

Sermon preached by MR. R. KINDERMAN at "Bethel" Chapel, Allington,
on Sunday afternoon, 1st May, 1977.

Text: Isaiah 41. v 17 & 18.

"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

These verses contain that which the Spirit of God by Isaiah promised to Israel, that they might be favoured to prove the power of what you were just singing, the gospel streams. (Gadsby's 973.) And so the Lord in His kindness has caused this to be written, because He will make this known. This is the word of God with power for sinners; and though oftentimes, (I thought as you sang the opening hymn, 320,) unbelief, and all the powers of sin and the powers of the enemy that are so rampant, and within, would keep from everything that is good, yet the Lord here has promised what He is able to perform, and what, as you have been singing, the Lord has done in the Person of His Own dear Son. For the prophet Isaiah was favoured, very favoured, to be the means of proclaiming the coming of the Lord Jesus, the purpose of the coming of the Lord Jesus; and that is a wonderful part of the opening up of the gospel, the purpose for which Christ came into this world. If the Spirit of God move in our hearts and we are among this people here referred to who are needy, then there will be an attraction. There is an attraction in the gospel to such, and an attraction to the channel through which salvation comes. We know that. But when you come to a point of need there is that wrought within to seek to prove the truth and the power of the foundation from which it flows. We need something real. Every earthly stream fails, all the powers of nature fail; but when the Lord is pleased to make it known that He has done something, and that it will be made manifest in a way as He sees fit, what a strength!

So the Spirit of God speaks to a people as "poor and needy". The people of God will be to the end of time that which He has made manifest from the beginning, the people that are poor and needy; not naturally, but brought into a state and condition to need help, poor in spirit. Christ said that those are a blessed people that are poor in spirit. He said that because it is to the poor in spirit that the gospel is to be made known; and that is the work of God. When the Holy Spirit moves in a soul that God has loved eternally, (and it is the election of grace that God brings into these truths,) it is wonderful power. You that know what it is to feel the power, you may not be able always to express it, you may not be able always to tell others exactly how it moves within, but there is a power, the power that God the Spirit puts forth which cannot be satisfied. There is nothing in self, nothing in the world, that can satisfy such an exercise as this. There is no water. Every fountain, every stream of nature comes short and does not quench that divine thirst that God Himself implants in the soul, a thirst that He alone can help. But He gives this promise of truth because there is much exercise when a sinner is poor and needy. You may travel, if I may just

mention it, often through the Psalms; the Psalms are very graciously written for the poor and needy, and I doubt not that you that know that have often found in the Psalms the expressions of your own heart. "As the hart," said the Psalmist, "panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." He was in a state of need; he was thirsty, seeking water, feeling faint, and wondering whether it would ever be his favoured lot to taste of that water. And so all the people of God have walked in that, and the Psalms are left on record, I believe, because they are the very practical exercises of God's people. So you may find it; and so the Lord here makes a declaration of truth that He will do it. He says, when these poor sinners, when those that have got nothing to look to, no riches, all their strength gone - however long the Lord may delay, in the gospel we find that the Lord Jesus fulfilled this word for many sinners, and opened fountains in the wilderness, in their own soul. He made manifest His truth. One comes to mind that you well know, who for twelve years had been in need and was brought to poverty of spirit and then was brought to seek to Jesus; and He did not turn her away. He made manifest the virtue, and in her soul she received the water of life. And there were others.

As the Lord brings into that poverty, so He gives a heart to seek for grace. You will know the difference when there is a seeking after, when there is a longing, when there is a thirsting: "Will the Lord appear again? Will He come? Will He undertake? Will He grant me that which I desire?"

Now, says the Lord, when the poor and needy come to Me. Hannah's is a different case, perhaps, from some; her husband said, "Am I not better to thee than ten sons?" but she said, There is something I need, and I am in need of that which only God can give. And when you feel that need of soul, a need of Christ, a need of eternal life, a need of the water of life, a need of that which flows, as you have been singing, only from the gospel, marked out with blood, it is a gracious needing; painful to nature, when the Lord brings down every high look, when He spoils from everything, and when you walk alone because the heart knows its own bitterness in this, when you have had to go to the Lord. "When the poor and needy seek water;" when they come to prayer. God brings to prayer; He brings His people to prayer. It may be oftentimes a sigh or a groan; that is called 'divine,' but it is prayer, and prayer is in need; and He says, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none." Because the Lord has a purpose in that. If we could find it in the creature, -

"Could the creature help or ease us,
Seldom should we think of prayer."

It is not that there is not a love naturally; it is not that he feels any different toward the Lord's people; but there is one thing that God does do to those He brings into the gospel, and that is, He delivers them from every arm of flesh, He brings from everything of self to Him; and when there is need, and you look around, -

"Of cistern waters art thou sick,
And loath'st the mire they bring?"

one said; and even in that sometimes it is a long time before there is a coming to the real place. He waits to be gracious, does God, in the opening up of His mercy. He waits till He

has killed to every hope in self, to every creature fountain, because God will not give His glory to another. I often feel now God is well pleased in His dear Son, and He will not have any but Christ admired and spoken of in truth, or any looked to, but Christ; and so God by His Spirit often waits to be gracious and brings a sinner to a place where his tongue faileth for thirst; when you have said, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no hope? Is there no water of life for sinners? Is my case beyond every help?" And I do believe in one sense every child of God comes to a point there, that it is his own particular case, his tongue faileth for thirst. When it fails for thirst you may not be able to speak a word, but the Lord knows the cry. There is a seeking, there is a longing, there is an asking. Sometimes, if I may just say, you can go through some of the hymns like you have been singing, and they touch the point, and you say, "That is just how I feel. Will the Lord ever come? Will He look upon me? Has His mercy clean gone for ever?" "No," says the Lord, "I will look to that case."

But there is another truth that I felt: "When their tongue faileth for thirst," that is when the enemy assails. The enemy is a cruel foe, and he is a coward, I often feel; and he is a cruel foe in this, when he sees a sinner in need and seeking for help, and there seems to be none, "and their tongue faileth for thirst," how he comes in with all his insinuations; You are unworthy, and there is no help. And yet that is not according to truth, because there is no sinner that is beyond the power of God to save. That is not a resting-ground, but there is no sinner beyond his power to save. But the enemy comes in, - how often with the psalmist, too, - "As with a sword in my bones," said David, "my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" As though the enemy says, Well, you will never be relieved, you will never be brought out, you will come to a solemn end. Yet David was favoured. But that is the exercise. Now the Lord says, and this is the word of God in truth, "I, the Lord, will hear." He hears the groans. The poet says,

"He hears the groans of His elect,
And hates to put away."

He hears, He knows; and He knows what every secret sigh declares. He knows where there is a desire for Christ, a seeking for the water of life, a seeking for Christ, for that water that flows from Him. He knows. He knows every saint's peculiar case. Perhaps you do not feel you can say you are a saint when you are poor and needy, but He knows, and He hears, and there is a time when God says, "I will come; I will not always stay away, but I will hear the prayer of the destitute. I will hear the cry of the needy; I will come and help." So He says, "I will hear; I, the Lord, that am able to do for them what they need; I that have all power." And the gospel, the water of life, is with God to give; for every good gift is from heaven.

"I, the Lord, will hear." I felt, what a wonderful word, and certain! Not like sometimes a creature might be, saying, "I might help, and do help," and then, "I forgot;" or "I am not able to do it." God is faithful. And there are many, there are Jacob and Abraham; and sometimes the Lord speaks with power into the soul to prove His faithfulness, and He says to a thirsty soul, to cause him to hear, "I am the God

of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; I heard their cries and saved them from their fears; I brought them through; I opened up places where there was none; I made manifest my mysterious word of love to them;" and so He speaks to the end of time to one sinner here and one there, "one of a city and two of a family" brought into need, brought into poverty of spirit, crying out to God, seeking water and saying, "Shall I die out of Christ?" These are some real exercises, and those right exercises that draw sinners to the word of God, and not by constraint, and not by just outward conformity, but draw to His ordinance of truth. They know what it is, - I like the word, - to be "on the stretch" sometimes to come to His house, and to come with a prayerful exercise, with a desire that the Lord would appear. Perhaps you have been disappointed sometimes, and gone away, not to blame any, not even the ministry, but to say, "The Lord has not appeared." It may be because the Lord is waiting to be gracious, to make further manifestations of His power, bring into more exercise, or lead more to see the blessing, the fulness and the work of His Own grace. "I, the Lord, will hear them." O, you travel through the scriptures and see how the Lord hears, and did hear the exercises of sinners. "I have heard thy cries." He did it to Cornelius. He sent Peter. Peter could not understand at first, but that sinner and his household were poor and needy, seeking the water of life. That was proved when they said, "We are all here before God to hear what God will speak, what He will tell you to tell us about the gospel, about Christ the water of life, because we are needy;" and the Lord opened Peter's mouth to proclaim with power, and he had to tell those of his own brethren how the Spirit of the Lord had come to those sinners whom God had made poor and needy, and who were seeking for Christ, and then He had heard them.

"I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." The God of Israel is a covenant-keeping God; He is a God that has promised. The God of Israel, - the people that He has chosen, the people that He loves, the people that He will be sanctified in, - I, the God of Israel, I, the God of Whom Christ came for the children of Israel, spiritual Israel, to save them from their sins and to open this channel of mercy. You have just sung it (Gadsby's 973). This was true when Christ died; He was opening a channel of mercy. All that went before died in faith that when Christ came in perfection He would open that channel of mercy, and the water of life would flow to sinners, to the people of Israel, sinners, and bless them; and when the Lord Jesus came He came for that very purpose. He said to His earthly parents. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? I have come to do My Father's business, - redeeming blood, - that sinners might be blessed." "I, the God of Israel will not forsake them, cast them out." Perhaps some of you many times have used words and feared, and maybe when you have looked at others and seen that they have been favoured you have said, "Will the Lord ever be gracious to me? Before I come to the end, will the Lord ever mercifully look upon me?" Now the Lord says, "When I see that, when I hear those groans, when I hear those cries, when they are seeking for water and their tongue faileth for thirst, and they have had to look away and say, 'Christ is not there; no gospel there; no truth there;' and when the Lord has brought this word and those ways that open up the channels through which Christ manifests His truth, the Lord says, "I will hear them; I will hear their groans and the groaning of the

prisoner, and the crying of the needy, and I will arise and help." He does; and sometimes not only at the beginning of a work of grace. When John was in prison he felt forsaken, although he was the herald of Christ; he felt forsaken and alone, and the Lord Jesus had been some time without manifesting His favour; and you know what he did, - he sent two of his disciples: "Art Thou He that should come? or do we look for another? Am I deceived, or is it true?" And the Lord Jesus was very mindful of John, and He opened the river in that high place again. "Go and show John again the things which you have seen and heard; show him that I am the Christ; show him that the power of the gospel still goes forth, and blind sinners and lame sinners and dead sinners are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. You go and tell John, and that will cause him to know the truth that I have not forsaken him." And so the Lord says, "I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." And though unbelief may long molest, and so many doubts and fears arise, and the enemy assails, O, it is a mercy if we are among this people! You might say we are not in that enjoyment now; but if you have felt this, when the Lord mercifully appears, "I will open rivers in high places; I will do what no man can do." When He brought Israel out of bondage how He manifested His power, how He caused them to know that He hears! They came to the sea; they were in difficulties; the enemy was behind them, a fierce enemy, the sea was before them, and they felt as though they were cut off and forsaken, and they were needy and poor. They had no defence in themselves. But what did the Lord do? He opened the way of mercy, He opened the way of blessing; and the children of Israel went through on dry land. We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Which the Egyptians assaying to do," - they wanted to do the same as Israel, but they were not in need, they were not blessed, and they were drowned.

But the Lord says, "I will open rivers." My blessing shall come to high places where you never thought the Lord would come. I will manifest My power; I will cause My truth to be known; I will give that mercy and that fountain in the valleys, and cause them to flow. And when through the atonement of Christ, the fountain of life flows into the soul, it is a mysterious and wonderful work, and it proves it is the work of God because, in your fainting, failing condition where there seems to be no place of help, the Lord has come, how sovereignly! He did to Jacob; he was poor and needy, blessed of God, but he came very low when the message came, "Esau is come to meet you." To Jacob it seemed as though every covenant mercy had gone. If you know that, what a high place that was! It was a fountain of water opened, it was a fountain in the midst of the valley to him; that very place was made a place of mercy, a place of blessing. He blessed God then. He remembered there in some measure the truth, when he wrestled with the angel all night; he was poor and needy, his tongue failing for thirst, he had no help from man, he was alone with God. Then the Lord came to him and He said, "Let Me go." No, Jacob said, "I cannot; and He blessed him there." That was a place never to be forgotten. You can read it with others; and then you can come with me to a place and you can feel the power of the Lord in His mercy.

"I will open rivers," cause rivers to flow from My word and the preciousness of Christ to sinners; and where they are dark and dry, and their tongue faileth for thirst, then He looses the tongue, He causes it to speak forth. We sometimes hear it spoken, Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion." And that praise is from sinners who are poor and needy, and the Lord has thought upon them. "Yet," says one, "the Lord thinketh upon me; I was brought low, but He heard me; I felt as though He would not, but He did not despise my prayer."

What God has promised He will fulfil. You may feel He is that faithful God, He cannot lie, and if He has promised He will do it. He will come where you never expected, in some exercises of your soul, and maybe in some providence; and He will come in that, in that very place where you were thirsty and fainting and your tongue failing for thirst, and the Lord makes it a place of blessing and causes His mercy and life to flow into the soul. What Jesus said will take place, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink;" and I believe to the end of time God's word will be fulfilled. He has a remnant still, and they can testify. Many have been able to give a tribute of praise and say the Lord was faithful; He came in that dispensation and darkness; He came when I could not feel any comfort of hope, when my tongue failed for thirst, in such a sad condition; and the Lord appeared. He appeared for Martha and Mary. They were in a sad place: "If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." And when the Lord said, "Take away the stone," they said, "By this time he stinketh." But you know, they saw the power of His grace; the resurrection power of Christ was felt in their souls, and those godly women in their sad condition were to praise God for His mercy. And so He still comes. These high places where you never thought the Lord would come; He came to that sepulchre and blessed Lazarus, and blessed them, and made the power of His resurrection known, and fulfilled His promise, because He had said to them, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me shall not perish, shall not die. Believest thou this? When you come into that sad place I will hear. I will mercifully attend to those petitions, I will hear those cries, and I will come; I will hold out the sceptre as the king did to Esther when she came;" and you know her secret. I like those words that come before, when she says, "And so will I go in unto the king." It seemed death alone could come, and she ventured, she ventured in hope, ventured in the knowledge that there was a sceptre; and when you cry to the Lord even in the darkest place sometimes, and say, "There is mercy with Thee, there is a sceptre," it is not without some knowledge, friends. The queen went to the king knowing; although she feared, and had not been bidden to come, she knew He had a sceptre, she knew if he put that sceptre out, then she could speak to him freely. And there is a sceptre of peace, and when you go in your condition and say, "There is One in heaven's high court Who is able to do; whether He will or not I do not know, whether He will compassionate my case, but I will venture. I will go in unto the King, and if I perish, I perish." And then the Spirit of God draws, and fountains open, rivers; rivers that flow, that is, of His mercy, of His promises that He has made to sinners, which are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. He may not speak a word, but the promises are with power: "I will be with them; I will not forsake them; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."

The Lord makes over the promise of His truth; and in the midst of the valleys there will be fountains.

"I will make the wilderness pools of water." You say, "Lord, can there be any help?" Unbelief says, - well, I have felt like that man who said, "If the Lord should open windows in heaven might this thing be," when the people were in dire extremity. You remember the case. I have felt like that man. He was struck dead in the gate; and when the Lord strikes our unbelief dead, you know in that very place there was much provision. And so the Lord will make rivers in the wilderness. You have said, "Will the Lord ever bring us this pool of water?" Mercy has provided in the fulness of Christ that provision of His help, that strength to go from strength to strength. "I will do it." So there is a poor, needy sinner who will be able to testify the Lord is faithful. How firm a foundation He has laid!

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, He will not desert to his foes;"

foes within, those foes within your heart, suggesting that you will never come out of the wilderness alive, it will be death, eternal death.

"I will not, I will not desert to his foes.
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

I felt how certain it is. You dwell in a dry land, and you have looked and said, "My heart is dry, I have got nothing." You have looked into the word of God, and it is just letter, and dry; and when grace has been in exercise and you have desired that there might be something, and when it seems shut up and it is a dry land, you do not blame others then, but see yourself; and then the Lord comes; and then that sinner who dwells in a dry land has had to go to the Lord and has had to say, "Will there never be any opening up of truth? Shall I never receive the gospel? Will there never be any blessing? Shall I die without any comfort of hope?" The Lord says, "I will hear, and that dry land of your soul I will make a spring of water; I will do for that soul what I did for the woman of Samaria." The Lord said to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water:" and He said that water shall be in him a well of water springing up. From time to time it will spring up with power and life and knowledge, opening up more of what Christ is in His Person, His work, in all that He has done, all that He has promised, - springs of water.

They "shall spring up unto everlasting life." When some portion is a real spring, when you have tasted, handled and felt of the word of God, what has it done? It has assuaged your thirst, comforted in hope, given a little enjoyment of truth, enabled a sinner to say God is faithful; like David; in all his path that he walked, when he came to the end he was brought to this place. "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant," - and this is part of the covenant, it is "Ordered in all things, and sure; this is all my desire, all my salvation, although He make it not to grow." What a mercy if your portion and mine is in this chapter, if the Lord by His Spirit has so dealt with us each

that we cannot be satisfied out of Christ! Nothing else will do. If every spring is dried up, and when we have dried up and are brought into soul poverty and need, our tongue failing for thirst, and we seek and cry, what a mercy if we can say, "The Lord has heard my petition; the God of Jacob has done for me what I desired." "For this child I prayed," Hannah said, "and it has been fulfilled." God has been faithful to supply that need; and what He does in the earnest of it here He will do in the fulness of it in all eternity.

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