

THE WATER OF LIFE

"The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water."

John 4:15

You will remember that our Savior had been speaking to the woman of Samaria concerning living water. He had endeavored to catch her attention by using a metaphor to her work and her position. Water was uppermost in her thoughts and Jesus sanctified the element to His own gracious end. Sitting at the well's mouth, I think I can see His earnest face and note the woman's wondering eyes while He talked to her as she had never been spoken to before concerning water which caused a man never to thirst again.

At first the woman raised questions: the skeptical part of her nature took its turn and quibbled, and carped, and argued. "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep," and so on. Do you not see all the elements of the infidel in her? But she is in good hands, and soon she has passed from the period of questioning into that of petitioning, and she cries this time, "Sir, give me this water." She was still, I am afraid, very ignorant. She did not even understand her own petition. That is clear from the words which follow the text, "That I thirst not, neither come here to draw."

She was giving a material meaning to a spiritual utterance. She was thinking of the water that could moisten her lips, when Christ was speaking of that Living Water, His own Grace and love which touches the heart, and the heart only. Her eyes were dark but her face was turned the right way. And, best of all, Jesus was there, who can lead the blind in a way which they know not. It will be all well with her—you may leave her alone and think of yourselves.

I hope I am now conversing with some here who have gotten clear of this woman's ignorance and have passed away also, as she did, from the period of questions. You know best who you are and where you are, but I hope you are desirous to partake of the Divine Grace which saves. You have got away from raising difficulties. You have had enough of that unprofitable hair-splitting and cobweb-making. You feel that you get no good by constantly insinuating doubts as to the possibility of your salvation and questioning whether Christ is a Savior or not.

And so you are about to leave the skeptical business, and try another route. You are now arrived at the point of desiring, not, I hope, the terminus of the route, but only the first or second station. I am glad that you have come so far. If there is Grace to be had, you are saying, "O that I might have it!" If there is pardon, peace, eternal life—you believe all that Jesus Christ says of it and you want to possess it. You are stretching out your hands like the drowning man who is ready to catch at the plank.

Your desires are awake. Your better thoughts are no longer slumbering. You have broken away from indifference and obstinacy—you are now anxious and desirous to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ. It is to you that I wish to speak this evening, and I shall first take the text and try to use it to excite your desire still further by a description of the water spoken of in the text. Secondly, I shall try to assure your hearts by some remarks upon the likelihood of your obtaining this water. And then we shall close by urging you not to leave this House of Prayer until the prayer has been registered in Heaven, "Lord, give me this water; give me this water tonight!"

1. To begin, then, I am TO TRY TO EXCITE YOUR DESIRE BY A DESCRIPTION OF THE WATER SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT. Water is an essential element in the natural world. There is a spiritual world, in which describing we are obliged to use analogies taken from the natural world. And the Grace of God in the mental and the spiritual world is

just what water is in the natural world. You need water as a man. You must have it—on certain occasions it becomes an imperative necessity—you must drink or die.

You need Divine Grace as a man—not for your body—but for your soul, and it is imperative that you should have it or else your soul will first be in pain here, and then at death the pangs of remorse will seize it, and afterwards an everlasting thirst—an unsatisfied need will be the second death to you. The Grace of God is like water in no less than eight senses. But let me not alarm you. I will not weary you, be sure of that, for I long to win you and weariness will not serve my purpose. I shall only mention the eight parallels with a few remarks, and pass rapidly on from each one.

Water, first, is thirst-removing, and so is the Grace of God. The man who drinks water thirsts not. His bodily need is removed. The man who receives the Grace of God in his heart gets that which his nature is lacking, and his painful longings are over. Man by nature is so foolish that he does not know what his nature needs, but he feels that it needs something. Awakened men talk to themselves in this fashion, “I need—I do not know what I need—but I know I need something which the world cannot give me, which I cannot find within myself, which my fellow men cannot bestow upon me. I need something: O my God, what is it? Tell me what it is!”

Friend, if you are in this condition, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is just the thing for you, for in it the Lord not only tells you what you need, but He presents it to you! He tells you that you need His love, that if His Grace is shed abroad in your heart, and your sin is pardoned, and you are made to be His child and accepted through Christ Jesus, then will your soul say, “Now I have what I needed. Now I need no more—I can sit still and say, Blessed be God that my desires are full. The aching void which the world could never fill is now filled to overflowing, and my soul has what it was always needing though it did not know what it really needed. I can sit down now perfectly content!”

It is a grand thing for a man to be able to say, “I am satisfied,” but the genuine Believer in Christ can say that. “You have satisfied my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed as the eagle’s.” Believers in Jesus carry the pearl of content in their bosoms. Jesus takes away the restless spirit and gives us rest. Jesus is the door that fits the heart, and when He is near to us He shuts out the world’s cold and heat and gives us sweet content.

O ambitious Man, you that run after something and you cannot tell what it is that can gratify your immortal spirit, turn to the Cross! At the foot of it there springs a sacred fountain of soul-satisfying delight, and if you will but stoop and drink, your ambition shall be over and you shall want no more. There is satisfaction for the deepest longings of heart, and head, and conscience in the fountain which springs from the wounds of Jesus! Faith is the silver cup. Dip it into the overflowing stream and drink! O Holy Spirit, put the cup to my poor thirsty Brother’s lips!

Secondly, water is also life-preserving. In the wilderness, where there is no water, the lips becomes chapped. The skin is dried—the tongue is like a firebrand, and the mouth is like an oven—and the weary traveler must drink or die. O for a draught of water there! A bag of diamonds could not buy a flagon there! Priceless is the life draught. And far out on the salt, salt sea, with—

*“Water, water everywhere,
But not a drop to drink,”*

the mariner, though he may seek to satisfy himself with the brine around him, feels that it will be death sooner or later to him unless he can get some pure, clear, refreshing drops of water to drink.

Drop, you heavens in pity, or let some friendly boat see the castaways. Such is the Grace of God to the soul of man. The whole world over there is nothing that can save a soul apart from the Grace of God. Your good works can no more save you than the salt sea can give the sailor drink. Ceremonies can no more fill your heart with peace, and give it life, than the hot sand of the

wilderness can quench the thirst of the weary traveler. God must lead you to the river of Eternal Life flowing out of the Rock that was struck!

You must get Grace through Jesus Christ, or hope shall never dawn upon you—despair’s midnight shall be your everlasting portion where lost spirits wail out their undying lives in one endless death. O Soul, if you get God’s Grace, you shall never die! Do you believe this? If that Grace of God shall come flowing into your soul, you shall possess eternal life, an immortal principle which shall bid defiance to the grave and make you sing in the very jaws of death! He that drinks of this water shall live in Christ forever.

“He that lives and believes in Me shall never die.” “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” This Grace of God, then, is life-preserving, as well as thirst-quenching! Have you found it so? Friend, I cannot afford to let you hear me, and yet escape a squeeze or two. If you forget this sermon, it shall not be because I did not press you to remember it.

Water, in the third place, is filth-purging. Man seeks no more than to get to the stream to wash when he is defiled. Many and many a time in passing through a country, the poor traveler comes to a brook so clear that he can see his face reflected in it, and he stoops down and washes his brow again and again, and takes his bath and goes his way all bright and shining as though he had exchanged sorrow for gladness, and received the oil of joy for mourning! Now, the guilty sinner, and such are we all by nature, however foul he may be, has but to stoop down at the river of Eternal Grace and wash and he shall be clean!

This stream can take out spots which nothing else can remove. Our sin is of such a crimson dye, naturally, that it might incarnate the Atlantic before it should be washed away. But this Water of Life can do it—it takes away the stain of blasphemy and lust. It removes the pollution of theft and murder. All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto that man who comes to the Cross and trusts in Jesus. Whoever believes in the world’s great Redeemer shall find full and complete pardon for every offense that he has committed.

O try it, you blackest of the black, if you are here! You who have gone to the greatest extent of sin, cast your guilty soul into this fountain and see if you do not rise from it with your flesh like unto that of a little child, clean and pure, and not a spot remaining on you! This filth-removing is the Grace of God streaming from the Cross where Jesus suffered in our place the wrath which was due to us for our transgressions—

*“Calvary’s wonders let us trace,
Justice magnified in Grace.
Mark the purple streams and say,
Thus my sins were washed away.”*

Friend, can you do this by faith, trusting for pardon in the blood of God’s dear Son?

Water, again, is well known, very frequently, to be softening. There are some things which, when laid in water, soon lose their hardness and become soft and pliable. This water of the Grace of God, which it is my longing desire to commend to you, has a marvelous softening power. Adamant millstone—yes, the nether millstone, northern iron and steel—have been melted when laid to soak in this fountain. The hardest heart yields before the power of the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus.

I think I hear one of you exclaim, “That is good news for me! I know that Christ can pardon me, but I cannot feel my sin as I ought. I am such a stiff-necked sinner, so hardened, so perverse, I cannot feel my need as I would wish to.” Soul, if the Grace of God shall flow upon your heart it shall turn the stone, by a wondrous transformation, into flesh at once! There is no stubbornness which the Grace of God cannot overcome. What a blessed thing it is for the preacher that he has not to give his hearers soft hearts, nor even to find tender hearts in them to begin with! How

delightful it is for him to remember that he preaches a Gospel which works wonders—wonders even greater than the rod of Moses—for when with the Gospel we smite even a rock, penitential streams gush forth, and yet more—the rocky soul is itself dissolved under a sense of sin.

O that some Saul of Tarsus might be washed by this stream tonight! He would no longer be the enemy of God's Church, but would seek out some poor disciple to ask him what he must do to be saved. It is a heart-softening water. May the Lord give it to every one of us who have hard hearts remaining! Gladly would I bathe in it anew, that I might the more tenderly feel for you. Friend, will you never feel for yourself?

In the fifth place, this water has the property, like earthly water, of being fire-quenching. There is nothing like water, after all, with all your new inventions, for putting out fire. We run for the engines and turn on the main—what can we do better? But there are fires that burn within the human heart! Deep volcanic fires fed from the depths of Hell! Furious flames which roar within the inner man and soon roll over in torrents of sin—lava in his daily life! These are fires which never will be put out except by heavenly water.

Oh, that fire of lust! How many a man has been consumed by it! It has devoured him as the fire devours the stubble. But when the Grace of God comes, how soon that fire is dampened and even quenched forever! And there are other fires which burn in the soul—the fire of envy and of malice, the flames of anger and of unholy desire—how these will rage and glow until the Grace of God comes! I know it puzzles many a man to know how he could live without such-and-such sins. “Oh,” he says, “I could not live without them! I have fallen into the habit of them, and I must have them.” Ah, but you shall be made a new man, such a new man that if you were to meet your old self, you would avoid the wretch or struggle with him in deadly hand-to-hand combat!

Let me tell you, you will never be on good terms with your old self so long as you live. You will hate that old self of yours and it will be your daily desire to kill him. You will try to drive the nails through his hands and feet, and crucify and his lusts. Oh, mighty Grace of God that can put out the flames of sin! O Sinner, the very flames of Hell are put out by this Grace of God! I mean so far as the saved soul is concerned—for the soul that is washed in this fountain—there is no Hell in which God can punish it. How can He punish a pardoned sinner? How can he that is in Christ Jesus be cast into the flames?—

*“No condemnation now I dread,
For justice smote my Surety's head.”*

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” He that has Christ to be his Substitute is beyond all fear of Hell. He can look down into that dread abyss and feel that there is not a burning coal there for him, and that whoever may perish, yet he, being in Christ Jesus, can never die. Friend, have the fires in your soul met with this glorious Antagonist? Are the engines of Grace casting their floods upon your soul? Let conscience give its reply, and let it have your ear.

A sixth property is one that is not found in ordinary water, and that is that it is a spring-creating water. Wherever the Water of Life falls it makes a new spring which begins to bubble up directly. By this I mean that if the Grace of God enters into a man's heart it is an immortal principle, and, as the Savior says, “Out of the midst of him shall flow rivers of living water.” “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

What a great difference there is between a pool and a running spring! Frequently in crossing the Alps, when one has been very faint and thirsty, it has been a sweet rest to sit down by a running spring and wash one's face and feet, or bathe one's self in it. You may have walked till you are very footsore—you sit down to bathe your feet, and if you have found a mere pool, you will stir the bottom of it, and it will soon be very filthy—but when it is a running spring, you can sit and wash, and wash, and wash again, and if you do stir the sand at the bottom, the earth is all gone in a moment, because the water still comes bubbling up clear and fresh, and therefore it is always clean.

So it is with the Grace of God in a Christian: it never gets flat, and dull, and dead—and the daily pollutions and washing of our feet do not stain it—because it is a living spring and arises from those “fresh springs” which David sings about which he rejoiced to find in the Lord his God. It is very hard work to play the part of a Christian if you have not a spring within you. For a man to have to keep up, year after year, a profession without life, why, it must be slavish work! Do you think that I would come and take a seat in this place, or in any other place of worship, and occupy it merely because it was respectable to do so if I had no care for it? I would as soon be a slave!

Base is the man who even in his religion is the serf of tyrant fashion! To come up to the House of God because you love to be there, and to sing because you cannot help singing, and to unite with God’s people because “birds of a feathers” must “flock together” and you love to be among them—why there is something in that, something which tastes of reality and sincerity! He who has no great depths of godliness in his soul makes a bondage of religion. He lives the life of a dog and does not even get the crumbs from under the table as his portion. Mark you, Brethren, it is harder to preach without this spring than it is to hear without it, because if you have not a spring in you, you may go foraging this dead man’s books, and that other dead man’s stores to find a subject, but you will soon run dry.

But if God the Holy Spirit is a spring within you, you may remain full of the precious Truth of God, and pour it out so long as God shall give you utterance—and you shall not run dry! What a blessing it is when the Living Water makes a spring within the Christian! What a curse to be one of the stagnant ponds of formality exhaling the putridity of hypocrisy! Friend, where are you? I must have my hand on you again! What are you in this matter as in the sight of God?

Seventh, it is fruit-producing water. What fruit would there be upon the trees, what pasture in the meadows, what harvest in the field if it were not for the rain? Everything would be barren without water and even where there is fruit, if there is not, also, a fair share of water, what poor stuff it is! When I was in the country in June, and there were some heavy showers, I could not help thinking what good they were doing. There was the wheat just needing plumping out, and the rain came to fill it and to make the ears full. It might have been wheat, of course, without it, but the ear is likely to be more full of grain when the drought is gone.

So, Brothers and Sisters, we may produce some little fruit when we have but little Grace, but if we had more Grace, how that fruit would plump out! How would our fruit be more rich, and fat, and mellow! How would our service to God be improved and perfected if we had more of this fruit-producing water! You cannot serve God without His Grace. You cannot give Him true praise, nor true prayer, nor true service, nor anything that is acceptable unless He first shall give you of the rain of His Grace—Grace for Grace. “By their fruits shall you know them.” Friend, what fruit have you? O that Grace may turn the barren fig tree into a good fruit-bearing tree!

And lastly upon this point, it is Heaven-ascending water. You know there is a rule of this sort in hydrostatics, that water will rise to its own level. Not long ago I thought such things were gone out. I was riding along where the road was in a little cutting, and a spout was actually taken over the road to carry water from one field to the other, it was dripping fast upon the passengers and making an ugly place in the road.

Now they might easily have taken the little stream under the road and up again in a pipe, but I suppose when the spout was made it was not known to those who made it that water will rise as high as its source. Now, the Grace of God will rise as high as its source. If you and I have grace that began with us, it will never get higher than we are. If you have grace that the priest gave you when you were christened, it will never get higher than the priest. But if you get the true Grace of God which descends from Heaven, it will take you as high as the New Jerusalem from which it came!

High up in the Throne of God are the everlasting springs of Divine Mercy. At the foot of Divine Sovereignty it wells up a spring, clear as crystal, pure without a stain, and it flows down to earth, leaping down by the way of the Cross. And it will ascend as high as its Source. It will go up to the Throne again—that is where it came from—and it will rise to its own level and it will float you up

there with it. If, by the Grace of God, you have been taken up by the stream of Jesus' dying love, it will take you up to its own Source, and where God is there you shall be.

Because you have been made to taste, to feel, and to be saturated with the Grace that came from God, from a Divine Source, you shall also have a Divine portion forever. The rivers go to the sea because they originally came from the sea. Did not the sun kiss the sea and make it ascend to him in clouds, that it might descend in rain? And so all the rivers of Grace in us shall flow into the sea from where they came—the bottomless, shoreless sea of everlasting love—because that is the eternal Source and Fountain of them all! Clouds of suffering went up from the heart of Jesus to return to earth in showers of mercy for poor sinners. Friend, do you know anything about this in your very soul?

Now, I have thus spoken of the Grace of God which is revealed in Jesus Christ. I only hope that someone here may say, “I wish I were washed in it! I wish my thirst were satisfied with it! I wish that my soul were made to overflow with it! I wish that I might be lifted up to Heaven though its energy!” Oh, then, Soul, I am glad you have the desire! Turn it into a prayer and let the prayer be the text, “Give me this water!”

II. And now, with great brevity, indeed, we shall take the second point, that is, TO CHEER YOUR HEARTS WITH SOME REFLECTIONS UPON THE LIKELIHOOD OF YOUR GETTING THIS LIVING WATER. I am supposing, now, that you really want it. If you say, “Sir, give me this water,” you will have it. And I will tell you why I think you will have it—because, in the first place, I do not think that an ordinary man would deny another water. If I stood by a well, and you approached me, and said, “Sir, give me this water,” I should say, “As much as you like of it”

Who would not give water? It is the most common of gifts. Even in the East, with all the value that is attached to water there, the Savior mentions that as one of the most ordinary acts of benevolence. “Whoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his reward.” Who will deny another a glass of water?

Then note that according to our text, the giving of Saving Grace is to the great Redeemer no more than the giving of water to you! Grace is a priceless gift for you to receive, but to Jesus it is a delight to give it. If you give water, you have a little less water left—but if Christ gives Grace, He has not any Grace the less. He still has as much Grace in the inexhaustible fullness which dwells in His adorable Person. As the sun is just as bright for all its shining, and the ocean still full, notwithstanding all the clouds exhaled from it, so Jesus is as abundant as ever in pardoning mercy and saving power! I tell you that for Jesus Christ to be gracious is as much according to His Nature as it is for you and for me to be generous enough to give away water.

The blessing of poor needy souls is no labor with Jesus, no loss to Him, no tax upon Him. All the pain and cost He has borne long ago, and now to save the guilty is His reward in which He sees the recompense of His travail. Now, if in this place the Grace of God had been compared to gold, that metaphor would have suited well to express its value. But you would have said, “Who gives gold away?” But here it is compared with water—water which man freely gives—and which our Lord Jesus never denies to those who seek it of Him. I do not believe, then, if an ordinary man will give away water—and Christ compares His Grace with water—that He will let you say, “Sir, give me this water,” and then send you away without it! Friend, be not so unbelieving as to think that the Lord Jesus is ungenerous and unkind, but ask for the Living Water and it shall be given you.

Again, even if you would refuse water to some persons, I am very sure that you would not refuse it to a thirsty person. If you saw him panting and the hot sweat starting to his brow, and if he could scarcely speak, but had only strength enough to gasp out, “Sir, if you would but give me a cup of water, I would bless you for it with all my heart,” why, you would run and bring out the sparkling crystal and feel a great pleasure in seeing him drink. Would you not? I am sure you would!

Now, if you are a thirsty soul I am quite sure Christ will give you the Water of Life. He will give it to any that ask, for He refuses none—and to you He will give it so quickly that He will seem to give it twice over. He will not let you thirst in vain, for has He not promised, “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel 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.” “Oh,” says one, “how I desire to be saved! How I long to have Christ!”

You may have Him, then, for Jesus Christ never did deny a thirsty sinner, never did refuse to give of His substance to the poor, His clothes to the naked, or His medicine to the sick. He came on purpose to bless such. I say that in all likelihood you shall have the blessing if you will but pray earnestly, “Lord, give me this water.” No, more, there is a certainty of it! Another reason gives me comfort for you, and that is there certainly is plenty of it, for the Apostle John says he saw “a river of the Water of Life.” Now, nobody is afraid, when there is a deep, broad flowing river to draw from! Who fears to exhaust the Thames or drain the Danube by his thirst? Moreover, as John Bunyan reminds us, a river is free to everybody to drink.

The source of it is private. Many rivers rise in a park or private grounds, but the river itself is public. As soon as it becomes a considerable stream it becomes a public highway, and a universal water supply. It is free, it flows the way it wills. Rivers possess a sort of sovereignty—you cannot bid them flow in a straight course, or order them by rules of geometry. They will have their own sweet will. If the river chooses to go by one town and not by another, it will have its way! Who may try to stop it? But while it is sovereign in its course and direction, yet it is free for public use. The cattle come to drink and even a poor dog is not refused when he gets to the river’s brink. If he wants to lap and cool his feverish tongue in the dog days, who shall say no to him?

And you, poor Sinner, you shall find the Grace of God free to you, for there is enough of it—it is up to the banks—no, it overflows the banks, there is a flood of it! Such a flood that there never can by any possibility be any lack, though all men should come. Though 10,000 times 10,000 should come, there would still be found sufficient Grace in Jesus to meet the needs of all—for whom the Lord brings, the Lord can provide for in Christ Jesus. The Grace of God is sovereign in its choice and discriminating in its course, but still it is free to all thirsty ones who long to partake of its everlasting fullness.

I am comforted, also, by another thought, namely, that this river is on purpose for the thirsty. I am sure I do not know what there is mercy in the world for unless it is for those who need it because of their sin and misery. What could Christ have made an Atonement for except for sinners? It is not possible that the beloved Physician came all the way from Heaven to heal those who were well and needed no medicine! It is not likely that He opens His great granaries to feed the nations who have a harvest of their own! It must be that our Joseph has stored up the wheat for hungry perishing ones!

O you that need, come and welcome, for the Fountain is opened especially for you! It flows that such as you may come and drink. Friend, shall our invitations have no power with you? O Holy Spirit, make men willing in this the day of Your power! I feel sure, too, that you who seek the Lord will find His Grace because there never has been one refused yet. A dear Brother, who I believe is now present, told me that he owed his conversion in early life to hearing a sentence or two of a sermon from a man whose name he never knew but whom he heard preach standing on a log of wood on a village green.

He had never gone to listen to the Gospel anywhere, but happened to be straying through the village and he heard the man say that there never was a soul that sincerely sought God through Jesus Christ, but what ultimately, sooner or later, it was brought into a state of peace. And let me say to you all—it may sink into some heart and one day yield it comfort—it shall not be said by you in eternity that you sought the Lord and He would not hear you! I remember what comfort this gave to me when I heard my mother say that she had heard many wicked things in the world, but she never heard a man wicked enough to say that he had sincerely sought God through Jesus Christ and yet had been refused.

When I heard that, I thought I could say it, for I was confident that I had sought the Lord, but I had had no comfortable answer. But I have never said it. I have never had cause to say it, for before I could be driven to that state of despair I looked unto Him and was lightened, and so I am persuaded it shall be with you! There never was one refused who said, "Give me this water," and you shall not be the first!

To close this point, it is to Jesus Christ's glory to give of His saving mercy, and therefore be certain that He will not withhold it. It cannot make Christ more glorious to deny a poor sinner His mercy. It cannot be to His profit to shut His door in a seeking sinner's face. It is impossible that the bleeding Lamb should cease to be pitiful to poor bleeding hearts. By everything that can make the name of the great Physician glorious. By every pang of His soul on account of sinners I am persuaded that He will not deny you! Why, the more a physician cures, the greater is his fame! The more the Savior saves, the higher is His honor! The more Jesus Christ can bless, the more lofty will be the praise and the more exalted that mighty shout of "Hallelujah," that shall go up from 10,000 times 10,000 of sinners who have been washed in His blood!

Come, then, seeking Sinner! Come now, and by humble faith trust in the Mediator's sacrifice. Wipe those eyes of yours. Be of good cheer! Be bold in heart! He calls you! There is room at His table! The door is open! There is room in His heart! He died for those who rest in Him! If you wish for Christ, He wishes for you! If you long to go to the feast, He wants guests as much as you want the feast! Only trust Him! God help you to trust Him by His Spirit and you shall live.

III. The last thing was to be to urge you tonight, before you leave this house—but my urging will be of no service unless God the Holy Spirit owns it—TO URGE YOU TO PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE TEXT. A desire is like seed in the bag, but prayer sows it in the furrow. A desire is like water in the bottle, but prayer drinks it. Now I commend to you the prayer of my text—"Sir, give me this water." Begin then, your prayer by honoring Christ. Do not call Him, "Sir," but call Him, "Lord." She gave Him the highest title that her respect could accord. She did not know Him in any other capacity, so she called Him, "Sir."

Now call Jesus, "Lord," for you will get no mercy if you dishonor Christ. Think of Him as God's only Son suffering for sinners. Call him, "Lord." Can you do that? If you reject His Divinity, you shut yourself out of His kingdom! He must be owned as Lord and God as well as Savior. "Oh," you say, "I have long ago called Him Lord. I know Him to be Divine. I rejoice in the thought of His eternal power and Godhead. I would honor Him with all that I have." Well, then, you have well begun, but may Divine Grace make you go further!

Now in the next place, if you would pray this prayer aright, notice it, and confess your undeservingness. It is not, "Sir, sell me this water," but, "Sir, give me this water." Confess that it is a gift. You shall never have it otherwise. Away with your merit-mongering. Away with your trusting in your prayers, and your tears, and your sense of need! Mercy must be given or else you shall never have it. "Sir, give me, give me, give me this water. O Lord, give me Grace, or else I die! Give it to me of Your free mercy because You have promised to save the chief of sinners. Give it to me, Lord. I have done with boasting. I have done with the Pharisee's thanking You that I am not as other men are. I come with empty hands. I come naked, poor, and miserable! Give it to me! I have nothing to buy it with. Oh, give it to me without money and without price! Give me Your salvation!"

Friend, does your pride kick at this? Be wise, I pray you, and bow your neck to the yoke of Divine Grace. Take care, too, that you make it a personal prayer—"Lord, give it to me." Never mind your neighbors just now. Care for them after you are saved. Look after their salvation when your own is secure—but just now you have first to do with yourself. Your children? Yes, pray for them. Your relatives? Yes, consider them. But meanwhile, now it is yourself—your own proper self that is concerned. Do not think of the whole congregation. Think now personally of your own soul, and say, "Lord, give me this water."

I mean you, Mary. And you, Thomas. And you, John—let the prayer come from your own lips as distinctly being from yourself. As you sit or stand now in this House of Prayer, silently breathe the petition—“Lord, give Your Grace to me, even me.”—

*“Pass me not, O gracious Father,
Sinful though my heart may be.
You might curse me, but the rather
Even me. Pass me not,
O tender Savior!
Let me love and cling to You!
I am longing for Your favor.
When You come, call for me,
Even me.”*

Once more, I want you to offer this prayer in the present tense—not, “Give me this water tomorrow”—but, “Tonight give it to me, Lord, save my soul now!”

The worst of most of men is this—they want to be saved, but it must be when they die. You would serve the devil all your life and then cheat him of your soul at the last? Mean, miserable thought! If God is God, serve Him, serve Him now! And may the Lord have us in life as we hope He may have us in our death. “Give me this water.” But you are going out next Wednesday—that will be awkward! “Yes,” said some young woman at a revival meeting, who was in much concern, “but I am going to a ball tomorrow.” And so everything good was put off for that! But she dropped down dead at the ball!

God grant there may be no such cases of postponing here, lest we postpone ourselves into eternity where there are no acts of pardon past. May we have Christ now! We may not live to see tomorrow’s sun. Albeit that the sun is well-near gone down, yet the light of this evening may not have gone before our life may be ended. How near to death we stand, and yet we scarcely think of it! Right on the edge of our graves sometimes we are, and yet we sport and laugh as though we had a lease on life! You forget death, most of you. The cemetery is so far out of town but still you should not quite forget, for the hearse goes to and fro with awful regularity, and the Church bell that tolls is not rusty! And those words, “Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” are still familiar to the ears of some of us.

It will soon be your turn to die. You, too, must gather up your feet in the bed and meet your father’s God. God grant that you may then be found right with Him. Little do I know for whom these sentences may have a special bearing, but they may have a bearing, dear Friend, upon you! I see some of you dressed in black—you have had to go to the grave mourning because of others. That black will be worn by others soon for you, and the place that now knows you shall know you no more forever.

Oh, by the frailty of life, by the near approach of the Master, or by the certainty of death, I pray you see to it that you breathe the prayer, “Lord give me of Your Grace.” The Lord help you to pray it. Amen.