

Rivers of 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.

Today I want to ponder with you with regard to who the Lord Jesus is and how we should respond to Him, and to understand what He is seeking to do in our lives.

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

This gives us a picture of a situation where He recognizes that we have a need and in that spiritual need, we come to the Lord Jesus and we drink. That drink should satisfy our thirst; that drink should give us spiritual life; that drink should enable us to live each day.

But then when we go on to the next verse, **verse 38**, He says, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

How does this aspect of coming to Him to drink lead to rivers of living water flowing out from us?

What is the difference between the two?

There are different ways that you can appreciate it but one way which I see meaningful is to recognize what God wants to do in our lives.

First, He knows we have a need: We are thirsty, we have many problems, difficulties; we need help. We come to Him, we drink. We drink of the living water and as we partake of that living water which God grants to us through the Holy Spirit, we receive life: we are refreshed, we are strengthened; we are enabled to go through the situations which we may otherwise not able to do so.

But then God is not satisfied just to help us with our problems.

When you have a problem, you come to Him and you say, "Lord, please help me!" and He helps us. Is that what God intends for our lives?

I would say no, clearly no. God wants us to be like Him, living a life of freedom, of joy, of power, of meaning – not just to solve our problems, not just to be able to cope with the stresses and difficulties of life, but to have a life that is overflowing with meaning that can satisfy not just ourselves abundantly, but also to minister to others.

Rivers of living water gives us a picture of something that is not just meant for us alone. Rivers of living water are meant to help many other people around.

So how do we progress from coming to the Lord Jesus to satisfy our thirst for ourselves, to having rivers of living water flowing through us?

In **John 10: 10**, the Lord Jesus tells us what He came to do:

John 10: 10

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.

The Lord Jesus did not just say, "I came that they may have life." That would be adequate, and you can go on from there yourself: He came to give us life and there is no limit to that life.

But the Lord Jesus specifically and deliberately said, "...and have *it* abundantly."

He wants us to know that the life He offers to us is not just to cope with difficulties, is not just to tide us through the difficult times but it is meant to be a life that is abundant, a life that we are refreshed each moment, a life where we are joyful in the Lord, we are grateful to Him – life is full of meaning and purpose and direction.

And if our hearts are so filled with that: that is the time when we can truly minister to others.

If in our own lives we are struggling each day with discouragement, fear, anxiety and we can hardly cope with it, how are we to properly and effectively minister to others?

Yes, we still can. If you yourself are very tired and sick, and you see someone drowning, you can still throw a life belt into the water.

But that is very different from if you are healthy and strong and you are a lifeguard, you jump in and save the person.

And there are many things in life that we can still contribute even though we are weak and we are faltering – we can still serve. But even as you throw in that life belt, it may be the last ounce of strength you have and you may collapse after that.

And it is true: There are many people who try to help others, who subsequently collapse because with whatever we may seek to minister, there will be a spiritual opposition. Well, some people may say action and reaction are equal and opposite. This may or may not apply all the time, but the evil one is certainly constantly responding to what we are seeking to do in the name of God. When we seek to do what is positive, he will come with what is negative.

So, can we withstand, overcome and continue?

So the Lord Jesus tells us He came that we may have life, and have it abundantly. But then as we go through life, as we look at others around us, as we ponder over what is taking place in the world, we may wonder why is it, it does not seem to be true?

Christians ought to be joyful, full of life, meaning, within their hearts, able then to transmit it, but it does not seem to be true. They are very dissatisfied; they are still entangled in the world; and there is strife and jealousy and envy. There are many things that bind us, yes, many encumbrances that we need to discard, deal with, but they are not properly dealt with.

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

So, the answer to that question is: believing in Him. If we believe in Him, then there should be, there would be rivers of living water flowing from us.

So, that means there is something wrong in our believing in Him: that is why the rivers are not flowing.

What does this mean? What does it mean to believe in Him? Do we not all believe in Him? Do we not recognize the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of the world and we acknowledge Him as our Lord?

Matthew 14: 28-31

- 28 Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."
29 And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.
30 But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"
31 Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and *said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

This was the apostle Peter, specially selected by the Lord Jesus. He was to proclaim the gospel later on. He was a sincere follower of the Lord Jesus.

Did he believe in the Lord Jesus? Certainly! But why was he sinking?

The Lord Jesus said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

"You of little faith" means that Peter had faith. He did not say, "You of no faith!" "You of little faith" – Peter had some faith. He did trust the Lord Jesus and that was why he was prepared to walk on the water. Others who had no faith would not have come out of the boat to walk on the water because they would say it is not possible. But Peter believed. The Lord Jesus said, "Come!" and he came.

So it shows he had faith but it was little faith – faith that was affected by doubt. He was not properly moving in the direction of faith.

So what does “believe in the Lord” mean and how should it be worked out?

James 2: 19-20

- 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.
20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

The apostle James was concerned about the wrong kind of faith: People may think that they have faith but in reality, it is not true faith. It is what is called “dead faith” – faith that is not alive.

Belief is something that is very easy in one sense: All of us can believe; anyone can believe.

And he tells us: “...the demons also believe”.

But did their belief help them? The answer is obviously no. The demons believed that God is one. They knew, they recognized, they could acknowledge, recognize it as a reality, as a fact. But what is the effect on them? They shudder. They shudder because they know that God will judge them. They know that God is the Almighty God, they cannot overcome Him and they will be judged. They are afraid of the Judgment Day but they believe.

So what is the difference between the belief of the demons and our belief? What is the difference?

The primary aspect of the difference has to do with commitment. It has to do with commitment.

You believe that God is one and you can believe all the right things about God: He is good, He is perfect, He is just, He is gracious, He is kind, He is infinitely wise. You can believe all the right things but if you are not prepared to be committed to Him, all that belief will still bring judgment. You have not lived according to your belief.

When the apostle Peter started walking on the water, why did he do that?

He did that because he believed in the Lord Jesus. He believed that he could trust Him. He believed that He had the power to enable him to do so. Peter as a fisherman must have known that it was not possible for any man to walk on the water, but because he had come to know the Lord Jesus, he could trust Him. In that moment of faith, he was prepared to be committed to take that path.

So we can say the right kind of belief involves not just trust in the sense that we trust that He is able to do it, but the kind of trust that involves our entrusting ourselves to Him: We are prepared to trust Him knowing that He is reliable; we can recognize what He says is true; but more than that, we are prepared then to entrust our lives to Him; we are prepared to be committed to live that way.

If we say we trust the Lord Jesus, then we must consider: Is it true?

Are we entrusting our lives to Him? Well, some may say, "Yes, I do. I do entrust my life to the Lord Jesus: I have many problems, I have many difficulties; I entrust all these to Him. I entrust them to Him. He will take care of them; He will solve the problems for me."

But that is not what we are talking about.

We entrust our lives to Him means we live according to His ways, according to His instructions, according to His promises, and as we recognize who He is, we are prepared to move together with Him wherever this leads us.

Many Christians, in spite of the fact that they have tasted of the goodness of the Lord, are still very hesitant when it comes to really entrusting themselves to the Lord.

Generally, if you do computer work, you know that it is very important to back up your data. In case it gets erased, you have a backup. Many people do not do it and so they lose data which they cannot recover. So to do back up is very important.

And this is what many Christians are doing. They want backups: Trusting in the Lord Jesus is not enough. They must have other backups: "In case this thing does not work, I have some other outlets; I have some other ways to cope with it."

And this is the critical problem I see in many Christian lives.

We are not prepared to give up everything and to entrust to Him.

What if things go wrong? What if the Lord Jesus is not what we think He is? Well, if you have a backup, you will say, "It is all right. I have a backdoor, I have some other ways. I can return to the world, I have other things that I can do and depend on."

As long as you do that, you can never enter into a deep relationship with the Lord. Just as you have your backup, He also has. He does not need you. He is not going to be fully committed to you. He is not going to be totally concerned for you because anytime, you can leave. He also will leave.

So if we want a deep and meaningful relationship with the Lord, we must be prepared to go all the way: no backup, no bridges to return to your old ways; no backdoor to run out. Go with Him and wherever He leads you.

If you do that, if you are prepared to live like that, you will be able to taste of the rivers of living water increasingly. His life will come into you. The Holy Spirit will have the freedom to work in your life and you will find the joy, the meaning, the fullness as you go through each situation.

If we want to follow the Lord Jesus, we cannot afford to be half-hearted. We have to be decisive, we have to be determined; we have to recognize what is the right path to take.

And it must not be just for a short while. It has to be forever. Whatever comes, we need to endure. And this path is not something that is very easy for each one of us to walk in. With all the best of intentions, we may at one time love the Lord so much that in our hearts we say, "I am prepared to do anything for Him." But it may not endure. When things come that we did not expect, it may not endure. We may be looking at the Lord Jesus, appreciating Him but gradually, other things of the world come and they draw us away. Our focus is not fixed; we do not sufficiently appreciate what it means.

So I see it is important, if we want to properly believe in the Lord Jesus, we need to spend time to ponder over what it means to believe in the Lord Jesus. If you want to believe in the Lord Jesus, then you must know Him: You must know who He is, you must know what He has said, you must know how He has lived His life; you must know what He has commanded, what He has instructed. You must know what lies ahead in the future that He wants to bring about.

If we are ignorant about all these things and we say we believe in the Lord Jesus, it may be a problem because we may be building our own ideas of who the Lord Jesus is and what He wants.

To believe in Him properly, we must first understand Him correctly: Who He is, what He has done, what He has said, what His plans are, what He wants of our lives, what is important to Him; and in that state, we trust Him, we believe in Him and we entrust ourselves to Him.

The Lord Jesus in calling His disciples together, He said to them, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do the things that I say?" Calling Him "Lord, Lord" in that context for the disciples generally, they were sincere: They believed in the Lord Jesus, they wanted to follow Him but in reality, in practical life situations, they were not doing what He said.

So this can happen very easily if we do not sufficiently intensely pursue Him. It requires hard work but it is hard work that is very enjoyable: The more you learn to focus on the Lord, to be absorbed in Him, to think about Him and to consider what He has to say, the more you will find life wonderful. You can think about Him the whole day and night, and ponder over His will and His purposes; and increasingly enjoy this path in the midst of difficulties, problems of life.

So this is something which I see we need to consider carefully, so that we are true to what we believe.

It is easy to say "I believe" but to live our lives true to what we believe, that is a difficult thing but it is a most wonderful thing because when we do that, all the riches of God which He wants to impart to us will become real.

That is the key that will unlock the safe that keeps all the riches that God has in store for you. He wants to give to us but will we do our part to respond?

So then, as we come before the Lord, let us ask Him to search our hearts and help us to understand how we have lived our life so far.

Are we living in a way that we are satisfied ourselves that we are true to Him, we are true to what we believe?

Or are we actually doing many things that we know are not truly pleasing to Him but we do not want to think about them and we just carry on day by day, and there can come a time when it is too late for us to do anything about it?

So whether young or old, today is the best day to really think about it carefully and to do something about it to really deepen our belief in the Lord Jesus.

Let us then thank Him for all that He has done for us and ask Him to help us by His Spirit to understand these issues more clearly and how it applies to us personally.

God wants to bless us but He cannot unless we fulfil the conditions.

His conditions are simple, but they are very difficult to fulfil. The instructions are clear, but we may not face them.

So let us ask Him to help us so that we can properly live out our lives, whether we are young or old, that we prepare for eternity so that we will not regret in the way we have lived our lives, the way we have spent our time, our energy, our resources, but we can rejoice in Him always.