

Christian Retirement

Part 58

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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ON THE LIVING WATER

How beautifully instructive is our Savior's conversation with the woman of Samaria, while sitting, wearied with his journey, on Jacob's well! What an example to his followers does the benevolent Redeemer exhibit, of condescension to ignorance, and of affectionate improvement of trivial occurrences to the spiritual good of all around us! The human mind, until taught of God, is equally blind, whether clothed in the imposing vestment of a Jewish doctor, or in the simple attire of a Samaritan female. Nicodemus was as ignorant respecting the nature of the new birth, as this poor woman was of the living water.

Human learning, though called theological, can never make us savingly acquainted with the first principles of the Gospel of Christ. Many an unlettered peasant may be a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom; while the learned doctor, filling the professor's chair, may be a very babe in the things of Christ. This view is humiliating to the pride of man, and should teach us to call no man master upon earth; but in child-like simplicity to sit at the feet of Jesus, and drink of that living water, which alone can purify and refresh our souls.

How delightful is the thought, that Jesus, the Savior and friend of sinners, is the giver of this spiritual blessing! "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says unto you, Give me to drink, you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water." How consoling the truth, that this living water shall be in all his believing people as a well of water, not drying up as earthly springs too frequently do when most needed; but daily rising higher and higher, until it issue into everlasting life.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, whoever drinks of this water (the well of Jacob) shall thirst again; but whoever drinks 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."

The joys of earth are only top springs. Many are delighted with these bubbling waters in seasons of outward prosperity. But in adverse times, when comfort is most needed, they become wells without water. Where, then, must the poor worldling go to quench his thirst? He must go to Jesus. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

The Holy Spirit is this living water, whose sacred streams can satisfy the most thirsty soul with joys which strengthen and purify the heart. He who drinks of this fountain, shall thirst no more as once he did. His thirst shall now be after righteousness; after the enjoyment of God himself. Blessed thirst! Oh! that I could feel this thirst increasing every hour; and every hour betake myself to this spring.

But what says the Savior? It shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Happy experience, when sensibly enjoyed! Have I this precious internal spring? Have I the Spirit of Christ? This forms the grand indisputable evidence of being a child of God, an heir of glory. Were the whole world my own, I could find no real happiness separate from Jesus Christ. There are indeed many counterfeits which bear the image and superscription of happiness, but all shall finally be detected, and leave their possessors miserably poor.

"Man who is born of a woman is of few years and full of trouble." Such is the portrait which Job draws of human life. But man was created happy, and would have remained so, had not Satan beguiled him into sin. Yet being "full of trouble," he naturally desires rest. Hence all men are in quest of happiness, and every one expects to find it. Many fancy that they have obtained it, and wrap themselves up in this fond conceit, until death hurls them headlong down the precipice into the burning gulf below!

While we view the many millions of mankind in search of some imaginary good, and greatly thirsting after it, how gracious, how condescending is the invitation of mercy, to the only fountain of true felicity; "Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters; and he that has no money, come you, buy and eat; yes come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." A world thirsting after happiness, but mistaking its true nature and source, is here most lovingly, most freely invited to accept of the inestimable blessing. "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?" is the powerful appeal to the hearts and consciences of sinners.

Much labor and expense are bestowed towards obtaining some supposed good; but being altogether of an earthly nature, it cannot nourish the soul, or satisfy its enlarged desires. Hence follows this gracious declaration; "hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you; even the sure mercies of David."

Oh! what rich display of grace is here. Well may the Almighty say, "my thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways." But it does not stop here. The voice of mercy still cries, "seek the Lord while he may be found; call you upon him while he is near;" evidently implying that a time is coming when he will not be found; an hour is approaching, when he will not hear. He is now waiting to be gracious, and may be found in Christ upon a mercy-seat, to bless every returning penitent. But if the day of grace be once ended; if death find the sinner still impenitent and unbelieving, the Lord will he found indeed, but found seated on a throne of judgment; and the wretched criminal will be driven far from his presence, never more to hear the sweet call of slighted mercy.

In this beautiful invitation to a world of sinners, grace reigns through righteousness; for it is added, "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." A sweet assurance of joy and peace is given to every sinner, who thus, through grace, turns unto the Lord with a true penitent heart and living faith; "he shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

Here is nothing but joy and rejoicing!—Oh! what a precious salvation! The ransomed soul shall be filled with joy and peace through believing. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repents." The ministers of Christ ardently long after and rejoice in the conversion of sinners. "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the affections of Jesus Christ." "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Such were the feelings of Paul and John.

The whole church rejoices to behold the wandering sheep brought safe into the fold; and heartily welcomes the chief of sinners, when he becomes the loving disciple of her beloved Lord. "All they knew was that people were saying, 'The one who used to persecute us now preaches the very faith he tried to destroy!' And they gave glory to God because of me." Galatians 1:23-24. So wrote Paul to the church in Galatia, respecting his reception by the apostles at Jerusalem.

The Almighty himself thus addresses his beloved people, redeemed through the blood of Jesus; "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love; he will rejoice over you with singing." Thus the Lord will bless the righteous, and with favor will he compass him as with a shield. The certainty of all this blessedness is declared; "My word that goes out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing, whereunto I sent it."

The glory of God is also secured; "Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briars grew, myrtles will sprout up. This miracle will bring great

honor to the Lord's name; it will be an everlasting sign of his power and love." Isaiah 55:13. This glorious change from sin to holiness, which is figuratively expressed by the thorns and briars, the cypress and the myrtle, shall be for a sign, an everlasting sign of the divine origin of the Gospel of Christ, and for a perpetual memorial of the converting grace of God.

Oh my soul! after what object are you thirsting? After what are your desires tending? Look around you, and see if any created good can satisfy those desires? Be assured that nothing can make you truly happy, but an interest in the blood of Jesus; nothing but a union to him by faith; nothing but a sweet experience of his pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace; nothing but an entire and unreserved dedication of yourself to him who gave himself for you. Oh! then, cast yourself now at the feet of a loving Savior. He will not spurn you from him, though you deserve to be cast into the nethermost hell!

Oh! may I daily thirst for these blessings. I would now draw near to the fountain of living water. May I freely take of you, Oh Spirit of consolation. By your sacred influence may I feel my soul refreshed and strengthened, while journeying to the land of which sovereign grace has said, I will give it you.

Blessed Jesus, I am not worthy to approach you. But here is my encouragement; that those only are invited, who have "no money;" no merit of their own; and I have none. Your righteousness is my only boast and plea. You came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. How gracious, then, is this Gospel call to a world of perishing sinners! "Ho every one that thirsts come to the waters." Oh! that all may hear and embrace the offered mercy.

Hasten the glorious period, when all shall come with singing unto you; when the church shall lengthen her cords, and strengthen her stakes; yes, when the whole, earth shall be filled with your glory. Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly. Amen.

You fountain of eternal life,
Whose streams forever flow,
Spring up within my waiting heart,
And all your bliss bestow.

Refresh my soul with living streams,
Until holy fruits abound;
A chosen tree of righteousness,
On Zion's sacred ground.

Come, Holy Spirit, your grace impart;
Put forth your quickening power;
Vain is the hope of bliss below,
The pageant of an hour.

Like tender flowers, we open the bud,
And greet the morning ray;
But before it is noon we droop and fade,
The creatures of a day.

Yet on this little day of life
What mighty things depend;
Eternal torments, or the joy,
That knows nor bound nor end.

Then haste, blest Spirit, to my breast,
Renew my guilty soul;
Speak peace, you blessed Comforter,
And make the wounded—whole.

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