

HOLY WATER

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“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.”
John 4:14.

ALL things that are of earth are unsatisfactory. Our spirit craves for something more than time and sense can yield. Nothing which comes of earth, even if it should yield a transient satisfaction, can long maintain its excellence. Pointing to the water in Jacob's well, our Lord said, “He that drinks of this water shall thirst again.” And therein He took up His parable against all earthly things, whether they are fame, or riches, or fleshly pleasure, or anything else beneath the sun. He that drinks at these shallow wells shall not quench, but thirst, or if, for a time, he imagines that he has done so, he will be deceived and, in a little season, the old craving will return. That which is born of the flesh is still flesh at its best—and all flesh is grass and the goodness thereof is as the flower of grass—the grass withers and the flower thereof fades away and in like manner fades the flesh and its glory.

The religion of the *flesh* shares in the common fate. If it has a man's own self for its author, his own energy as its impulse and his own opinions for its creed, it may, for a little while, flourish like the flower of the field, but the wind passes over it and it is gone. Waters from his own cistern may stay a man's desires for a while, but before long he must thirst again. Nothing can abide forever but that which comes from the Eternal One. Not from the will of man, but from the work of the Holy Spirit, all truly satisfying religion must proceed. It is the prerogative of the Gospel of Christ to thoroughly satisfy the soul of man and to do this abidingly. The chief object of our present discourse is to set forth that most admirable fact.

I. Finding that it greatly helps the memory of the hearer if the preacher keeps to the words of the text, I shall do so, and note, first, that we have here before us THE WAY OF OBTAINING TRUE RELIGION. “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” It is clear from this that *true religion must come to us as a gift*. The water that I shall give him, says Christ. There is no suggestion as to digging deep with much learning into the deeps of mysterious truth to find the water for ourselves. This priceless drink is freely handed out to us by our Redeemer, without our bringing either bucket or line.

There is no hint in the text that we are to purchase the life-giving water. It is presented to us without money and without price. There is no allusion to a certain measure of fitness to qualify us for the drink—it is purely a gift to be received by us here and now. Our Lord Jesus told the woman that had she known the gift of God she would have asked and He would have given. Sinner as she was, she had only to ask and have! There is no other way of obtaining eternal life but as the free gift of Sovereign Grace. The Divine Life is not in us by nature. It cannot be produced in us by culture, nor infused into us by ceremonies. Nor can it be propagated in us by natural descent—it must come as a blessing of infinite charity from Heaven—unpurchased, undeserved.

Wisdom cannot impart it. Power cannot fashion it. Money cannot buy it. Merit cannot procure it. Grace, alone, can give it! If men desire wages they may earn them beneath the mastership of sin, for, “The wages of sin is death.” On the side of God all is of Grace, for, “the gift of God is eternal life.” Whoever, then, is to be saved, must be saved by the boundless charity of God. In other words, by the free gift of the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is an elementary Truth of the Gospel, but it needs to be told in every sermon, for man is so hostile to it and the natural mind so runs upon *merit* and its own boasted *doing*, that man will not understand the doctrine of Salvation by Grace though it is as plain as the sun at noonday.

Observe, next, that *true religion is a gift from Jesus*. Our Lord says, “the water that I shall give him.” The only true religion in the world is that which comes from Jesus Christ. And the only realization of that true religion in your own

soul is by receiving it from the hands of Christ, for it is, in all its details, connected with Him. Do we want peace of conscience because sin is forgiven? We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins! Do we desire deliverance from the power of sin within us? We can only overcome by the blood of the Lamb! Do we need teaching? The best instruction comes from His lips! Do we desire an example which will inspire us to obey the teaching? He is our pattern, yes, “He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” He is our All in All!

If any man dreams that he has a God-given religion, he is in deadly error if there is not the mark of the pierced hands upon it. That peace which does not come to us sealed with the blood of the Mediator’s sacrifice is a false peace! Your soul is deceived with the semblance of satisfaction, but its thirst will soon be upon you again, like an armed man, unless you have been drinking from the fountain opened upon Calvary. Drink from the cup which Jesus fills! Do not think that satisfying waters can be drawn from any well but Himself!

True godliness is next described in the text as *a gift which must be received*. “Whoever *drinks* of the water that I shall give him.” It is received, you see, not merely into the hands, but inward. When we drink water it enters into us, saturates us, becomes a part of our being and helps to build up the fabric of our body. Even so we must receive Jesus Christ into our innermost self. We must not profess to believe with the creed of the head while the heart remains in unbelief. We must not pay to our Lord the empty compliment of praising His Character while we reject His mission. We must so trust Him, depend upon Him, love Him, follow Him, yield ourselves up to Him, live upon Him and in Him that it may be clear that He has entered into and become one with us forever! We need Christ *in* us—Christ in the secret fountain of our being. The Holy Spirit must create in us a new heart and a right spirit—and then dwell in our renewed nature as a king in his palace.

My Brothers and Sisters, be sure that this is so with you. Be not content with the outward name which is no more a part of yourself than if it were a label hung about your neck. Be not satisfied with mere externals which do not enter into the heart. Never rest till you have the Divine Life within you. We need not the faith which prates and talks, but the faith which eats the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks His blood. What we need is not Jesus Christ pictured on the wall, nor His name on the lips, nor words about Him from pious books! We need the Lord Himself received into our heart—“Christ in you the hope of glory.” Oh for Christ living, dwelling, reigning within our entire nature, looking out from our eyes, speaking by our lips, blessing the poor by our hands, going about doing good with these feet and magnifying God in these mortal bodies as once He did on earth in His own body! This, then, is true religion—Jesus Christ received by an act of faith into our inner-most soul.

Dear Friend, have you got this? Before we go an inch further let every man and woman among us press this question home. Do I know what it is to drink of the life-giving stream which Jesus Christ bestows?

II. We notice, in the second place, THE SATISFYING POWER OF TRUE RELIGION. We are told in the text, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” *Grace relieves our soul-thirst as soon as it is received*. In Eastern countries the idea of thirst is much more vivid than it is with us. Owing to the great heat and the dryness of the atmosphere—and the frequency with which thirst *really* happens to men—they feel it to be one of the most severe physical sufferings.

To the Oriental, thirst would be a forcible metaphor of the longing of an awakened soul. Let it be so to us. A man, once startled from the sleep of sinful indifference so as to look about him and to ask *what* he is, and *where* he is, and where he is *going*, finds in his spirit an eager craving. He scarcely knows what it is, nor what will satisfy it—but urged on by an insatiable sense of need, he searches after a something which will fill what Dr. Watts has very aptly called the “aching void” within him. He tries the virtue of riches, but gold and silver cannot fill a soul. He seeks after knowledge, and it is no mean pursuit, but science has no well from which a weary spirit may be refreshed. “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”

It may be he dazzles his fancy with fame, or charms his eyes with beauty and his ears with music, but, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, thus says the Preacher.” And the Preacher’s verdict finds a thousand echoes in experience. There is a horseleech in human nature which continually cries, “Give, give!” And had it all the stars for a possession, it would still cry for more, for like the sea it cannot be quiet. Man, though he knows it not, needs his God. He needs reconciliation to his offended Maker, and until he gets it, he cannot rest. He is like “a rolling thing before the whirlwind”—he is tossed up and down like a thistle-down in the breeze. And like Noah’s dove, he finds no rest for the soles of his feet.

He who believes in Christ has received the Atonement and finds in it an at-one-ment with God—the great quarrel is ended! His Nature is also changed and now he seeks after that which God delights in—and in the Lord his soul is satisfied. He has the new birth. He belongs to the family of God. He begins to understand Divine realities and to see them, taste them, handle them and to find rest for his soul in them. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Faith in Jesus quenches our souls’ thirst and *it continues to do so*. This is the beauty of it. He that drinks of the water from earth’s wells is refreshed, but after a little while the effect of his drinking is gone, and he thirsts again.

But he that drinks of the water that Christ shall give him, shall never thirst. That one draught has created in him an inexhaustible fountain of supply which will satisfy his mouth with good things, so that his youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s. Though the thirst will forever strive to return, yet shall it be always met by the well within which shall spring up into everlasting life! Accept the Gospel of Christ, poor thirsty Heart, and you have accepted a satisfaction which will endure as long as you endure! Glory be to God that we have such living water to present to you in Jesus Christ’s name this morning!

Here is the secret cause of this abiding satisfaction—it continues because Divine Grace continues. Our Lord adds, “The water that I shall give him *shall be in him*.” The water drank today has its uses and is gone. It serves our present purpose and disappears. But he that drinks of the water which Jesus gives, has it always in him and hence he always enjoys a freedom from spiritual thirst. Whatever effect the Grace of God produces today, it will be capable of producing the same tomorrow—and other effects as they shall be required—for it retains its potency and the same cause will produce the same effect. O the matchless draught, which never leaves the man who drinks it, but remains in him as part and parcel of his noblest self, forever contenting his whole nature and causing rivers of living water to flow out of him, even the Spirit which those who believe in Jesus have received! Well may every instructed heart pray, “Lord, give us this water.”

Now this final and abiding removal of thirst by a draught of Grace, which remains in the man, *is a matchless blessing and averts a thousand ills*. It is often useful to measure our mercies by their negative aspect, asking ourselves, What should we have been without them? O Sinner without the living water, you are thirsting now—or if not thirsting, a deadly stupor is upon your soul—which is worse than thirst! How mournful is your condition! And yet, my Brother in the Lord, you would be in the same pitiable case had you not believed! You would be cast into the same lethargic sleep with which sin steeps the senses of your fellow man! Or had you been awakened out of that sleep, you would be in bondage to fears, dreads and innumerable horrors!

Sin would have been as a burning fever to your nature and all the joys of earth a mockery to your anguish. You would have been crushed beneath an awful sense of present wrath and a deadly fear of coming judgment! Perhaps, also, at this time you had been going from bad to worse, trying to satisfy your cravings with the delusions of Satan, poisoning your heart by drinking down what seemed to be water but turned out to be liquid fire, inflaming your passions with intoxicating vices and preparing in your heart a fame which shall burn even to the lowest Hell! Your fleshly lusts might at *this* hour have been steeling your spirit more and more with a dreadful hate of God and proud disdain of His Gospel. Ah, perhaps at this moment you would have been in Hell—where thirst rages both in body and in soul forever—and not a drop of water can be found to allay the torment.

But now you have drunk of what Jesus Christ has given you and you are satisfied and at peace. Blessed be the Lord for this! The ills averted and the good bestowed you can not sufficiently calculate, but you can, today, adore that dear hand which bestowed this matchless draught upon you. I think I hear someone interpose the observation that there is still in the Believer a thirst. I answer, yes, it is true, and blessed be God for it! We sang right well in our hymn just now—

*“I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share.
Your wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should find my pleasure there.”*

The moment a man knows Christ, he thirsts to know more of Him. But there is a very great difference between the thirsting of horrible unappeased longings—and the thirsting of unutterable joy which longs to continue—and of burning love which gladly would know more and more of its adorable Lord.

The inward desires of the Christian after more holiness, more communion with God and more love to Christ are not so much a thirst for Grace as the bubbling up of the well of spiritual life which is in the soul already! I would not wish to be in such a state as to be satisfied with myself, or satisfied with my attainments. Satisfied with Christ, the Christian always is. But altogether and entirely satisfied with his own realization of the blessings which Jesus brings—so as to desire no more—I think he never will be till he gets to Heaven! Have you never heard of that great painter who, one day breaking his palette and putting aside his brush, said to a friend that he should paint no more, for his day was over. And when his friend inquired why he had come to that singular conclusion, he said, “Because the last painting which I executed perfectly contented me and, therefore, I feel that the high ideal which led me on has departed and I shall succeed no more.”

It is so. There is in every man who is a master of his art a high ideal after which he strains. And the fact that he has that ideal ever above him is one of the tokens of his lofty genius. I suppose that Milton, as a poet, never reached the “height of that great argument” as he desired to reach it. When he had composed a portion of his wondrous epic he would feel that his thoughts were above his words and that he had an inner, unshaped conception towering higher than his actually formed and shaped thoughts. He was a poet because that was the case. Other rhymesters are not poets because their verses *please* them.

That man is holy who mourns the unholiness of his holiest deeds—and that man is no longer holy who conceives himself to be without sin and to have reached the highest attainable excellence. The mariner who has reached the Ultima Thule and dreams that he has cast anchor hard by earth’s utmost boundary, where the universe comes to an end, will never be a Columbus. Up with your anchor, my Brother, for there are wide seas beyond and a land of gold across the main! Self-satisfaction is the grave of progress! He who thinks himself perfect is never likely to be so. Brothers and Sisters, shun the spirit of self-content! Whatever doctrinal views you may hold as to the higher life, I will not dispute with you. But I practically beseech you to shun the spirit which lulls the heart into soft slumbers by the music of spiritual flattery.

Whoever you are, I make bold to say that you are not all you should be, nor all you can be. There is a blessed hunger and thirst after righteousness—a panting after God as the hart pants after the water brooks—which still abides in the Christian. But it is in no degree akin to the thirst which is mentioned in the text. Grace in the heart gives rest, peace, joy and holy calm of soul. It satisfies our cravings and fills our largest desires—and all because by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit it daily enables us to realize Jesus and God in Jesus. What fullness there is in Him—

*“In want, my plentiful Supply;
In weakness, my almighty Power;
In bonds, my perfect Liberty;
My Refuge in temptation’s hour;
My Comfort ‘midst all grief and thrall,
My Life in death, my All in All.”*

III. Having noticed the way of obtaining true religion and the satisfying effect of it, we will now observe ITS ABIDING CHARACTER. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” There is a theory of religion which supposes that a man may be regenerated and yet may so depart from the Lord that the inner life may become extinct. And I have met with persons of whom I have been told that they have been born again three or four times—that after experiencing regeneration they had fallen from Grace altogether—and yet had been renewed again unto repentance.

I must confess I have not believed what I have been told, for it is contrary to those many Scriptures which declare that “if these shall fall away it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance,” for, “if the salt has lost its savor wherewith shall it be seasoned?” My heart believes, and as I read the Scriptures I believe it more and more, that where a good work is begun by God, He will carry it on and that the new life bestowed upon us is an *incorruptible* seed which lives and abides forever, so that, “the righteous shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.”

Notice how the text describes the matter. “The water that I shall give him *shall be in* him—not *of* him, not upon him, not around him—but *in* him—and hence it cannot be lost. You know how we use that expression. Here is a man trying to write poetry. (Ah, how many are guilty of that folly)? But it is not *in him* and it cannot come out of him. So he

rhymes his nonsense, but a poet he never becomes. But if a man has it in him, who can take it away? Another sits down to paint. But if it is not in him, he becomes eminent in the school of Van Daub, but reaches no further—it is not *in* him—but if in him who shall deprive him of the gift?

True religion is, however, more than a faculty, it is a new life. And so it is even more abidingly in the man than my illustration sets forth. The poet may be despoiled of his goods. He may be deprived of his liberty. He may be shut up within iron bars—but he still sings—you cannot rob him of his poetic faculty, for it is *in* him. The artist may scarcely be allowed a ray of light in the dark dungeon into which he is thrust. But he follows the lone sunbeam around his prison wall and works by its light, for his art is *in* him. We all agree with the remark that it is better to give a lad an education than a fortune, for the one he carries in him and cannot lose, but the other may soon be gone, since it is no part of himself. That part of our inheritance which we carry *in* us is beyond the thief's cunning and the tyrant's power.

If we have the Grace of God we shall have it still, for Jesus says—"it shall be *in* him." Blessed be God it is not in our frail body nor in our feeble mind, but in our Heaven-born *spirit*—and so it is in that part of our nature which Death, itself, cannot cause to die—which no power on earth is able to touch. If religion were a garb it could be laid aside. If it were a rite, its efficacy might cease. But since it is a *life*, a vital principle, an essential part of our new nature and is interwoven with the warp and woof of our renewed manhood, it is ours eternally! Christ has said it, and we believe it, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him," and in us it shall be as long as we live!

Our Lord also promises that this water shall be in the man, "*a well of living water.*" It shall always remain in him as an operative *force*, full of freshness and life. It shall not be there like water in a cistern which may gradually evaporate and cannot have the freshness of spring water. Nor as a stagnant pool which becomes useless and even pestilential to all around. It shall not even be as water forced into our houses by pressure—it shall have a springing up power of its own! It shall be as permanent and changeless as Jacob's well which was there in the Patriarch's day and is there, still, as full as ever! It shall be forever new, yet ever the same. It shall have an energy and force in it which shall cause a perpetual uprising in the soul.

Like the village brook born at the springhead, our new life shall flow on, and as it flows it shall sing—

*"Men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever."*

As surely as the well continues to fill itself without machinery of man's invention, or a pump of earthly power, so surely shall the new life within the Christian continue to stir and move and bubble up. There will always be in it a vitality which comes from the quickening Spirit. Mechanical religion, which consists in ceremonies and observances, is a very stale thing. I should think, after seeing the mass, or any other Popish display some 50 times, it must become rather a dreary business, however prettily the show may be arranged. And the mere repetition of a liturgical service, without heart, with the same words and tones, must become very monotonous. Certainly extempore prayer and the most varied service is heavy enough when the soul is taken out of it.

Anything which has not *spiritual* life in it becomes, in due time, insipid, flat, wearisome. As well be a blind horse going round in a mill as the performer of religious acts without the inner life. Coming to this place, sitting in these seats and listening to me may soon become a piece of mere clockwork to you if your hearts are not alive towards God. How very different is worship in Spirit and in Truth! Real inward vitality is as perpetually beautiful as the sea which never appears to be twice alike, though it is always the same. Or like the rising of the sun, a perpetual novelty, forever exhibiting some new phase of God's Glory. It is a joy for me to linger near a spring and mark the widening circles, the countless wavelets, the sparkling ripples and the translucent streams which, in their perpetual variety and laughing joyousness, are the very image of youth and freshness.

True religion is like a well because it is independent of its surroundings—it flows in summer and in winter. The pond overflows because there has been a shower of rain, but the deep well is full in the drought and the villagers flock to it in the driest season, for they never knew it to fail. Its secret sources are too abundant to be affected by a few weeks of parching heat. Would you go in search of them, they are far away on yonder cloud-capped hills, where the river of God, which is full of water, empties itself into reservoirs which the Lord has dug. "I will look unto the hills from whence comes my help," says the Christian. He directs his expectations to the all-sufficiency of God and sings, "All my fresh springs are in You."

He knows that it is the Lord who “sends the springs into the valleys which run among the hills.” The Believer is independent of his outward surroundings. He is not exalted by riches, nor crushed by poverty. He trusts not in man whose breath is in his nostrils, for in which he is to be accounted. Nothing earthly can feed or famish the Divine Life in man and even the visible means of Grace are not absolutely necessary to it, for concerning them it may be said, “man shall not live by bread alone.” Should a Christian be cast into a heathen land, or cared to live where the Truth of God has fallen in the streets, and zeal is dead, and corruption abounds, he is greatly tried—but still the inner well springs up because his faith has tapped “the deep which lies under”—and he draws his supplies from the Infinity of God—not from outward ordinances.

Elijah is strong amid idolaters and Paul’s faith is vigorous on board ship among heathen, just as wells are found in places where all around is arid as a desert. Elim was in the wilderness, not in the king’s garden. And many a Believer is found in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. God is Infinite and All-Sufficient—and the man whose sources lie in the All-Sufficient One receives of His fullness! When natural religion and fleshly excitement are gone, the faith, hope and joy of vital godliness manifest the dew of their youth. Alas, how often is the contrast seen! Do I not know some who were converted under a very earnest preacher and as long as they heard *him* they remained in their apparent godliness? But when he was gone, what became of them?

I enquired the other day as to the permanent results of a certain revival which, at the time, I hoped was a genuine one. Some two or three hundred were added to a certain Church, but the pastor left and I asked his successor whether the converts remained. He replied, “I cannot give a good account of them. Very few are with us now.” That is not a rare case. I have other instances within my knowledge where Churches have been revived into absolute annihilation! The balloon has been filled till it burst! Warmed up into a furnace heat by tremendous blasts of excitement, a cold of corresponding intensity has set in when the heating apparatus has consumed its fuel. Not a word have I to say against *real spiritual* revivals, but I warn you excitable people that *principle* is the main matter, not *passion*.

Give me a man who does not depend upon a preacher, nor drink in his inspiration from warm-hearted friends and crowded meetings—but has inward, vital experience by which he knows the Lord for himself—and has had personal dealings with a *personal* Savior! Such a man will follow the Lamb though every preacher should die and every outward ministry should be struck dumb. The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit rises superior to all disadvantages, like a spring which cannot be kept under, do what you may! Our engineers and builders know how hard it is to bind up the earth-floods from overflowing—and the spiritual floods are yet more unconquerable!

It is wonderful how springs will bubble up in places where we least expect them. The great Sahara Desert will, no doubt, be made a very easy country to traverse and, perhaps, may even become a fertile plain, from the fact that there is water everywhere at no great depth below the surface—and when it is reached an oasis is formed. The Government of Algeria has sent engineers into parts of the Sahara bordering on the French possession—and these men have bored the rock by Artesian wells and greatly astonished the natives, for in the wilderness have waters leaped out and streams in the desert! At the magic touch of the living water, palm trees have sprung up and an undergrowth of vegetation, so that the solitary places have been made to sing together.

When the Lord gives our souls to drink from the fountains of the great deep of His own eternal Love and to have a vital principle of Divine Grace within us, our wilderness rejoices and blossoms as the rose! Neither can the Sahara around us wither our verdure—our soul is as an oasis, though all around is barrenness! Happy is the man whose life is hid with Christ in God, for he shall be filled with all the fullness of God—

*“From You the overflowing spring,
His soul shall drink a fresh supply;
While such as trust their native strength
Shall melt away and droop and die.”*

When God shall fail, the Believer will fail, but not till then. On him He fits the blessing given to Joseph, securing to him the precious things of Heaven and of the dew and of *the deep which couches beneath*. Observers tell us, and we may have noticed ourselves, that wells are not always equally full, for verily earthly things must change and none of them are full types of the heavenly.

Springs which are never frozen in the coldest winter and never dry in the hottest summer, yet exhibit certain ebbs and flows and, even so, the Christian, because he is still in the body, is not always at his best by reason of infirmity and fault.

There are happy times when we overflow delightfully—and there are other seasons when we have to cry most anxiously, “Spring up, O well.” Yet, blessed be God, the well is always there and as it is never disconnected from its springs, it never utterly fails. Our Lord says the well shall always be in us and, therefore, we may exultantly cry, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Who shall destroy the life which is one with His?”

The notion that our Lord’s spiritual body is undergoing a constant change in the loss of its members and the growth of new ones is so strange—and so dishonoring to Him—that I must leave its defense to those who can tolerate it. I believe that no member of Christ shall be amputated from His body and, “not a bone of Him shall be broken.” He says, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” “Because I live, you live also.” He has said, moreover, “Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life.” But a life which expires is not *everlasting* and, therefore, we are sure that it will live on eternally. The principle implanted in us when we believe is an abiding one, for we were, “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.” If it is so, how can we perish? No, Brothers and Sisters, Grace will remain in us and the Lord will perfect that which concerns us.

The text further says it is a well which is *springing*, a well which never ceases to flow—upon which we will not dwell. We will only say this—that God works up to now, and works always—therefore the life of God in the soul is usually operative in some form or other. The great motives which set the Christian working at first are as forcible in his old age as in his youth. And his obedience to them is even more complete. Therefore he ceases not from spiritual activity. His soul bubbles up in prayer, praise, love, hope and joy forevermore. He must do the will of Him that sent him. He cannot but work out his own salvation, for God continues to work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. Thus all that happens to a Christian, overruled by the Grace of God, tends to keep him springing up.

Is he surrounded by the wicked? He feels it his duty to bear his protest the more vigorously. Is he in the midst of the righteous? He owns that in such congenial society he ought to do more for Christ. Is he poor? He feels that he had need be rich in faith to sustain his spirits. Is he rich? He knows that uncertain riches are certain temptations—and that he needs great Grace, both to escape the snare and bear up under the responsibility of his station. Thus even adverse things are made to help him! And even as the Nile overflows in the hot season because of the melting of the snows on the far-off mountains, so does the inner life. How all the more when we might have imagined it would be drawn dry.

The text adds, “Springing up *into everlasting life*”—not to *life*, merely, but to that life which is everlasting! I, for one, shall never be able to attach any meaning to the word *everlasting* but that of lasting forever! The Believer lives on forever and Divine Grace blossoms into Glory. The life of the saints on earth is of the same essence as the life of the saints in Heaven—they receive no new life when they enter into Glory—only that which they received in regeneration is purged from every hindrance and is developed to perfection! Our life below tends in the same direction as the heavenly life, for both flow towards God and seek His Glory and delight in fellowship with Him.

We have now within us the germs of the glorified character—a holy life, a humble life, an obedient life, a blessed life, we always have here—and such is the life of the golden city. Our life is sustained by the same power as the life of those in Heaven. “Because I live, you shall live also,” is the gift both of saints in Heaven and saints on earth. It is guaranteed by the same Covenant and if a child of God on earth can perish, a child of God in Heaven may, for anything I can see. The fidelity which will keep the blessed is the same fidelity which preserves us while here below. And if our life, which is hid with Christ, can fail, I know not what additional security belongs to a soul in Heaven. The whole text together gives us this full assurance, that if we have drunk of the water which Christ gives us, it cannot be extracted from us or fail to save us! It is a *living* well, and must spring up into everlasting life!

The practical outcome of it all is just this. Let each one answer this question—*where did you get your religion?* Does anyone reply, “I am of the religion of my father before me, and that’s enough for me.” Yes, that is what the old heathen chieftain said when he had one foot in the baptismal font. He turned round to the missionary and asked where his ancestors’ souls were. And when he heard that they had gone to Hell, he said he would not be parted from them. I see no sense in such talk! I suppose if your parents had been blind you would have put your eyes out. Or if they had been lame, you would have made yourself a cripple!

No, dear Friends, we should follow our parents so far as they followed *Christ*, but when they leave Jesus we must take another road! Where did you get your religion from? Is it of your own manufacture? Is it the creature of your own

power and will? Then it will come to nothing! Nothing is worth having as to everlasting life but that which comes from the hand which was nailed to the Cross—and there bought our redemption—and now freely bestows it upon us. The next question is, *what has your religion done for you?* Has it satisfied your heart? Does it bring rest to your soul? Has it quenched your thirst?

Now, there are many religions in the world which do not profess to do this. When nine persons out of 10 talk of what they call the Christian religion, their notion is that perhaps a man may know he is safe when he is dying. Perhaps he may get his sins forgiven in the last solemn article. But as to any idea of being saved *now*, they do not comprehend it—their religion does not deal with *present* salvation. How few rejoice in that text, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is”! How few can say, “Being justified by faith we have peace with God”! They think it presumption, for they are ignorant of the power of faith. Go to Jesus Christ then, dear Friends, and receive from Him the free gift of His mercy and you will say, “Lord, it is enough, my soul is satisfied.”

The next question is this—*Does your religion abide with you?* You had great joy in it once. Do you possess it *now*? Is it *in* you? That religion which you can lose, it might be well to lose at once so that you might be driven to seek a better! But that religion which you never can lose is the religion of Christ! Now for a straightforward question. Does your religion always dwell in you? I know some people whose godliness lies in their best hats. They put them on when Sunday comes round and then they are wonderfully religious! And when they get into a place of worship they look into the hats to which they owe so much—but when the new garments are laid by and the work-day hat is on in which they go to the city or the workshop—they act as badly as other men.

The Sunday bonnet and go-to-meeting dress make a deal of difference to some people. When the hymn book and the Bible are near at hand, they are devout. When the ledger and the day book are near, what a change comes over the scene! Genuine religion is *in* a man. You cannot lay it aside as the soldier may hang up his sword or put away his uniform—you carry it with you everywhere—it is your delight to do so.

Lastly, *does your religion spring up within your soul by the secret energy of the Spirit of God?* Do you feel emotions, longings, regrets and desires arising in you without any outward prompting? You do not pray by order, but because you cannot help it—you are in need and *must* pray. Nobody stands by and says, “Lament before God.” You groan because you *must* groan, and sing because you feel like singing! You pray continually because your soul’s needs are constant. And you praise frequently because your soul’s gratitude bursts forth like a mighty spring. Your obedience does not arise from a Law upon stone, but from a Law written on your hearts, from life in you, from heavenly instinct, from the sacred impulses of the Spirit!

“For me to live is Christ.” Happy is the man who feels the well within him bubbling up, so that it is in his very *life* to obey the Lord Jesus! God grant we all may drink of the living water for Jesus’ sake Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-John 4:1-42.

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