

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 15 November 1931

TEXT: JOHN 7 Verse 37

"In the last day, that great day of the feast
Jesus stood and cried saying 'If any man
thirst let him come unto Me and drink'"

This feast was the feast of tabernacles, one of the feasts which Israel was commanded to keep unto the Lord annually. It was the feast of tabernacles to celebrate and keep in memory of the people of Israel their journey through the wilderness and the supplying of Israel with water for their thirst out of the rock. It was therefore a joyful feast. A thirsty nation supplied with drink in the wilderness, a very beautiful illustration of God's exceeding kindness and of His wisdom and of His omnipotence in a case of need. A nation thirsty, in an arid wilderness, miraculously supplied with water out of the smitten rock. It was also a symbol. They were looking for the land of promise and the tents or booths, the booths that were made of strong boughs of trees and branches of palms and willows, making them to understand that they were not to always be in the wilderness, that these booths one day would be struck, to be set up no more, because they would enter into the land of promise. This is a beautiful symbol, an alluring one, to the people of God, saying to them you are groaning in your tabernacle, but you have a building of God. You one day will leave this tabernacle. We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed but clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

A two-fold purpose was therefore answered by Israel dwelling in these booths. And on this occasion, the last day of the seven days, the great day of the feast, water from the flowing pool of Siloam was taken by a golden vessel and poured out as an offering to the Lord on the altar of the Lord and the people drank of that water also and drank joyfully, because it said to them - you

remember you were thirsty in the wilderness, you remember that you murmured against the Lord in your unbelief, you remember how that God came and by Moses smote the rock and out of that smitten rock came water for your thirst in abundance. It followed you through the wilderness. That rock that followed them, says Paul, was Christ, typifying the living water that should ever flow from the Lord Jesus. Well, on this last day of the feast, there had been murmuring about Him, great disputes about Him. Some said He was a good man, and some said He was an evil man. He declared Himself to be the Omnipotent One by what He had done and now, on this last day, He, as it were, answered all objections and said what was calculated to still all the murmuring of the people - If any man thirst, if any of you, drinking of this water should thirst for another water, let him come unto Me and drink.

Let us first notice a little concerning thirst. Thirst is a natural and healthy state of the body, not made, not vamped up, but just a natural healthy condition of the body. We cannot explain it, but there it is. There comes a moment when we are conscious of needing some water. That is thirst; it is a condition, healthy condition of the body nothing but water can satisfy. No substance but that of water can satisfy this natural thirst. No! Spiritual thirst answers to this. It is a spiritual condition natural to the new life which God gives to His people in regeneration. Nobody can have this thirst until born again. Consider that point. A man cannot truly say "I will thirst for God, I will go after Him". Unless he has a new nature he cannot thirst for God. He may read the Bible, makes no use of it; he may hear good preaching, but he can make no use of it. He is just a poor dead thing, but, when this new life, new birth, eternal life, a spiritual nature is given, then this thirst comes and the man sees and feels the insufficiency of all created good. He feels in himself a poor, wretched sinner, a desire for what God only can give and this is this thirst. God knows how many of us have it; how many can say they really want God, understanding a little of what they mean. They want God. Who God is, what He is, what He has to give, they have some little, it may be very little, apprehension of, but they can say, they do say, they want God. If this is so, let us next, by the help of God, look at

what this coming is. Let him come. Bad man, let him come; Hard-hearted wretch, let him come; guilty sinner, let him come; all but prayerless at times, let him come; deeply conscious of his ruin, let him come; weak and helpless, let him come. Let him come, devil hinder him not; let him come, conscience prevent him not; let him come, whatever stands in the way, let this sinner come. He wants God; I am God, let him come to Me. The freeness of this can never be adequately expressed. The greatness of this can never be fully set forth. O wretched men and women thirsting for God, God says, come to Me. I think it is a wonderful gospel that thus speaks to thirsty people.

Here was a nation, gathered as to the more part of it, at Jerusalem, Jews, by divine commandment, gathered to Jerusalem, disputing about God in the man Christ Jesus and this God says, when they were drawing water in the golden vessel and pouring it out before the Lord on the altar, He says to them - If any of you thirst (they were drinking) if any of you thirst, come to Me. What is this water? It is, in the language that was read just now, the pure river of water of life, and that is no less than the Son of God Himself. He is the bread of life; He is the water of life. And of this water He says "Ho everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters" But I am poor says he. "He that hath no money, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." Does that suit many of you? Everyone that thirsteth, cannot do without God, cannot live, yet living, cannot be satisfied without God. Then says He "Behold Me. Behold Me." I am unworthy. Yes my friends that is true; I am wicked, that is true; I am guilty, I am a wretch, I am an unbeliever, I have more unbelief than faith, if I have any faith at all. That is true. But that is not a word put as a hindrance. Jesus does not say, if any worthy man thirsts let him come; if any good man thirsts, let him come; if any pure man thirsts, let him come. He says if any man, a poor, guilty wretch. I wish it would please the Holy Ghost to cause the freeness and the greatness and sufficiency of this word to fall upon us. Our poor legal nature is apt to set up conditions and marks and the devil may make use of what we sometimes honestly sing

Marks of grace I cannot show
All polluted is my breast

and say if you have no marks of grace you ought not to go to Him. He does not say that. What is this water? It is the pure grace of God, the eternal love of God. It is the eternal purpose of God to poor wretched sinners to do them good, and save them. It is that pure water of life that has already given life so that out of the nature of that life comes the thirst. The pure water of life, which a sinner freely drinks when he receives a supply from the blessed fountain of it. It is the pure water of life to continue and maintain and increase life in the soul. This life in the soul needs maintaining, needs a continual supply out of the fountain. "He" the fountain, says one

He, to the feeble and the faint
His mighty aid makes known
And when their languid life is spent
Supplies it with His own

This water is the pure water of free justification, a guilty sinner, needing not excuses to help him, for he has none, but needing the divine sentence, the blessed sentence of justification. To drink of this from time to time is to experience what John writes in his first Epistle "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". It is the pure river of water of sanctification, purging away evil meats from the conscience and the affections and the will and the understanding. Giving grace to a sinner to aim at the glory of God in whatsoever he does, whether he eats or whether he drinks to do all to the glory of God. It is the pure river of water of life of pleasures. The river of God is full and it is a river of pleasure for evermore. There is real pleasure in God, the pleasure of God in His Son. This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, and he is well pleased with every sinner who comes for this water of life, the sweet pleasure of knowing God. You can never understand it till you get it and vain nature in the child of God very strongly works against this pleasure. If, for

a moment, you delight yourself in the Lord, the next moment there is an enmity working and would prevail if it could. But there is such a thing as this pure water cleansing away that enmity and causing you to delight in the Lord. What is it to delight in the Lord? It is to delight in the revelation He has given of Himself, the revelation He has given of Himself in holy scripture, and then in the soul by the Holy Spirit. It is the revelation He has given to a sinner of His will in providence. Providence is the outworking of divine decrees. Providence in a family is the outworking of the goodness of God, of the severity of God, of the jealousy of God. And, when it pleases the Holy Spirit to bring of this pure water of life to a person, a child of God in affliction, that enables him to glory in tribulation. There are degrees with respect to tribulation, and in the effect of it on the soul. One degree is this, and very beautiful it is - to be submissive.

Sweet to lie passive in His hands
And know no will but His

That is a great thing, to be as clay in the hands of the potter, to wish no one single thing but what God does and gives, to desire to take out of the cup put into your hand to drink no bitter ingredient, to desire to put into it no sweet of this world. It is a great thing to submit to the will of God and find it to be a good and acceptable and perfect will. But it is a step beyond that when the soul can say, I rejoice in this, I glory in this. This is God's way of conforming me in some measure to the image of Jesus Christ. This is God's way of weaning me from myself, and from the world. O happy is the man who can truly say that he glories in tribulation. Let the man who wants it come, let him drink of the water of life, to purge away from him all fretfulness and indifference to God's glory in tribulation. Let him come to Me. Let him that is athirst come to Me for strength to hold out to the end. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. Ah, it is one thing to start in the race, it is another to obtain. Many run, says Paul, in the race, only one obtains the prize. So run that ye may obtain says he. And what is this running? It is expressed by the same

Apostle when speaking of himself, he said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ." This is pressing after the end of your journey and the entrance into the joy of your Lord, into that joy that is eternal, that is in the river of God full of pleasures. We have not many of them today it may be in our experience, but the river of God is full of them and Paul prays that he might reach unto that and attain unto it in God's own time.

If any man thirst, let him come unto Me for glory. Yes, there is a glory even in this world to be experienced. The Apostle says to the Corinthians "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord". Do you thirst, or are you satisfied with your present attainment? When there is a healthy state of soul, there is a real thirsting after more and as faith is drawn forth into exercise she sees something of the more that is attainable, more of God. "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." More of His love. 'Tis but little of that that we know, the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. More of His grace to save the sinner, more of His mercy, drawing, melting, humbling, saving and comforting the soul. More of His power to sanctify afflictions which He may not be pleased to remove for a time. Now when the thirst of the soul is strong and healthy it is this way - O that I knew more of God. And, as God's people advance in years, if the Spirit is in them to teach them, this certainly becomes part of their real thirst, that they may know more of God. How little of Him is known. Who can understand the thunder of His power, and how little of Him is known. His way is in the sea, His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known. When God's way with you is in the sea, it will be vain for you to find out a straight path, a firm path, for your feet. When His path is in the mighty waters that may be roaring about you, you will be put to it to understand His dealings. What then? O Lord I thirst for grace to believe, for grace to say "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good", for grace to humble myself under Thy mighty hand. This is what men taught of God thirst for

in their troubles, and when a man, having eyes given to him, sees not the way of the Almighty, he says why is light given to me? Why do I see my misery, my weakness, why do I feel it? My snares, why am I exposed to them? Why is light given to me? God will say perhaps "What I do now thou knowest not but thou shalt know hereafter". And when you take a sip of the water of life then you are cleansed, sweetly, powerfully cleansed from the vain enquiry that you have been making and you will fall flat before God and say "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning, I say more than they that watch for the morning". Are full waters of sorrow wrung out to you and are you brought more and more clearly to see and deeply to feel your need of God, your lack of grace, your lack of understanding in the things of Christ? Well, if that be so, there will be, under the Spirit's grace, a real thirst that you may be led to enter into the things, even the deep things of God. He revealeth deep and secret things and He said - If you thirst to know Me in these things, come. He reveals His secrets to all who are near to Him and Hart says

Living so near Him, His secrets they learn

That is true of the Lord's people. Let then this poor sinner come to the Lord Jesus.

Now, in the next place, what is this drinking? It is a real experience of God. Let me repeat it, this drinking is a real experience of God. When the people drank of the water of Siloam, it was a real thing, it was no fancy. One might say - I took my cup and there was poured into it the water contained in the golden vessel and I drank of it, it was no imagination. So, when a coming sinner reaches, by faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, he gets that, he receives that, that becomes a real experience in him. He receives mercy, the healing mercy is unspeakably sweet. He receives some rays of divine love and some sense of that love in his soul so that he says - I have really felt the love of God. When the atonement comes and purges his conscience from dead works, he says, I really have felt the forgiveness of my sins. It is a real experience, and when grace suppleth his will and

brings him into conformity to the will of God, so that he can say, my poor will that has had such rebellion in it, that has moved me against God in this providence, is now put straight with the will of God, and I believe and feel that the will of God is good and acceptable and perfect in my soul's experience, and I would not have one thing altered even if I might. The man has been favoured to drink of the fountain, his soul has been favoured to be near the Lord Jesus and has received grace for grace from the Lord Jesus. And this is an experience I wish we might have more and more, just lie in our poor wills straight with God. Providence wont do it; the creature cannot do it. The sin of rebellion is felt but O, when this communication from Jesus is felt, grace to say the will of the Lord be done; Lord here is this poor heart of mine, take it, I have no power, yet my weakness is my sin, take my heart, take my mind, take my thoughts, take my judgment, take my will, put all straight. Now my brethren, if you thirst for this you cannot get it, it is not a thing within the power of fallen man. But the thirst, being spiritual, arising from a spiritual nature, will enable you to obey this invitation - Lo glad I come for this. I want this Lord. O grant it to me, that I may drink and thirst no more. If any man thirst. You may thirst for what is earlier in experience than this. You may thirst for a sense of forgiveness, to feel satisfied about your salvation, to feel that all the sin of your nature, original sin and the sin that works in you daily, God has forgiven. Now what makes a man want forgiveness? Not simply, not only, the dread of hell and damnation; that may prove extreme. Much of that, if not all, may prove to be mere terror, natural terror. But when there is a spiritual sense of God; some apprehension of His holy nature, that you cannot, in your state, approach him; some realisation of His terrible justice, and you cannot stand before that; when His divine claims on you are pressed upon your conscience and understanding so that you can say - I cannot answer one of a thousand of all my sins, O if I only knew He could and would forgive them; O if He would but kindly speak to me the forgiveness of my sins, I thirst for that more than anything in this world; Jesus says, let that man come to Me. Let that guilty person come to Me. And do not come with excuses. If you try, God wont allow you. There are no excuses.

God allows none. All He allows is confession. Only acknowledge thine iniquity. But will He? O the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. How can I know that He is willing to forgive my sin, even if I believe that He is able? You can believe that He is willing when He does it. A thousand ministers might proclaim, as with one voice, the wondrous freedom of God and the freeness of His grace, and the sufficiency of the blood of Christ, but they could not make you believe it. But the touch of forgiveness, the smile of God on your conscience, the application of the atonement of Christ, that would make you know what Hezekiah expressed concerning his own case "The Lord was ready to save me", more ready to save me than I was to be saved. Come to Me, He said. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them". This man, this God-man, who gave His life a ransom for many; this man, sent from heaven by His Father. The Son of Man came down from heaven and He ascends into heaven. This man, this man, hanged on the cross, receiveth sinners and eateth with them. He shows, not only His kindness, but His familiarity. He says "Eat O friends and drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved."

Now dear friends, the Lord help you and help me to listen to this, to this gracious word. Let him come, let him drink. Water flows freely. It flowed freely literally; it flowed wondrously; it flowed sufficient for the whole of Israel when the rock was smitten. Let this man come. Water flows freely from Christ. This drinking, I repeat, is a gracious experience, and if you have this thirst, when you come to this man, this God-man, you will understand what the drinking is. Receive My flesh; receive My blood; receive My love; receive My goodness. That is just what it means in simple words, that the God-man, having all grace given to Him, having all life in Himself, having all power and goodness, invites this people who are thirsty with natural water in their hands, drinking it may be, in the act of drinking, yet let them come for another kind of water which I have to give and let them drink without hindrance. What should hinder? Many things hinder. A legal heart hinders and many other things hinder, but, says this Great One, let him drink. And out of His fulness of grace and love, He pours water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground, and all this to save poor

sinners, to do them good, to conform them to His divine image and to bring them ultimately into the land of promise. These Jews, of this day, were dwelling in booths; left their houses, built these booths, and dwelt in them for seven days, and their thus dwelling said to them - there is a land of promise before you. So the dwellers in booths today, in tabernacles which shall be taken down and in which they are now groaning, have this blessed word sent to them. You thirst for heavenly joys, come to Me for them. You thirst for divine satisfaction about your condition, come to Me, and I will bestow it. May the Lord help us to believe in this great and wonderful word, and He shall have all the praise.

AMEN.