

The fountain of living waters

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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.

This passage can bring great joy to a Christian who believes in what the Lord Jesus said. The content, the meaning, the direction are so very rich and so very meaningful, the potential is so great, and we can be very, very happy and very glad when we read this.

And yet, in reality many Christians may not properly believe this passage. They may not pay much attention to it, and even if they have some degree of belief, they may not find the kind of reality that should correspond with this.

So why is it like that?

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

There are many Christians who would have come to the Lord Jesus, who have called upon Him and they tell Him: "I am thirsty. I want to drink of this living water." They want to experience the life, the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives in abundant measure. But it does not seem to be real to them.

The "living water" here, we are told, is associated with the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in the Lord Jesus were to receive. And the Scriptures tell us that when we are baptized into the body of Christ, we are made to drink of one Spirit.

So, we can partake of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of life. Then we may think: "Perhaps I should come to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to come into my life to fill me, to help me." And so we do that, but it still does not seem to work.

As I ponder over this, as I observe life, as I think about who God is, I realize that very often, while these passages are very meaningful and true, we can very readily misapply them in our lives. We approach it the wrong way and so, we do not benefit from what God wants to give to us.

God gave the Holy Spirit in order to help us know Him, to be present in our lives, to teach us His ways: that the laws of God may be written in our hearts, that we may experience the presence of God, the power of God in us.

All Christians would have experienced the working of the Holy Spirit in some way, but our response to him is very often very limited. We look at life from our angle, our perspective. We see things according to what we want, we like, we prefer, and so we do not properly appreciate what the Holy Spirit is seeking to do.

That is why many people who have experienced the working of the Holy Spirit, they want more of that experience or they want to be able to do many things: that they can accomplish something where they can be satisfied, or people can recognize that they have done something.

So their approach to the Holy Spirit very often is still rather self-centred, even though there can be degrees in which they are concerned about the glory of God, they want to help other people, they want to contribute to God's kingdom.

So too the way we come to the Lord Jesus: He is the One who gives to us the living water and yet, we may not receive it because we also approach the Lord Jesus in a very limited way. Yes, we want the living water, we want the Lord Jesus to help us, to give to us something that we think is good. Many of the Jews came to the Lord Jesus, but the Lord Jesus said: "You are seeking for the wrong things. You are looking for things that will perish. You should be seeking for that which is eternal, that is of true and ultimate value. "

So I see that while God has spoken to us in His Son and while God has chosen to give to us the Holy Spirit through the Lord Jesus Christ, we have actually missed something very important as we read the Scriptures and as we seek to live out our Christian lives.

We have missed the heart of God: we have missed appreciating who God really is and what He is seeking to do.

Jeremiah 2: 13

"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water..."

God was speaking to the Jewish people.

He says, "My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters..." That is one evil that they did: they forsook God, the fountain of living waters. And the second evil: they hewed for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water. (Cisterns are basically containers to hold water.)

God is the fountain of living waters. We want to have living water. We come to the Lord Jesus, we come to the Holy Spirit but why is it we do not receive that living water?

It is because we have not appreciated sufficiently the very ultimate source, the fountain of living waters. What does it mean? Why is God the fountain of living waters? Do we appreciate that, do we recognize it? We come to Him to get the things that we want, but we will not be able to find true satisfaction because in order to benefit from what God wants to give to us, we must understand what is it that He truly wants to give to us. And in order to do that, we must appreciate who He is.

Have we ever properly pondered about who God is from the angle of appreciating Him, loving Him, seeking to understand what is meaningful to Him, what is in His heart, what He wants to bring about?

Or do we often think of God from the angle of: God is almighty, God is great, God is wise; He does many great things and I can benefit in many ways. I come to Him; I ask for this, I ask for that, and I can receive them. Do we not often think of God in our terms?

I see that a fundamental problem with us is that we do not think of God on His terms.

We do not appreciate God in terms of who He actually is, what He is seeking to bring about, and why He wants to bring about these things. If we sufficiently appreciate that, our approach will be very different.

Our approach, instead of a self-centred way, would be truly a self-giving way. As we understand the heart of God, what would come forth from us would be a spirit of worship: We appreciate Him, we love Him; we stand in awe at the greatness of God, the wonder of his love, His kindness, His grace.

If we understand this and we approach it this way, our emphasis would not be: "What can I get?", "What do I want out of it?"

Rather, our approach would be: "How can I bring joy to Him according to His goodness and the meaningfulness of life?"

God is a very purposeful God and His purposes are wonderful. They are good, they are morally perfect. Do we love them so much that we are prepared to give of ourselves to fulfil that?

It is a sad thing that generally, it is not so. And because it is not so, Christian lives can never be truly fulfilling. No matter how you live your life, no matter what you may have experienced of God, no matter what you may have done, no matter how other people may appreciate you, you will find that life can never be truly fulfilling because you are not living your life in fellowship with God, in accordance with what is most precious in His heart.

So this is something I see very important for us to consider. If we do not appreciate the fountain of living waters, we will not be able properly to come to the Lord Jesus to ask for living water. We will not be able properly to appreciate the living water that comes to us through the Holy Spirit.

Our approach, our response, will not be correct and our experience of what God wants to give to us will be distorted.

Yes, God came into this world in the Person of the Lord Jesus and the Lord Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to us to help us. But the Scriptures tell us God poured forth His Spirit on all mankind and then He says, God poured forth His Spirit through the Lord Jesus Christ.

So ultimately, we must behold the great, the almighty God, the Creator of all things in whose heart is all that is pure and good and meaningful. We must appreciate Him.

If we appreciate Him correctly, then we will appreciate the Lord Jesus: God became Man to help us to know Him. He lived in this world to help us appreciate what it is like to face the problems of life in this world, how to overcome, how to be what we ought to be.

And God gave us the Holy Spirit, His own life, in order to transform us: that our character can become like His. We were created in the image of God as a potential. God wants to help us to become like Him, be in His image as a reality: the life and the character of God formed in us.

So it is correct if we come to the Holy Spirit to ask Him to dwell in us, to help us. It is correct for us to come to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to grant to us the living water. It is not wrong.

But we must first make sure that our approach is correct, that our spirit is right, our motives are good and we know who God is – not just as an idea, not just as principles, but with a heart of love and devotion, a commitment that will result in our walking with Him.

All of us can know God. Throughout the world, throughout all ages, we all can know God because He is our Creator.

He created each one of us, young or old, east or west, north or south: Wherever we are, in any age, all can know Him – and not just to know Him in recognition, but to know Him in a personal relationship, to benefit from all that He wants to give to us, and to experience His life and power to transform us.

Today, we have the Scriptures completed. We have record of the Lord Jesus coming into this world, what He did, and we can benefit from all that He said and did. We have the Holy Spirit poured forth to teach us, to dwell in us, to help us abundantly.

And yet, we are not benefiting as we should.

Enoch walked with God. What did he have?

He did not have the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus had not yet come. The Holy Spirit was not poured forth at that time in this way. But Enoch walked with God, and God took him because before he was taken up, we are told, Enoch was pleasing to God. Why would God take Enoch up? Why is it God was pleased with Enoch?

It is because Enoch worshiped God. Enoch recognized the moral perfection of God. Enoch was prepared to live by that recognition – his heart responded to that.

Why is it Job could understand and appreciate God in His goodness and learn to follow Him?

It is because Job desired the path of righteousness. He understood that this is the way and he wanted it, so he followed God.

And so it is throughout the ages.

God has given us the Scriptures to help us understand more accurately, to help us understand many aspects which He may not have revealed generally. But all these will not benefit us unless we truly want to do His will.

So that is something that all of us will have to settle deep in our hearts: Do we really love God? Do we know who He is in terms of His moral character, in terms of what He wants to accomplish?

These are basic things which are not very difficult to understand, but the issue is: Will we choose this path? If we do not, then all that we learn will not really help us. But if we do, then whatever we learn, the whole process of learning, growing, seeking will help us more and more to appreciate Him.

If we love God, of course we would want to read the Scriptures, because the Scriptures give us detailed instructions in many areas of life, to help us understand how God wants us to live.

If we love God, we would observe the life of the Lord Jesus, we will seek to understand how He responded in different situations. They will not just be historical records to us. They would be alive to us each day as we read and observe His life. We want to be like Him. We appreciate the underlying meaning of His life. So all this will become very meaningful to us.

If we love God, then we will understand the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We will be careful to listen to what He has to say to us. We will want to obey Him, walk in His ways. We will want to walk by the Spirit.

So as we seek to understand and appreciate what the Lord Jesus has done for us on the cross, as we seek to thank Him for what He has done and learn to live for Him, it is good for us regularly, constantly to ponder over who the almighty God really is.

It is not just a concept that we agree with, but it is a Being whom we love.

Yes, we need to know Him personally. We need to come to Him, we need to ask Him to speak to us, to teach us, and when He does, we must make sure that we obey.

The more we do not obey Him, the more easily we will become deceived. The more we do not walk in His ways, the less we will truly know Him.

So, knowing God in a meaningful way requires that we learn to take the stand, the attitude, where we are prepared to give our hearts completely to Him: We do not hold back. We want to live according to His ways.

Many of us can understand this as a principle but we do not sufficiently ponder about it in terms of its practical implications in our lives.

It is very important that we do so – regularly, daily, ponder about it. What does it mean to have your heart completely belonging to God?

We often live our lives basically according to what we like and prefer, not according to what we understand is most meaningful to God. This must change if we want to know Him and live for Him.

Yes, God is appreciative of every positive response. Every little gesture of your love for Him, your desire to follow Him, is appreciated.

But let us not stop there because if we do, we can also move in the negative direction, where the evil one can make use of our lives to go against what God wants to accomplish.

So let us come before the Lord to ask Him to help us to ponder over who He is: The great, the almighty God; the Creator of all things and the One who has such a wonderful plan for us that has cost Him so much in pain and anguish because He wants us to have the very best.

Do we appreciate that? Do we really want to walk with Him in accordance with His will?

If we do, then let us tell Him in all sincerity – not just today but every day of our lives: Affirm it again and again and ask Him to help us to live that way by His power.

Let us thank Him for the Lord Jesus who made it possible for us.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to guide us each step of our way, each day of our lives.