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Sermon preached by Mr J.Delves at Ebenezer Chapel,
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Text: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.
John 4. v.14

This remarkable chapter records an unusual circumstance in the life of Christ. During His sojourn upon earth every thought, every action, every word, every movement, every sermon, had its point and fulfilled its purpose, often in a very unexpected and remarkable way. The Lord often works in ways that confound reason, that no man should glory in the flesh and that His Holy Name should be magnified. While he was upon earth, He came into contact with many different kinds of people. Some openly resented and revolted against His ministry. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not"; others secretly questioned it; but some by divine grace received it in truth and love and were made partakers of the blessings the gospel provides.

It is profitable to observe the link between the footsteps or orderings of providence in our lives and the eternal decrees of God. They cannot be separated because our providences are a fulfilling of His decrees. So here there was in the eternal purposes of God a reason why Christ must needs go through Samaria. As He wanted to get to Galilee and this bit of country lay between, so geographically He must needs go through Samaria to get to His destination; but there was a far deeper reason than that. There was something particular to be accomplished in Samaria; there was a vessel of mercy there who hitherto had been wrapt up in the blindness of her heart. How good it is to observe the disposings of providence. How the Lord works often in mysterious ways and that to His own praise. So it was when news was brought to Christ that Lazarus was sick. Naturally we should have thought that Jesus would have hastened to them there as soon as possible in case the poor man died; but no, when He heard that he was sick, He abode two days in the same place where He was and then, more mysteriously still, said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." But why all this? In order to magnify His power and grace in raising Lazarus from the dead; not to save him from dying, to heal him before he was dead, but to bring his corrupted body forth again from the grave. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

"He must needs go through Samaria." That was the way. Yes, and so it is in the Lord's dealings with us. You may have a Samaria, so to speak, and may have to go through it, some peculiar providence, some

awkward thing, some painful trial, but you have to walk in it. Naturally you would get round it; you would avoid it by all means possible. But that is not the Lord's way to bring blessings to His people. He does not say, "I will be with thee going round the fire, avoiding it, but going through it. That is where He comes. It is only so that the bitter waters can be made sweet. "He must needs go through Samaria." But O, for what a reason! There was a vessel of mercy there. His purposes were to be revealed and His glory too in the conversion of the most unlikely person. In this case do we not have to see the sovereignty of His grace? Who would have thought that this Samaritan woman was thus to be dealt with? - that her eyes were to be opened - that she was to be brought to know Christ - to hear His voice and to say of Him, "Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did." "He must needs go through Samaria" to meet her according to the orderings of providence.

But here we see also the freeness of His grace. How free it comes! O, how free is His grace! And this is not to condone sin or to make it as a little thing but to magnify the riches of His grace and to make the receiver of it hate the sins that pierced Him. O, how sweet it is to be brought to feel a little repentance before the Lord under a sense of the freeness of this gospel to sinners, vile sinners, bankrupt sinners, those who have no money. That was very sweet to me yesterday morning - "He that hath no money, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" I read it and O how sweet was the thought that mercy flows freely, not on the ground of any merit in a sinner, but to a lost sinner, one who has nothing to pay. "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

But this instance also proves the power of His grace - the effectual power of it - as always it is when applied by the Holy Spirit; always effectual then and never effectual otherwise. This was a vessel of mercy ordained to eternal life. What a wonderful thing! And then there is this in connection with this relation. When the Lord Jesus came to the well we read He was weary and sat thus upon it. He was subject to physical weariness. A sweet thought this when we consider the reason why. He had doubtless walked a long distance and that in order to meet with this particular case, although later we understand that many more believed upon Him there because of his own word. But this instance is related in detail because it is so striking - as every instance of divine grace is. But this weariness shows that the Lord Jesus was subject to sinless infirmities. It reveals His true humanity; how He suffered both in body and soul for His people - weariness of body. It was not a motor trip

into Samaria. He walked many miles until he became weary in body and sat on the well. O, think of that! And not for Himself but for others who were depending upon the freeness of His mercy. But this suits me - a sympathising High Priest. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He went far deeper into suffering both in body and soul than any of His people can - weariness of the flesh - weariness of the body. Perhaps we get weary in His service sometimes, that is bodily. But, O! think of Him and what He endured and bore patiently and meekly for His people. The conversation recorded here was rather striking, was it not? Jesus came to the well and sat upon it; the woman came and the Lord said to her, "Give me to drink" and it surprised her that He should ask her for this thing seeing He was a Jew and Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. They did not seem to like each other at all. But here was a striking instance. "Give me to drink" He asked. But there was a purpose in that, not just simply to have some of the water from Jacob's well but to bestow upon her a great gift, even that living water and that living bread which comes down from heaven. "How is it that thou being a Jew askest drink of a woman of Samaria, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans?" Jesus answered, "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that said to thee 'Give me to drink' thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water." This she could not quite understand. Her eyes were not opened to see who He was. So as is common, she took the natural or literal view of the thing and said, How can you draw water from here? The well is deep and you have nothing to draw with, "From whence then has Thou that living water?" Jesus said unto her, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." If we drink water, that only satisfies for a season and we need to drink again and continually to satisfy the desires of nature and the body. But this water of life, this living water, has a satisfying power. "He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst." That is shall not thirst for ever - shall not need anything else - shall be satisfied - will prove it is sufficient. So elsewhere the Lord said of the bread, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is this point that has attracted me, this water being like a living spring - not a stagnant pool, but

moving water - ever running - running water like a spring - a fountain continually springing up. A very beautiful image or description this of the life and power of truth in the soul, the saving operations of the Holy Spirit in a believer where this gospel is preached. It is like a well in him. It shall be in him a well of water - not a theory or an assumption of the mind or understanding simply, but it shall be in him a well of water. It is said here concerning the water in Jacob's well that it was deep. "How canst thou draw this water? The well is deep." So it is in spiritual things. They are deep down in the heart of a believer like a well of water, yet continually springing up, moving, living. This is living water. By this water we may understand the gospel of His grace which is implanted, wrought in every quickened, believing soul. Here is this water. It must be where grace is. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God".

This water is frequently used in the Scripture as a figure of the love of God. "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." In Revelation it is spoken of as flowing through the city. But here it is said to be in the people of God as a well of water continually springing up. By this well of water we may understand the foundation doctrines of grace that are, as it were laid in the heart, in the affections. It is said of Christ in another figure that He is a stone, a foundation stone laid in Zion. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." So in another sense in this figure the well of water is laid in the heart of a believer. The name of Christ is written there upon the fleshy tables of the heart. The precious doctrines of Christ's person, His finished work, His atoning blood, His justifying righteousness are, as it were, laid as a foundation in the soul of a quickened sinner by the Holy Spirit who teaches of all things, who brings this grace, this gospel, and lays it, as a foundation upon which all true experience is built. We read in the prophecy of Isaiah of the well of water. "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation." This is the work of faith receiving from the fulness of Christ, drawing supplies from Him, coming to the well, coming to His ordinances, receiving renewed strength and sustaining grace. But in every believer this water is in him like a well - there it is, but it is continually moving. These precious doctrines of divine grace will have a power in the heart. The gospel comes as the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. It is not in word only. If

you have this gospel brought into your heart you will feel its operations. It will be a well of water, not lying still, motionless, inactive, but a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and all the movements of this grace are as an earnest of glory. They are the first seeds, as it were, of glory in us. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." "He will give grace and glory."

But here it is - this well of water shall be in him springing up unto everlasting life. Yes, indeed, it is this springing up - that is the point - it comes into experience - comes into your things, your trials, your disappointments, mysterious providences. Yet here is this water, and you will find it as a sustaining power in your soul; it saves you from despair, from being parched and dried up. This living water is an inward power continually moving. It is in other ways like the unction of the Holy One, the anointing that teacheth of all things. "The anointing which ye have received of me abideth in you." This well of water will remain there but it will be springing up, Now how can this be? Well, I believe it is like this sometimes - this well of water is the gospel of His grace; these precious doctrines of His grace under the Spirit's operations in the heart will be springing up sometimes in warm desires. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him," or as it is in the Song of Solomon, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest." Here is this living water springing up - it springs up in warm desires after your best Beloved. Your soul moves after Him, not in formal desires - but in warm desires. 'O that I could receive Him. O! that He could be formed in my heart the hope of glory!' He is there, that is why your desires flow after Him. Sometimes you will find it springing up in prayer. You will feel it. "Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, that Thou wouldest enlarge my coast, that Thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me." This living water, the Lord has put it there; it will be in you, and if it is there, it will keep springing up in your trouble sometimes when you are in deep waters or in a fire, in a furnace. You will have to go to Jesus, take your matters there, seek Him. And sometimes when you try to pray you will feel helped; you will get a little nearness and be strengthened in your spirit and feel enabled perhaps for a few moments to take up your burdens and cast them at His feet. What is this? Well, it is this water springing up. It keeps springing up, it must keep moving because it is a living spring. So it is in experience, when you come into fresh things, fresh trials, dark things, strange providences, crooked things that you do not like, then this water again keeps springing up; you have to go to the Lord, lay the matter before Him, ask Him to show you what to do and sometimes He does show you what to do; you get relief, guidance, help or reproof, renewed strength. So you

find this refreshing, life-giving water in your heart as a well of water springing up. Sometimes it is in hope, a good hope through grace revived in your spirit. It is a wonderful thing for a poor sinner to feel a real hope in Jesus. "The Lord is my portion", said the prophet, "therefore will I hope in Him". But there is something unspeakably sweet about this hope. It seems sometimes to march forth from the very borders of despair when you are disheartened, burdened, weighed down, disquieted, ready to give up. Then the Lord comes again and this good Spirit perhaps revives a promise, or gives you a fresh token, guides you to the Lord, and you feel a fresh hope springing up. So the Psalmist said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God." There it is springing up - a well of water springing up into everlasting life, this hope, this good hope. This hope is found when some particular view of the Lord Jesus is given in His suitableness to your case, in His wisdom to manage your matters, in His grace to manage your difficulties. Then we can get hold of Him in the arms of faith and feel hope springing up - 'I believe He will bring me through.' Have you had it when difficulties have been so insurmountable, yet you have been able to get hold of God and you have said, 'I believe I shall be brought through. I do not know by what means, but I believe I shall be brought through.' This is His grace, this is His gospel, this is this water springing up unto everlasting life.

Sometimes it will spring up in the sweet actings of faith in the soul upon the Lord Jesus; not only in faith believing in His power to save your soul, but in faith in believing He will bring you through all your circumstances, your difficulties, your providences. We cannot always believe that, can we? We are sometimes like the Psalmist where he complains of being overwhelmed - "When my heart is overwhelmed within me." But even there this water was springing up, for he says, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." So with Jonah - he was cast into the depths of the sea, yet says he, "I will look again toward Thy holy temple." This water was springing up in his heart. And so it will be with you. If this gospel is in your heart, you will have to do with the Lord about your things; as when they brought one to the disciples to cast out an unclean spirit and they could not. The Lord said, "Bring him to me." We have to pass by creatures, and take our difficulties and adversities to Christ. "Bring him to me." He only has power to cast them out. But here is this water springing up. You come to fresh difficulties and say, "How can I do in this? What shall I do in it?" Then this faith will again take anchor in Christ, saying in your heart, "Who art thou O great mountain?

Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain" This faith when the water is springing up will say to the mountain, "Be thou moved to yonder place. Be thou cast into the sea." It shall be in him a well of water springing up, springing up. These are the sweet actings of faith in an enlightened soul. How wonderful it is to have this grace! How I need it! It is as the sweet unction of His Holy Spirit, like water springing up into everlasting life. Sometimes this water will spring up in the sweet movements of love toward Him. 'O,' say you, 'I wish I could love Him.' Yes, but there will be moments, you know, when a touch of this love will be given. "We love Him because He first loved us." We have, I know, reason to mourn our coldness, and indifference, our distance and heartlessness, but there will be occasions when you will get a touch. You will read something, and it moves your spirit, and here it is again, here is this water springing up again in your heart. That is true, is it not? You read a hymn, and that line of that hymn drops sweetly into your heart, doesn't it. It was just the very thing you wanted. What a help it was in that difficulty; it seemed just to sustain you, direct you, support you. Well, what was that? It was this water springing up unto everlasting life. Sometimes it springs up in the soul's admiration for Him, as in the Canticles, where we read, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Here is this water springing up. When you get a view of Him your bowels will move toward Him; how it will soften your spirit, how attractive is that view. Your love flows out toward Him, your bondage is removed, you draw nigh one to the other, hold a little communion together, and this is this water springing up. It shall be in him. And it will stay in him too. It cannot be lost once it is put there, He who begins the good work will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. "A well of water springing up into everlasting life." Sometimes it springs up in the sweet actings of obedience. "If ye love me keep my commandments." Not only or necessarily baptism but the desire to walk in the precepts of His word in whatever way it may be particularly applied to your case. But often it is in respect of the ordinances of His house this water will be springing up. O! if I could follow Him-if I could walk in His ways! I would put Him on if I had grace. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." What is it keeps you back, what hinders? O I need more grace. I want matters cleared up in my soul. Yes, then you will be waiting on Him for this, and it will be as the waters springing up into everlasting life.

Now all these actings of faith under our burdens and difficulties are but the earnest of immortal joys. Every token of His love is as an earnest of heaven. It is like the bud, later to blossom forth and bear fruit, although it may be shaken by many adverse winds. Yes, does not the Lord exercise His people, sometimes in the deep waters, in order that it shall be so with them? You have some particular trouble, and you have to pray about it, and it is a burden upon your spirit. You know what it is, but you have to take it to the Lord; and here is this water springing up - these dealings with the Lord about our things. And what a mercy it is He regards us. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer." You may feel that you pray for nothing; that your prayers are not answered; that the Lord frowns upon you even when you pray. When this is the case it will be hard work, it will be a heart conflict and you will feel at times you have to give it all up. But you cannot. It will hold you. He will not let you go. But when He comes into these things they are like the bitter waters of Marah, which were sweetened, and your bitter waters can be sweetened by His love. When the tree was cast into the waters they were made sweet, and possibly they never did drink more sweet and clear waters than the waters of Marah. O! when the Lord sanctifies affliction, comes into your trials, what a sweetness there is. Other things fade out of view and this water springs up in your soul in love to Him; you fall into His hands: you take your difficult things and put them all into His hands, and you feel He will bring you through. It is but little I know of these things of which I have been speaking tonight, but I know, I trust, a little of this water springing up sometimes in preaching - not always, but sometimes in hearing, sometimes in praying in public when the liberty of the Spirit is given. Then one can get near the Lord and this water bubbles up, O! what a mercy it is!

May the Lord help us and grant that often in secret in our difficulties we may feel the springing up of this living water; it is the earnest of eternal life and must eventually issue therein. Amen.

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I. Fuller & Friends,
9 Sibella Road, Clapham, London SW4 6JA