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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 28 May 1919

JOHN 4 v 14

"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"

A man's society, the companions of his heart, will declare somewhat his character. One may say also that whatever a man's appetite is, will show his character. Men will go after their own appetites. If you thirst for the world, then you are a worldly person. If you thirst for God, then you may be said to be a godly person, but that may be very far from your own judgment of yourself, for you do not receive communications from God. If you have what is only thirst, only desires, you wont be able to conclude, therefore, you are of the people of God, and this makes such a great necessity in the soul to have communications from God, for communications from Him are satisfying. There are different measures, but all of them have some satisfaction in them. Christ here is speaking to, what we should call, an abandoned woman. He is the preacher and she the company, the audience; and He opened her ears, touched her heart, and drew her after Himself; convinced her that He was a prophet, that prophet that should come; and she got such a sight and sense of things as to want the water that He had to give. And here He tells her what the water that He has to give, and does give, would infallibly do for the person who received it. It would so satisfy the person who received it as that he would no more thirst; he shall never thirst. Also He declared that the given water would be in the person a well, a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It is a great matter that; it declares the nature of true religion. Let us, as enabled, look carefully into it this evening. Christ is the preacher. What attention we should give when He speaks in the Scripture; what reverence He is worthy of. Every word that Christ speaks is the word of the living God; everything He utters is divine, infallible; no miss can take place here, no additions are

allowed here and no takings away are allowed here. He that takes away from the words of this Book will have his part taken away out of the Book of Life, and he who adds his own things to the things of God will have added to him punishments. We live in most fearful times, and you will bear with me for often mentioning these times. There is on my spirit such a sense of the awful dangers of this day and particularly the thing that I must again and again give warning about - and one of the most terrible evils of this day - the rejection of the Scriptures as inspired, the cutting away, cutting to pieces the Word of the living God, which is truly, absolutely, inspired. Christ here is the speaker, the preacher; the Spirit of God had anointed Him to preach good tidings to the meek. He comes to this woman and He speaks a word that arrests her; Christ does arrest sinners. He speaks a word to her that convinces her of her sins and brings her, so to speak, to her knees in confession. She began at once to confess her sins, and that is always an accompaniment of divine teaching; confession of sins. You may have no immorality to confess as before men, as done among men, but you will have, O innumerable immoralities to confess as having been done in your hearts and you will confess them if Christ speaks to you. He does convince of sin. I am not able to express it properly, but I would say that the light of Christ's truth and teaching is such that it sheds itself upon, it penetrates into, the very nature of sin, and the person who so receives it must therefore confess what is discovered to him. This woman's manner of life now was opened to her and she was obliged to confess it to Him who was at that time a stranger to her; and you, convinced, will confess your sins to God. Beware of a religion that has not in its root and its growth conviction and confession of sin. It is a sickly religion that consists in empty sentiment, that talks about loving God while yet there is no root in the conviction and confession of sin. I have been, in my small measure, anxious about this ever since I have spoken among you. May the Lord grant I may never be slack in it. Consider this my dear friends, consider what you must have if God is your teacher. You must have a knowledge of sin and a conviction and a confession of it and a forsaking of it by His gracious power. Then Christ shows to her the unsatisfying nature of the water which she came to draw to drink. Literally this is so; water that we take quenches for a time our thirst, but it does not become a well in us so that we need not to come again to drink; it only does its work for the

moment and then there must be further and still further draughts. Says Christ, it shall not be so with respect to the person who receives My water, The water that I give to him will prevent thirst. This is the first thing to notice here. What is the thirst that is prevented by the gift of Christ? Thirst for the world. Many inward longings, lustings, you may often feel, but a predominant thirst for the world you will not find living and working in you, guiding your steps, and you will not find the various waters that you may drink, pleasure. Do you understand that? Do you know what it is in the midst of, and notwithstanding your inward longings, and lookings and lustings and thirst for the world, to find there is something different, stronger, of another nature in you preventing that thirst for the world, that thirst for the friendship of this world, that thirst for a good name, for riches, and pleasures, and honour, which can no more be a well of satisfaction in you than the draught of water you had this morning will suffice you for tomorrow? O, it is a great thing to be cut off from the world. If you are not really cut off from the world, you will not be really united to Christ, for union with them both you cannot have. Has Christ cut you off? Have His teachings cut you off? Please do not think that if you are cut off from the world you will never cast one single look on it. O you may cast many looks on it, but conscience and grace will make you say, it is not what I want. My wicked heart runs after it, but it is not what I want. You may say

I seek and hope to find
A portion for my soul
To heal a feverish mind
And make a bankrupt whole
A cup of blessing for the poor
That's full and free and flowing o'er

It is a mercy if we can in our measure - it may be small - say the Lord has taken away the dominion of a thirst for the world; if we can say our hearts are toward the house, the temple which the Lord pitched and not man; can say that we want Christ; if we can say, as Hart does

Blest soul that can say
Christ only I seek

He is a blessed person who can say that. Though the devil will push him back; his depression of mind will distress him; distraction of guilt will make him wretched; fears of no interest will sink him lower and lower daily; often feelings that he cannot be pardoned will be in his mind; but still seeking to Christ for relief, for forgiveness, for justification, for salvation, will make that person, as to his state, and in God's sight, a blessed person. It is one of the first and one of the last feelings that God's people have that they want and must have Jesus Christ, and He is, all through, the Person whom the sinner seeks. But what is the water here spoken of by Christ? I believe that He intends in the first place the gift of the Holy Ghost, for, as in the chapter which I read just now, (John 7) He said that what He spake when He said "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink", this spake He of the Holy Ghost who was not yet given because Christ was not yet glorified. Christ and the Holy Ghost were not to be in the Church on earth at the same time; Christ must be glorified before the Holy Ghost could come. But when the Holy Ghost comes into the heart of a sinner, then comes this word in its fulfilment - The water that I shall give Him. But in what respects may we understand this? First of all, the water of life, eternal life; O what a gift is this. He comes, as Paul says in the Romans, as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. That is the reason that a sinner gets a real appetite, a thirst for God. And the desire, the appetite, will rise as high as God Himself. Well, this is wonderful and this explains - though it may not explain it to you tonight, it will later on - this explains the conflict that begins in a sinner when he is born again, the trouble that he has about his sins which he never had before; the views he has of God which he never had before; the feeling, the belief, that there is a hell, that there is a heaven, that he is fitting himself for the first, that he shall never reach the second. The feeling that God is good and will be eternally good and just, eternally just, even though the sinner should sink into a deserved hell, comes into his mind at times. The desire to be right, the feeling that he must leave the world, that he is no longer fit company for the world, nor the world for him, comes here, rises here. O, the conflict that the people of God have in them arises from their possession of eternal life, for this life is a holy life, and how can a man who possesses it live constantly and willingly with peace and comfort, with the world of sin? How can you do it? It is impossible.

You may say, I am not fit society for the saint, but you will also say I cannot unite with the world. What was once a pleasure is now a pain. What was once a glory is now a shame. And this arises from the possession of life and this life is a well, by Christ's own word, a well, and it springs up, a well of water like a river flowing; it is called living water because it springs as from an eternal spring. Not like a well you could dig; not like a pond in a field that catches the surface rain; the rain that is perhaps just a little way beneath the surface drained off into this pit; a pit that soon becomes dry if there is no rain. It is not like that; it is a well of living water, and living water is moving water, and moving water is pure water, and it is very forceful water. You might throw mud into a living spring, and for a moment muddy the water, but it would cleanse itself, and so this living water that is in a sinner when Christ gives it to him as a well of water springing up into everlasting life, rises to God, and that is the reason that we can say, who, as we hope possess it - nothing short of God possessed will satisfy us; nothing short of this I am persuaded. And the reason is that this living water rises to its own eternal level, if I may speak such a word; it rises to God, and that will always distinguish a child of God. When the Holy Ghost moves afresh upon his spirit, his heart, his desires, his hunger, his thirst, rise as high as God, and O, if I may speak here this word, what a dry place the world is to this soul; what a wilderness it is. Fill it with gold and with silver; it is all dry. Fill it with pleasures; it is dry. The world is dry to a child of God. He must be in it; he is not of it. He has to do with it, but he is not of it. He has his duties in it but he is not of it as Christ said: "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world". Its glitter sometimes deceives, but this well cleanses away that. There are some attractions in it to some of us, but this living water cleanses those attractions away, for it is the work of the blessed Spirit, this living water, and it rises up to God. Therefore we may say here, what an infinite mercy God gives to a wretch when He gives to him the Holy Ghost. O, what a mercy it is to have the Holy Ghost. Nothing short will save us; as I have often said, we could as soon go to heaven without Jesus Christ as we could get there without the Holy Ghost. And the great honour that God has put upon the Holy Ghost in the Scripture is also put upon Him in the soul in its experience. Christ is all, the Holy Ghost is all, the Father is all; each Person is all; the Trinity is all; but the

charge and the care and the conduct and the protection of the church, Christ has committed to His Spirit. Well, my dear friends, do we know what this blessed, infinitely gracious, gift is, living water? And, said the woman, "Whence hast Thou this living water?" O, it is in Himself, my friends; it is in Himself. He is the river of water, the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal. He is the tree that grows on either bank of the river of water of life. He has the living water to give and says He "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst". This gift of the Holy Ghost then is of everlasting importance to us.

Now, not to deal in generalities only, let me come to a few particulars which little children have some knowledge of as well as young men and fathers. The first I shall mention is faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him." Now I believe, if you are honest to your own cases, some of you who may think if you are living children at all, you are only little children, will be able to come in here - I mean this - that there is in you a belief in God, such a belief I mean as brings you to particular things as first, to repeat myself, first you are poor, wretched, forlorn sinners, helpless in self utterly. And, let me tell you this - it may not cheer you up for the moment, but you will prove it true - you will carry that feeling to your dying bed, and it will grow in you; it will deepen and lengthen out and spread itself in your soul, that you are a poor, miserable, lost sinner in yourself. O, my hearer, that is a great thing. Who gives it? The Spirit. "He shall convince of sin". A great thing this, a despised thing this. Is He a true Friend? Do not run away from conviction. The child wont run away from the parent whose hand feeds it; do not run away from conviction. And if you are told it is legal, God keep you from believing it. Many legal fears will attend you, much bondage will hold you, and grave doubts about your state will ever be with you, but O, conviction is a friend, because, as you believe in God, and your conviction of sin deepens, there will also be another thing which is the second I will mention, and that is prayer. What should we do if we had no throne of grace to go to? I think sometimes of it now, what should we do? What would you, some of you here, do with your troubles, your heart troubles and your troubles in your

circumstances, if there were no throne of grace, if you had no Holy Spirit springing up in you in His motions and teaching to carry you to the throne of grace? It seems to me that a child of God must soon sink under his troubles, and sink into despair - No God to go to. And it is one of our best evidences, if we have it, that we cannot do without God; do not want to do without Him; are grieved to think of doing without Him, of not having an interest in Him, and this is one sweet working of the Spirit in His gift of the water of life in the soul; He moves and we move in sweet accord with His movements. He bids the sinner pray and He gives prayer. He enables the sinner sometimes to walk in that Scripture, beautiful Scripture. "Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God". This is water, pure, clear water of life, of faith, of prayer in your soul. O, what a thing it is to pray. God takes notice of praying people. It is written: "Behold he prayeth". It is written of Manasseh: "Then he called upon God". And Solomon, in dedicating the temple, said if they shall pray, if they shall remember, if they shall turn to this house, then hear Thou in heaven. It is all on the ground of some trouble they are to come and it is all on the ground that there is a blessed God to go to. Trouble forces, the Spirit draws, and these two together make praying people, and with all the warriors and heroes and conquerors that the whole world has ever seen, you must put the poorest and the weakest and the worst of sinners on their knees at the throne of grace, where God the Spirit comes and gives them power over the angel to prevail and get blessings. O, if you can deal with God by His dealing with you, you will get victories. The people that know their God shall be strong and do exploits. This is a part of this pure river, this living water, that has in it no corruption, that cleanses corruption from the thoughts, cleanses unbelief from the mind and heart, that cleanses carnality and makes a person spiritually minded again and again. This it is that makes the throne of grace so beautiful in the eyes, and such a place of prosperity to the soul, and such a place of conquest and obtaining promises and stopping the mouths of lions, and quenching the violence of fire over all poor, troubled sinners. O fly then, weakened sinner, fly to this blessed throne of God's heavenly grace, and you will find relief; you will get power sooner or later. That is the second thing and I beg you to notice it, because if you pray in the way I am speaking about, by the living motions of the Holy

Ghost, answers are coming. They may be long before they reach you; the prince was three weeks detained on his way to bring Daniel an answer, and in some mysterious way God permits evil, so to speak, to intercept blessings that are coming in an answer to prayer. In some way - for the will of God cannot really be thwarted - in some way He does allow evil to step in, interruptions to come, hindrances to stand up to prevent a blessing coming for some time, even as He permitted interruptions to come to Himself on the way to heal the Ruler's little daughter, that He might be the more glorified.

Now the next thing that I would mention to you in this living water is some gracious communication. Let us be particular here. There are some things that look like communications from God which are not, such as emotion. Strong emotion may be felt by some sometimes; Scriptures may be on the mind; but you must judge like this; if they do nothing for you, if they do not reprove you or comfort you, if they do not bring something from Christ to you to effectually help you, you may suspect their source; your memory may be doing the business; Ah and Satan may be doing it; but when God makes a communication it is different. There is some holding out the hand to receive it; there is some feeling of suitableness in it; there is some humbling power in it; it is like a messenger sent to prepare the way of the Lord who is coming after it. Take this notice of matters as the Lord may help you. O, when God the Holy Ghost puts the Scripture in it is like living water in the spirit, in the affections, in the understanding, in the will, and it is cleansing. It cleanses rebellion and carnal reason for the time from the mind and brings the soul into sweet submission. For instance, you may have been carnally saying, I do not see how I am to get through this trouble; I cannot see or feel divine wisdom in permitting it. You may have been thinking, how am I to get through honourably this perplexity? How is this want to be supplied? Now if the Holy Ghost brings living water to you it will cleanse all that away and bring you to believe there is nothing too hard for the Lord, nothing that He cannot do. No want of any kind, no sin of any power, no temptation however distressing, nothing in the world, nothing in hell, nothing in yourself will stand before your faith, as it receives a communication. It may be transient, it may not last many minutes, but there will be something in you that will leave a mark on your spirit

and you will be saying, O I should like that to come again. You will be like Manoah who said: Let the man of God whom Thou didst send come again. You will be saying, O let that word come again; let it work in my heart again as it did just now. There is something in the application of God's word that is singular, very singular, very powerful. And does it raise the expectation? O, it does; it brings you a little to think of what Hart says

Saints raise your expectations high
Hope all that heaven has good

That is living water my friends, living water springing up to Christ, springing up to the Father, whom you would fain call your Father, springing up to the Holy Ghost, whom you would fain feel working in you. Springing up to holiness, and springing up to justification, and to sanctification, and to wisdom and to redemption. And it will bring you inside that beautiful Scripture in the Proverbs: "Blessed is the man that watcheth at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors, for whoso findeth Me findeth life and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Now that carries us a long way in the divine life, for surely it is one of the greatest of all blessings to receive the living word of God. Moses thought so, and he said to the people: Did ever nation hear the voice of God and live as you have heard it? O it is a great thing. I wish we might more prize any word that God has given to us, and believe it and cleave to it and put Him in mind of it. Listen not to what despairing thoughts say, to what Satan might say, to what carnal reason may say. Hold fast, as you can, to the Word of God as spoken to you, that was life in you, that drew you to, and made you long for union with, Jesus Christ.

"Shall be in him". And here I would say this, it will never be taken out; the word in you will never be taken away from you. It is to be a well of water springing up into everlasting life. You may say, well then I am wrong for mine is gone. It may have gone from your feelings, it may have gone from the grasp of your faith for a time. Christ went out of Peter's faith for a time, and truth, and uprightness, and love, and faithfulness, all left Peter for a time. And the disciples forgot His word for a time; they must have forgotten it, because it is said of them: Then they remembered His

word". But for the thing to go like that does not mean that it is gone for ever. A long drought may cause even a spring to get low; it does not send forth its streams with the vigour it did before the drought came and affected it; therefore rain will make it run and be vigorous again. And the word in you may sink down, sink through, and away from, your memory, and out of the grasp of your faith, and out of your heart, as it were, but that is one thing; it is another thing for God to forget it, another thing for the Holy Ghost to leave it unfinished, which He never will. God will never forget it and He will never leave it unfinished. If Naomi could say, with great probability of truth, to Ruth: Sit still my daughter for the man will not be at rest until he has finished the matter, how much more, without the word probability, absolutely how much more may we say to each other - those of us who have received the word of God - Wait on Him, patiently wait. Commit the case, commit your soul, commit your trouble and commit His own word to Him. He will bring it to pass; He will swallow up your death; He will fulfil His promise. Faithful is He who hath promised; He will also do it. He will do it. The testimony of Christ can never be contradicted, abandoned by Himself. He will perform every word and you will be able to say one day, with Joshua, Ye know in your heart and in your soul that not one word of all His good promise hath failed. It is a living spring my friends, a living spring in your souls, a word that cannot be broken. The Scripture cannot be broken; God would dishonour Himself if He did not fulfil His Word. "It shall be in him". You shall never thirst for anybody but God. There will be lustings, as I said, and longings, but in truth, and as to the very trend and bent of your spirit, it will be this way; you will thirst for none but God, but for Him you will thirst and say "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God". Springing up, again and again and again springing up. O, what fresh springs of prayer you may feel, what fresh springs of faith and hope and love you will feel. What fresh springing of confidence in God you will feel. O what fresh springing up of love for holiness and desire to be like the Lord you will feel and if you feel these things, as you feel these things, notice them and may the Lord give you to remember this word and see it fulfilled in yourselves. "It shall be in him a well of water". Now I believe, if God helps you to be honest, all you who have His life and fear His Name, you will be obliged to come and say, now that is true, but I know the devil can make us lie against our

right, and unbelief can do the same.

Now one word more, when the Lord Jesus Christ gives the word of pardon He gives the pure water of the river of life. The Holy Ghost brings it; He sprinkles with blood the guilty conscience; He draws the sinner this way and satisfies the soul by speaking the word of forgiveness, and that is to spring up. You may lose it, as Bunyan lost his roll, by sleeping. You may lose it, but it will spring up continually because it shall receive again and again and again new power in your soul. You shall receive power to remember it and feel to believe in the infinite value of the blood of Christ and feel that all was done - sins past, and present and to come, were pardoned - when Christ died, and were removed from you, and they shall be removed again and again and again, for this water shall spring up and be in a person eternal life, and surely justification is life, pardon is life. "It shall be in him a well of water" O, blessed water; may the Lord never leave us without a thirst for it. We are in a bad state if we are not thirsting for Christ. I hope God will keep alive a real desire for Christ, for the living water which He has to give, and promises to His children. Seek it my friends, and I would also be seeking it continually. "The water that I shall give him". Then one may say, will He give it to me? I will say this to you; did you ever ask Him? Do you ask Him? Must you ask Him? Are you pressed to ask Him? led and enabled to ask Him? If so, it is coming; He has it to give and He wont deny anybody; He wont deny you. "If any man thirst", He says, "let him come unto Me and drink". O, the pleasures of grace; O, the pleasures of pardon, the pleasures of the Holy Spirit's communications. O, the pleasures of God's wisdom and of His ways; one cannot describe them. I have felt sometimes most singular sensations of unspeakable pleasure in God, in my soul; communications which have humbled me and melted me, and sanctified my affections and cleansed the evil from my thoughts and I want the same things again and again and again. I preach this plain gospel to you because I want the same thing for myself - a living Saviour for a bad sinner; a holy Christ for a piece of sin, and a heaven for one who deserves hell. The gospel is all this. It will cleanse rebellion about the troubles you may have from all your spirits and bring you to the footstool of mercy, submissive, resigned, content with the will of God. Well may the Lord give it to us. We do not know what we have to see yet, what

trouble will come to us personally, in our families, and in the church of God, but I think there is a great mercy in that solemn judgment that is pronounced by the prophet Amos. The Lord said He will send a famine, not of bread nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of God. That is an awful judgment, and I believe it is coming to England, but there is this mercy in it. And men shall go from sea to sea and from the north to the east seeking the word of the Lord and shall not find it for the time; but O, the mercy of seeking it. What a mercy it is not to be content without it; that you brave dangers and every sort of thing that may come against you to seek this living water. It will be a solemn time because then, it says, then shall the virgin and the young men faint for thirst. They wont die, for the Lord has promised to keep them alive in famine. I wish we may be kept as a little people for a time, that we may yet have the word of God, but the time may come when you, at least who are younger, will not find it, but I do hope you wont be left to run after vanities. Stick to the fountain as well as you can and it will supply you and cleanse you, and satiate you and do you good.

AMEN.