."

"Every one that thirsteth",  
and such a character will thirst every day to obtain mercy.

"Mercy is welcome news indeed  
To those who guilty stand",

and you cannot be exercised unto godliness, and not guilty stand before God with Whom you have to do. Each of you, this Sabbath morn, if you should be found in a right frame of mind, would have to stand before God, and solemnly confess: "Oh, my God, I am ashamed, I blush to lift up my face unto Thee", and to be exercised unto godliness like that makes mercy so desirable, and

"Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,  
'Mercy, Eternal Mercy', cries."

"God be merciful to me a sinner", said the dear Publican, and he was one that thirsted, and he did come to the waters, and he was enabled to drink. The Saviour declares: "I tell you this man went down to his house justified", and that is equivalent to saying: 'I tell you this man has got some

religion that is wrought in his soul by God". "One that thirsteth". It may be that you cannot say much yet about the deep things of God, nor can you climb up into high attainments in the life divine; yet you are one that thirsteth? "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" This thirst will be to find grace to help in time of need. I have thought of it often that our life is a time of continual need, but the difficulty is you and I are not always aware how needy we are; it is good when it is brought home to you:-

"I need Thy presence every passing hour,  
Nought but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power".

What can you do, as it ought to be done, without grace to help you do it; you can do nothing whatever to the glory of God, unless He energises you by His efficacious grace, and works in you to will and to do, and that will make you to be one that thirsteth.

"Let Thy good Spirit rule my heart,  
And govern all my works and ways;  
Let grace abound in every part,  
And teach my tongue to speak Thy praise."

Much might be said under this heading, "Every one that thirsteth". You will thirst too for righteousness. Sometimes you will light on that picture in the Gospel, where there was the man at the wedding feast without a wedding garment on; and it will cause you some searchings of heart: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?" The man was made aware for the first time that he was not the character with a right to be there; he had received no invitation, because had he received one, according to how things were done in the land of Promise in those far-off Eastern times, he would have received also a garment to wear provided by him who spread the feast, but he was without it, he was there without an invitation; remember that. Oh, but you will have to think about it, if you are the character in the text, "every one that thirsteth", and you will be saying:-

"Naked I come to Thee for dress  
And helpless look to thee for grace."

You cannot be found in heaven without this righteousness, righteousness which is of God by faith in Jesus Christ. You cannot appear before God in any so-called righteousness of your own, and if you are the character in the text, you will be

"Stripped of all your fancied meetness  
To approach the dread I AM."

"Every one that thirsteth". I add one more evidence that comes to my mind and that is - (do you test your religion by it) -, you will thirst, if you are the character in the text, for sanctified trouble. As a rule when trouble comes, the immediate reaction is to escape the consequences of it, and do what you can to ameliorate it, and if you can to get out of it, but you will not be allowed to do that, if you are one that thirsteth; if you are such a character as the text tells us about, your thirst will be to get out of your trouble on the opposite side to what you went into it. Your thirst will be that the trouble shall not leave you until you get something from God to assure you that matters are right between Him and you. I do like that word of the Psalmist: "Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee, and let Thy judgments help me"; and yet, in this thirst to know what sanctified trouble is may be you will be painfully aware that you have not behaved aright in that trouble. You will be brought in guilty before God because you have been irritable, fretful, murmuring, rebellious, but when grace at length, as it will do, superabounds over all that you are by nature, then this thirst for sanctification will be uppermost, and you will be saying:-

"Lord, I would indeed submit,  
Gladly yield my all to Thee;  
What Thy Wisdom sees most fit,  
Must be surely best for me."

Such is a little outline of the character in the text; "every one that thirsteth", and "he that hath no money", - a sinner who is brought down to know

solemn, painful, poverty of spirit. "And the poor have the Gospel preached unto them".

Let us look at the second viewpoint of the subject. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." The Gospel of the grace of God is likened to waters, the illustration is very simple and familiar. I like that word of the Psalmist: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the City of God." In thinking of the Gospel as being waters, it brings before us some characteristics of the doctrines of grace; one is the sovereignty of God in His dealings with poor sinners. A river makes its own course, therefore you often observe that it meanders here and there with many a bend in the stream, because the water finds its own level, and makes its own course and flows onward to the sea. Now the Gospel of the grace of God is like that. The keystone in the arch of truth is the sovereignty of God. The word of the Lord is: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy." If you could only think about it before God - oh that you might have grace to do it - you would see that it is the sovereignty of God that brought the Gospel of His grace to be where you were when you first of all found it to be as waters to slake your soul's thirst. The sovereignty of God ordained you should be where you were, and who the preacher should be when you heard the Gospel first of all, and found it to be the "power of God unto salvation" in your soul's experience, the sovereignty of God is evident in it. In these waters, while the text speaks of buying - you are all aware it is only a figure of speech, because you cannot buy it, for the character is said to have no money, - you cannot earn it, you cannot buy it, you cannot merit it; "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Saviour said to the woman by Jacob's well: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." "Come ye to the waters." In these waters there is a wondrous fulness, you can hardly find words to set it forth as it should be.

"Angelic minds cannot explore  
That vast, unfathomed sea;  
'Tis void of bottom, brim or shore  
And lost in Deity."

These waters set forth that the  
grace of God is free grace;

"Oh, bring no price, God's grace is free  
To Paul, to Magdalene, to me,"

"Ho, everyone...come ye to the waters." Another thought I like to dwell on is that wherever these waters flow there will be signs that they do flow in the fruitfulness being evident where they run. In a time of drought you can look across the countryside, and where a river is running you will see a riband of green on either side of the stream, and farther off the fields will be looking, in the drought, like coco-matting; the waters produce the fruitfulness, the green-ness, and it is very striking to see it. Now when these waters flow down into your soul there will be green-ness in your leaf, your profession of Jesus' Name then will be lively in things divine, and the things of God will be first of all in your life as you desire to live it; You will want "In the beginning, God" to be in all that you attend to, your duties, your difficulties, you will want "in the beginning, God", and to "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters". You see there is fulness, and freeness, and there is fruitfulness. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them", but it is to be feared with most of us, who do hope we are indeed the character in the text, we know much more about what it is to be one that thirsteth than to be one bringing forth fruit in our lips and lives to the glory of God, Whose we are, and Whom we desire to serve. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters". There is a word in the Revelation which is helpful, and that brings before us a doctrine: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." Mark what the Spirit of God inspired John to say here: "The throne of God, and of the Lamb", which is to tell us that these waters, flowing as they do in the "river of God which is full of water",

flow down to poor sinners like you and me by the way of Calvary's Cross, and through what was done thereon; otherwise this invitation could not have been issued; remember that. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea buy wine and milk without money and without price." Then there is another Scripture which is very striking regarding these waters, and there is much instruction in it, which you read in Ezekiel: "And it shall come to pass that everything that liveth, which moveth whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live." Now, if it is just a post by the river-side, all that will happen to it is that it will rot; but if it is a thing that liveth, if it is one that thirsteth; - one that thirsteth in his soul's exercises is like a tree planted by the water, and the roots set forth his soul's exercises unto godliness, and it speaks like this: "Everything that liveth which moveth", not only alive, but there is movement, and it is a movement after God, "after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Think on this word, as the Lord shall help you, you might find encouragement in it, because whenever you have been favoured to find these waters reaching your soul, to slake the thirst thereof, you have found also that you have been made lively in things divine, and there has been indeed a movement after God and godliness, the things of God have been uppermost. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth which moveth, whithersoever the river shall come shall live." I want to make one distinction, which comes to my mind, - you may be a thing that liveth, you may be a sinner born again, but there must be this, as you are found where you are under the Gospel: "Everything that liveth, which moveth", otherwise you will get no special help, no token for good, no blessing indeed, nor will you know the sweet experience to drink of the waters, and slake your soul's thirst. It is now winter-time, the trees about us are alive, but they are not moving, e'er long, spring will come, the sun will be drawing the sap up from the roots,

and there will be movement, and that is how it must be with you before God. "The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted." It is not enough to be just one that liveth, one that thirsteth, there must be a moving Godward in your soul's experience; remember that. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money;" what a blessed invitation it is. Have you ever considered that unless God had issued an invitation like this, no sinner would ever have had the privilege to draw near to God, and find in Him the Sinners' Friend. It is a wonderful mercy that God is approachable. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters", and that word of the dear Saviour's is still a good word to be fulfilled in every jot and tittle of what it declares: "And him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." As I come to the "Amen", I just say that these waters, as a rule run in the means of grace, public and private. And you need to think of the means of grace as public and private. In the words of God it is set forth that the means of grace in public are the most important. Have you ever thought on that? "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." I have told you, not once or twice, in my long ministry that, if in your profession there is a going down in public, and you are not as lively in the things of God as you should be, it is because things have gone wrong between you and God in private. What does it mean, then, that the means of grace in public are the most important of the two? The means of grace in public are those to be used because thereby God is glorified, and it is made known to the world at large Whose you are and Whom you serve. "Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep, and ye shall reverence My Sanctuary," the word of God declares; and in going up to the house of prayer and gathering there, desiring to worship God aright, it is a witness for God in the doing of it; and it is for the condemnation of those round about, who look on you doing it, and want to have nothing whatever to do with your religion, or the worship of God in which you desire to be engaged. "In all places where I record My Name, there will I come and bless thee." The

means of grace God has provided, but:-

"While we in the means are found,  
We still alone on Thee depend,  
To make the Gospel's joyful sound  
Effectual to the promised end."

As you are found in the means of grace, if you are the character in the text, one that thirsteth, and as you are enabled to come to the waters in His time, His way, you will feel as you want to feel, and when you are favoured to drink of the waters, every if and but and how will be resolved, and in heaven's own light you will be able to "rejoice in hope of life eternal." "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy Countenance." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." God help you to think on this blessed invitation, and may He by His grace, make you to be the character referred to therein, one that thirsteth, and satisfy your soul with the fulness of the waters which are treasured up in Jesus Christ as the sinners' Friend.

Amen.

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