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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Friday evening 30 April 1920

ISAIAH 55 V 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 is an invitation standing in the midst of very great, exceeding great and precious promises. It is an invitation to come to a full gospel, a gospel whose greatness and whose glory in the effects of it, as made known, we have set out in the preceding chapter. All that Christ is, and has done, and will do, all that the Holy Ghost will accomplish in the church, we have set before us in the Scriptures, and in this great word which we have been reading this evening. I can well understand the complaint that some of you may feel constrained to make, even that you feel very far from realising the sweet things that are here promised and the contrast, which is so painful to you, continuing, may distress and depress you. O what days came on Pentecost following that wondrous day, that day which, so to speak, contained as an earnest all the prosperity that the church of Christ quickly experienced, when that first church, as recorded in the second chapter of the Acts, soon had other churches like it. When Gentiles were brought to know the Lord; when the barren woman kept house; when poor idolators were turned from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, who redeemed them from the wrath to come and when there was such an outpouring of the eternal Spirit upon poor, sinful, creatures, as that they had the veil taken from their hearts and looked, as in a glass, upon the glory of the Lord and were changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. When we look at such churches, when we see the fulfilment of such promises, to such a degree as we have seen, I say the contrast between those churches, made up of individual persons, and our own churches and our own individual states, the contrast must, in some of your cases, as in my own case, be very painful. We are not as our fathers were. We are

not as the Puritans were. There is not the manifestation of God that there used to be, today. Satan is let loose. Hence the abominations of the present time, the abounding of heresies. Spiritualism, criticism, thinly veneered infidelity in pulpits, and the many evils that are so potent as not to need naming to you. It is terrible, and that in this evil day there should be such a withdrawing of that Spirit of Christ so as that we are all poor, lean creatures, for the most part. For the most part the best of God's people have but little and complain much. But yet I believe that a good day is coming, that a glory will come to the earth which did not shine, not in the splendour that is yet to come, even in Pentecostal days, when the knowledge of the Lord and His glory shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. And if any of you younger people live to see that day, you will see what you have not yet seen, and if you belong to the Lord you will know and feel a glory that you have never known and felt as yet. O, it will be a great day.

But now come to the text. It stands connected with great promises, exceeding great and precious promises, and therefore it is an unspeakable comfort to all to whom it may be spoken. Here are people who mourn, who wish that things were with them as they are not, wish they were better than they are, and who can say sometimes - "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?". Who, in their consciences feel strong desires for purging, purifying, bringing near by the blood of Christ. Who long to feel the cleansing blood and the justifying righteousness of Christ. And to such people this gracious word is sent. May it be sent in power to some of us. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters". These waters are the same as Ezekiel mentions when he said that in that day, which was neither light nor dark, in which there was no bright shining, waters should break out, and half should go toward the east and half to the hinder sea, the Mediterranean. The same as Ezekiel mentioned when he said he saw, issuing from under the threshold of the door of the house that looketh to the east, waters, and these expanded and went into the desert and into the sea and healed all things whatsoever they touched. And to the water that Christ speaks of - "The water that I shall give him", that is to him that is athirst and comes to Me, "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and he shall never thirst". And

to the water, the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, which the Apostle John saw coming out from beneath the throne of God and of the Lamb and becoming a mighty river, whose banks were lined with the blessed tree of life, whose fruit was yielded every month - that is perpetual fruitfulness - and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. These are the waters, and these do set forth what Christ is made, what the gospel is, and what the Holy Ghost does. And to these waters certain people are invited. God is very particular in the Scriptures and very particular in teaching His children. He is particular in this invitation. It is significant - thirsty people. It is not good people, or fit or strong people; it is to the thirsty. It is not to the thirsty with a quantity of money, but to the thirsty who are poor and have no money wherewith to buy. The freeness of the gospel is part of its beauty and glory. Ye are saved by grace through faith, saved by God. "I am God and beside Me there is no Saviour". Justified freely without the deeds of the law. Loved eternally and freely, simply and only because the Lord would love. Sovereign grace abounds over sin. No flesh shall glory in the presence of God. The promise is sure to all the seed and made over to all the seed. Mark, free grace. It will suit you as you become poor. As you get into that poverty stricken condition of soul by the teaching of the Spirit, free grace will amazingly suit you. "Ho every one that thirsteth". Thirst is a condition. It is consistent with health but not with comfort, and should it continue long it would not be consistent with health. It is a condition felt, but indescribable. No words can set forth precisely what thirst is, but every person who experiences it knows what it is. It is a condition of the body, natural thirst. When you are thirsty the body is affected, and without being able to describe precisely what it is, your whole body is, so to speak, under the influence of it. Nothing can satisfy it but water, some liquid. Gold, that would not do it. Silver, friends, house, land, knowledge, pursuit, nothing will satisfy, but water. And so spiritually, you cannot describe that feeling we have of wanting something that we have not. It is compared in the Scripture to thirst. The Psalmist said "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God". I am, in my soul, like a man who has no water and can obtain none, and if I get none this thirst will consume me. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" Said some men once to another man, "Sir, we would see Jesus". And if we have thirst

that is exactly what our spirits say. Sir - or, having no man to say it to - Lord, we would see Jesus, we would see His Person, we would see His work, we would see our union with Him, we would understand, by experience, His eternal love. We would see His salvation, we would be clothed with His righteousness. Yea, and after many years experience, the same person will be saying the same thing. I would see Jesus again and again and always be seeing Him. This is what a thirsty sinner says in himself and to the Lord and sometimes, if he knows them, he will be saying it to God's people. He can say, by occasion, "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God". As the hart, either wounded and hurrying with all its strength remaining to a brook, or standing on an aqueduct, whose keen scent discovers water beneath its feet but cannot get it. As the hart panteth, breatheth, longeth, seeketh water, so panteth my soul after Thee O God. This thirst, spiritual thirst. And the question is, is there anything that can assuage this thirst, satisfy the person who is thirsty thus? Yes, there is, and God has discovered it in this way. "Ho every one that thirsteth" and He accommodates Himself, if I may so speak, to the condition and the object of the thirsty person; water, wine, milk. And, accommodating Himself thus, He says, poor people, poor indigent people, having no money, come and buy. Beg and ask for this water, this wine, this milk. What an amazing word this may appear to you, to me, to be.

Let us look a little first at the waters, at the wine, at the milk, secondly at the coming, and thirdly at the condition here set before us.

First, the waters, the wine, the milk. Do not these represent the everlasting love of God, the everlasting grace of Christ, the everlasting love and power and mercy of the Holy Ghost? Do not these set before us a full gospel for an empty sinner? I think so. The grace of God; that is His eternal love, the grace of Christ - "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich", and the love of the Spirit, the fellowship of the Spirit when He comes and takes up His condescending abode in the heart and teaches and humbles and leads into all truth, those who are the subjects of His teaching and are, so to speak, His habitation. It is a great thing

that God should have discovered Himself in such a way as to be comparable to waters, to be compared to waters in the gospel which He has revealed. A pure river of water of life clear as crystal comes from Him, beneath His throne, that is issuing from Himself; and the throne of the Lamb, issuing from Christ; and the blessed Spirit, a well of water springing up into everlasting life in the sinner's heart. It is a pure water, a healing water. Ezekiel saw it to be a healing water. Whatsoever it touched was healed and lived. It went to the sea and healed all the fish it came to, and it heals all barren souls when it comes to them. All barren feelings, all impure thoughts, all hardness of heart, all baseness, all ingratitude, all unbelief and everything of a kind to separate between the soul and God, this pure water of life heals when it comes. Whithersoever the waters went they carried life and healing with them and whithersoever the gospel is it carries life and healing to all poor people and they know it as it comes; they realise it as it comes to them. And the wine which makes glad the heart of God and man, exhilarating, sets forth that joy in the Holy Ghost that is felt when He is pleased to administer the truth, to reveal Jesus Christ, to apply His mercy. Then it is just as if wine is partaken of, all the exhilarating effects of it are felt, are enjoyed. And is it not so when Christ comes in the power of the Spirit? Is it not so when that which is spoken of as joy in the Holy Ghost, when the Word comes not in word only but in power and in the Holy Ghost? Then that prayer of the Apostle for the Romans is answered "Now the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Ghost". And milk which nourishes, containing in itself all the elements of nourishment, partaken of does bring real strength. And is not the Word of God like this? It strengthens the inward man, it establishes the soul, it confirms faith, it brightens hope, it fans love into a flame. It brings sinners to be strong in the Lord enabling them to resist the devil and to wield the sword of truth and the weapon of all prayer. Whenever poor thirsty souls drink this milk they receive nourishment. They are strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might. You must fill in for yourselves as to this part. I mean you will find, as you are led to meditate on the matter, that the gospel has all these great things in it, water of life, wine of joy, milk of strength.

Now, says the Lord, "Ho every one that thirsteth". O every creature that has this state of spirit and experience, this want of God, this thirst for Me "Come". To come is to move. To move is to move from a place to a place, from a condition to a condition. This is faith. We walk by faith, we obey by faith, we believe when we have faith, we seek by faith, we come to God by faith. If we never have faith we never come. Without faith we cannot please God, for he that cometh to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him. When people move they move with design, they walk with design. When you left your houses to come here this evening you moved and you had a design in coming. God knows what that design is in your spirits, but there it is. There is a design. When a soul moves after God there is a design in it, a desire. There is an aim; something prompts. What is it? Thirst. O that I could find God, that I might find the Redeemer, and that He would redeem me. O that I might find peace in my soul with God, that I might find His word as Jeremiah found it and ate it, and find it to be the joy and rejoicing of my heart. O that I might find the Holy Ghost within me teaching, helping, checking, guiding, reproofing, establishing. O that I might find God. This was David's search. He came in his spirit, moved, walked, longed, and desired and sought. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God". It is great to have a want that won't let you lie still. It is great to have a case that will move your spirit. It is a sad thing to see professors always, as far as you can judge, in the same place, for love is an active principle, and where love is there is a movement, a moving after God. Do you see it in yourselves? Do you feel it in your hearts? Can you say "My soul thirsteth for God for the living God". What was it that he panted and thirsted for in respect of God? It was for some discovery of God to him. It was that he might have some manifestation of God, that he might come to God, get near to God, hear the voice of God, feel the love of God, taste the graciousness of God. Thus he came. As a godly Jew, with what delight he would take his morning lamb and his evening lamb, and with what eagerness would he look to see the ascending smoke of the ordained sacrifice. As a godly Jew on the day, the annual day of atonement, with what soul moving would he take, and go before God, that one offering being prefigured by the annual atonement. So, when a child of God is moving after God, are not his eyes on the sacrifice? Is not his desire to

know that? O that I knew that Christ died for me. If he has known it, O that I might have it again manifested in me. If he has felt the presence of God, O then he says, "When wilt Thou come unto me?" Wilt Thou not come again? And he may find himself enabled, at times, to plead the words of Christ. Thou hast said "I will see you again" O do come and let me see Thee again. Let me see Thy well-pleased face, let me hear Thy gracious voice, let me perceive Thy presence. Come again. This is moving. It is prayer, it is believing prayer. That is, you will never so come, without faith, and every breath of faith has prayer in it and faith will send your prayers to heaven, will send them through all difficulties, obstacles, opposition, temptation, sin and guilt. It is a great matter to have faith and a great blessing. It is a strong grace, a very strong grace that can send a prayer, even a prayer that will reach heaven, and enter into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. "Come", says God. Christ said "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden". It is the same thing, in other words. Come to Me; the refreshment you desire I have and I will give you. The joy that you seek, I have, and I will bless you with it. The nourishment you seek, I possess and I will bestow it upon you. Come for water, come for wine, come for milk. Well my brethren may we be coming people. Indeed, I believe that as long as a christian lives he is a coming person. It is not one coming and finish, but it is a struggling coming all the days of a man's life, with devils and sins and guilt and unbelief opposing him. The good man is a coming man as long as he lives.

And now in the next place there are conditions or a condition. These coming people have no money and they want valuable things and their poverty stands before them as an objection at times. Says God to them, your poverty is to be no bar. Although you have no money, I have a liberal hand, and no money that the world possesses could purchase what I have to give and will give. Come without money, without price, which, in our usual language, means come with all your poverty. And what is our poverty? It is the badness of our nature, it is the sin of our hearts, it is our own death. There's no poverty like death. There's no poverty like sin. And, says the blessed God, you who can speak of nothing in yourselves but sin and death, even you, Ho every one of you, come to Me, and come to these living waters, to this exhilarating wine, to this nourishing milk. Let your soul delight

itself in fatness. This, as opened and explained to any sinner, by the Holy Ghost, becomes a most wonderful encouragement. His very poverty that stood before him and made him stick in the way, becomes an incentive to his going even boldly to the throne of God's heavenly grace. What, is nothing to stand in the way? Is nothing to be a reason why I should not beg? Is nothing to be a reason why God should not bestow on me His mercy, His salvation? Why He should not justify me freely by His grace? Why He should not bestow pardon on me? O then my soul take courage from His word and go as the Apostle Paul speaks boldly to the throne of grace that you may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. There may be much trouble, you may have a great affliction on you, you may be sorely burdened with something. An affliction may have come and as it were stunned you. It may have come to you and made you know instantly your weakness in grace, your poverty in experience and in knowledge of God, and this will seem to be a reason to you why, instead of going to the Lord for blessings, you should lie in the dust and confess and do nothing else. But is not confession part of coming, and is not presenting your case before the Lord a coming to Him, a coming to Him for the blessings of the gospel? A coming to Him that He would fulfil in you His great promise "I will heal you". Come unto the waters and buy wine and milk without money and without price. And in the gospel this buying is begging, and begging is a very importunate business. It is importunate because there is real necessity, as when the man, to whom a friend came when on his journey, at midnight, having nothing to set before the newly arrived friend, he goes to a friend of his and finds him in bed, and discovers an unwillingness in his friend to get up and help him. But because the man had real need and was not to be put off by "No", the man gets up. One who is sought to gets up and gives to his neighbour as much as he wants. You may have an urgent case. No preacher can help you. God can, and He says come to Me and I will help you. Come with your burden, cast it on Me. With your care, cast it on Me. Your temptations, cast them on Me. And that is the same as here. Come and buy wine and milk without money and without price. As I think, this text takes in the whole of the Lord's people. Any stage and every stage of experience is more or less met here, because when we are reduced, either by some sin prevailing in us, or some trouble crushing us, or some temptation distracting us, or some lust driving us, or some sin overcoming us, we are brought to this, to thirst for

deliverance, to thirst for pardon, to thirst for God's interference on our behalf, and in such a case the word applies. Ho everyone, in any case and every case, thirsting for God, come unto the waters. Come without your money, that is to say, you have none. Come without price. I ask no price for all I give; I give freely. Come to these waters. And as you do, you will delight yourself in fatness. Yes, the gospel does enliven and enlarge and prosper the soul so that it may well be said, let your soul delight itself in the fatness of the gospel, in the rich provision of Christ, and of mercy and of promises, and an oath to establish all promises, and of a kingdom that cannot be moved. The Lord enable us to obey Him in this sweet word of the gospel. Come thirsty soul, come.

Let not conscience make you linger
Nor of fitness fondly dream
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him
This He gives you
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam

AMEN.