

The living water

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Let us turn to **John 7: 37-39**.

John 7: 37-39

- 37 Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.
- 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"
- 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

These words are very significant and very far reaching, and very important for all of us. If we truly want to find satisfaction, fulfilment and meaning in life, then we need to pay close attention to what the Lord Jesus said.

He said: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."

All of us are thirsty and we are thirsting for many different things. So it is important for us to understand what kind of thirst can properly bring us to the Lord Jesus, so that we can be truly satisfied.

The Lord Jesus will not quench all kinds of thirst.

There are many kinds of thirst that we may have and we come to the Lord thinking that He will supply us what we want.

But we will be disappointed because the Lord Jesus is not there to satisfy all our wants, all that we desire and all that we seek for if they are not truly good for us, they are not meaningful in the kingdom of God, they do not truly help others in this world.

So then, first, we need to try to understand what we should thirst for and then consider how that thirst can be properly satisfied.

The Lord Jesus said: "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

So He tells us that He will satisfy our thirst by granting to us **living water**. It is the **living water** that will satisfy our thirst. What is that **living water**?

In the context, we are told: But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

When we try to look at all these aspects together, something very meaningful emerges that helps us to understand what is the right approach to life.

If we have the wrong kind of thirst, we will not be satisfied.

If we do not receive **living water**, our thirst will not be quenched.

If the Holy Spirit does not minister to us, we will not find true satisfaction.

So what does this mean?

In life, we go through many situations where we have great needs and we may cry out to God: "We are thirsty. Lord, please help us!"

If the direction of our cry has something positive in it, often God will hear us and He will help us. For example, we are in great suffering and we find it hard to bear. We ask God to help us. Often, God will extend His hand to help us. Sometimes, we are in a very difficult situation. We do not know what to do. We ask God for wisdom and God graciously teaches us what to do. Sometimes, our lives are in great danger and we ask God to intervene and He may do so, and we are rescued.

However, very often, for Christians who love God, our lives may often consist mainly of these kinds of thirst and seeking of God. We have problems, we have needs; situations that we find that we cannot cope with: We come to God and ask Him to help us, and He does; and we are satisfied and we go on – on our way to do the things that we find helpful or interesting to us.

But if we look at the context, we see that God is not seeking to help us merely in situations like that. He has something far more important, far deeper that He wants to bring us towards.

What if we follow the instructions of the Lord Jesus and we long for the right things?

The Lord Jesus said: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

If we were to hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will be satisfied. Is this the right kind of thirst? Yes, certainly it is. It must be because the Lord Jesus said so. We must long for that direction of life: We want to be righteous, we thirst, we seek; we want God to help us to be righteous.

But many people long to be righteous and yet, they do not seem to find that help. They do not become righteous. Why is that the case since we should be blessed if we long for, we thirst after, righteousness?

Very often, it is because we have approached it the wrong way.

We want God to help us to be righteous. Yes, we want to develop love in our hearts for God and for our neighbour. That is good; that is right. We should. God commands us to do so. We must want to develop; we must choose that path. But how do we then develop and become such a person who truly loves God and truly loves our fellow men?

We all know from experience that many Christians feel very sad, frustrated and disillusioned because they have sought very hard to live like that. And they will tell you: "I want to love God with all my heart but I don't. I want to love my neighbour as myself but I don't. There is so much of self-centredness in my life; there is so much of wrong desires and attitudes within me in spite of the fact that I want to live that way."

So what is the problem?

From the context, we see that the Lord Jesus wants to give us **living water**. **Living water** means life. We need life and that life comes from God. If we do not receive that life, we cannot develop the quality of righteousness, of divine love, no matter how we try, no matter how diligent we are, however much we seek and practise to love and to care. We will fail because there is no life in us.

So we need to develop on the basis of the life of God. We must have the life of God. But how does that life come to us, how does that **living water** come to us? Yes, we come to the Lord Jesus; we ask Him. But what does He do in order to help us?

He says: 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit... It is through the Spirit of God that we will receive the living water, the life that will transform us so that we can truly love God with all our heart in our being, we can love others with the love of God in our being, in our character, in our day to day working out in life.

Many a time, we ask God to help us in our problem: "Lord, I am lacking in love. Give me more love. I am very impatient. Give me more patience. Teach me to be joyful. I am so sad, give me joy." But it does not happen because peace and joy and love come from the being of God. If we just want all these things just as things that God may give to us, then we have missed out on the source of that meaning and that life.

Ultimately, we can receive all this through the being of God. God wants to give to us, so that is why the apostle Peter tells us that God has given us all these magnificent promises so that we can become partakers of the divine nature: God's very being, His life can become part of us.

God wants us to develop such that the Lord Jesus Christ is formed in us. We are to nurture our heart such that the fruit of the Spirit continues to grow in us.

So how does that develop?

That comes about basically in terms of God's provision through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He comes into our lives. He brings the character of God into us. He brings the presence of God to us. But just the presence of God, the character of God being experienced by us does not transform us. We can be transformed only when the experience of God's presence, the experience of God's character in our lives becomes part of us.

So for that to happen, it requires our decisive, personal, specific deliberate choice that we want to be like Him.

It is a development of character that is similar to that of God. Moral perfection, righteousness, goodness, love: these are aspects of the manifestation of the being of God, His moral perfection.

So if we want to be righteous, if we want to have love, divine love, in our hearts that is part of our being, then we must learn such that the Person of the Holy Spirit is so real to us in our daily lives that we can relate with Him, He works in us, He teaches us the ways of God, He shows us who the Lord Jesus is and helps us to know how we can walk in this direction, and His life becomes part of us.

This path began when we were born again: When we turned to the Lord in repentance, we chose to turn from our own selfish ways; we sought God for forgiveness, we acknowledged the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, our Lord, and we wanted to live for Him.

It is at that point of time when this is real that the Holy Spirit works in us and we are born of the Spirit. And so **1 Corinthians 12: 13** says:

1 Corinthians 12: 13

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

“...by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”: Everyone who is born again is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. We become members of the body of Christ and it is in that context all of us – whether Jews or Greeks... slaves or free – we will all drink of one Spirit. We partake of the Holy Spirit.

He is the Source of life for us. We are born again. We were dead spiritually. We had no life in us. We went astray. We were under God's judgment. But after having repented, having been forgiven, we are reconciled to God, we are born again, we are members of the body of Christ and God grants to us to partake of the Holy Spirit. And here we are told: we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

But that is only the beginning. Drinking of the Holy Spirit is something that we should do throughout our lives and in increasing measure.

All of us born of the Spirit, we have drunk of the Holy Spirit but generally, it is only to a very limited measure. We may experience great joy, see a change in our lives as a result. But when we encounter problems and difficulties in time to come, we may find that it is not adequate for us to face these situations and to overcome and to grow strong.

We need to know the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives such that it becomes like **rivers of living water** flowing out from our innermost being.

But here we are told that "...this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

So from this, some may then interpret that the Holy Spirit was not available until after the Lord Jesus was glorified – which means that prior to the event of Pentecost, it would not be possible to receive the Holy Spirit so that He can become part of us.

But that is not the meaning of this verse.

It is quite clear from the Scriptures that this was a reference to the event of Pentecost where the Lord Jesus having been glorified, He will pour forth of His Spirit on all mankind: God pouring forth His Spirit on all mankind through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the Holy Spirit has always been available to mankind in terms of being available for us to be born again that we can receive the life of God, so that we can become children of God.

Psalms 51: 10-11

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me

So we are told that David, long before the event of Pentecost, knew the working of the Holy Spirit in his life. He was born of the Spirit; he was a man after God's own heart. The Holy Spirit was at work in him and in the midst of his failure, his sin, he cried out to God for mercy, for forgiveness. And he asked God to help him so that his heart would be clean, that he would have a steadfast spirit.

Of course, David himself must choose, and he did. He repented. He was contrite, he was humble. He chose and he asked God to forgive him, but he required God's help.

So he said: "Do not cast me away from Your presence". It is in the presence of God that David will receive help. It is in the context of the being of God that he will be able to be restored, that there will be spiritual life and meaning and transformation.

And so he said: "And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me". It is the Holy Spirit that helped him to develop the quality in his being so that he could say "The LORD is my Shepherd": he could have confidence in the midst of danger and difficulties.

But the Lord Jesus is telling us that when He is glorified, He is going to make available the Holy Spirit in such abundance that whoever desires to walk in this path can have ready access to the Holy Spirit coming upon him, helping him, teaching him and transforming him.

When we know the meaning, the experience, of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and we respond well consistently, seeking to live according to God's ways, then the Holy Spirit can work in us such that our thirst will be quenched and we will partake of **living water**, and our lives will increasingly become transformed to be like God.

What I want to emphasize at the moment is for us to take care that in our daily lives, we do not concentrate just on wanting to get things done, to be able to just go through situations, to just ask God to help us because of a particular need, but to appreciate that the most important thing is to know Him, to come to Him and to receive Him in His being.

But how do we do that?

Would God be pleased to dwell with you if your heart is occupied with all kinds of selfish interests, when you are so worldly minded and you want to pursue the things of the world; and you are seeking for things that you are pleased with but not what is important to God? When you ask God to come in that way, He will not be interested to come into your life.

So we need to appreciate the fact that if we want the Holy Spirit to come and we want to know Him, the most important thing is: Our heart must be centred on what is in the heart of God, we learn to identify with Him: What is important to Him? What does He appreciate? What does He want?

If we do not do that, we cannot develop that kind of quality.

And that is why when the Holy Spirit comes, He comes to glorify the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the perfect Man – God become Man. If we want to be what we ought to be, we must understand we ought to be like the Lord Jesus.

The Holy Spirit comes to tell us what the Lord Jesus is like. When we know that, do we still want to be like the Lord Jesus? Are we prepared to live with the same kind of spirit as He did, or would we come to ask Him to give us the things that we like, or the people of the world like, or even Christians in general would appreciate? Is that what we are seeking for?

So it is very important for us to ensure that if we want to develop properly, if we want to have the right kind of thirst and we want to have abundance of **living water**, then our values, our directions, our preoccupations, our concentration must be centred on what is truly meaningful to God, the being of God, and as revealed in the life of the Lord Jesus. It is in that context that we can properly ask the Holy Spirit to come and to work in us, so that Christ will be formed in us.

Let us then as we come before the Lord to seek to appreciate Him in a deeper way, to ask Him to help us to develop in accordance with His ways. We desire the right things, God is pleased with that. Let us go further and make sure that the approach that we take is healthy and right, so that He will be pleased to come and help us accordingly. Let us ponder over what the Lord Jesus has done in the life that He lived on earth, in His death, His resurrection, and consider whether would we want to live like that, with that kind of spirit. If we do not, then we can never become like Him; Christ will not be formed in us.

So that is something all of us must decide: What do we want in life?