**THIRSTING FOR THE SPRINGS - SERMONS BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**02. THIRSTING FOR THE SPRINGS by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst."*

*John 4:14*

THIS is a suitable place at which to take our stand if we wish to raise the question, who is this Jesus, man or God? Is He a particularly beautiful offshoot of the Jewish race, rudely cut off when He was blossoming into a maturity of unexampled loveliness, or is He the great Eternal, enshrined in a vesture of time? This is a fitting place for such question to be asked. What is the claim? "I am life's water, I am life's bread." Does He mean just what He says? Does He use figures and metaphors loosely, or do they represent with scrupulous accuracy the inmost truth of things? Bread! Water! I cannot do without them. Then the Master will not permit Himself to be regarded as the superfluity at life's meals. He is not an indifferent addition to life, but an elemental and fundamental necessity. He claims to be something that we cannot do without. "With out Him we cannot live." There will be nothing worthy to be called by the large and sovereign term of "Life." We shall be starvelings, weaklings, pinched and pining, full of hungers and thirsts, creeping along upon the confines of moral and spiritual death.

Such is one aspect of this stupendous claim. Now look at it from a slightly different angle. This man Jesus asserts that if He be regarded as bread and water, if He be taken and used as the common food of the common day, He will annihilate all the hungers and thirsts of the soul, which are now the sources of so much disquietude and pain. "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Let us pause, that we may attempt to grasp the significance of this mighty claim. Let us call the roll of a few of the hungers and thirsts which this man claims to have the power to appease.

Here is a thirst of the soul. It is the thirst for assurance. It is born of feverishness. There is a feverishness of the spirit, as well as of the flesh. We are familiar with the symptoms of the feverish body -- the accelerated pulse, the throbbing head, the tossing restlessness, and all these have their analogies in their feverish soul. There are souls that are "heated hot with burning fears." Fears are in their minds and hearts like burning firebrands, and they eat and inflame the entire life. What kind of fears are these? The Master has named them, "Anxieties about to-morrow"; and when one of these blazing brands gets into the soul, it creates a feverishness which drys the life with a consuming thirst. Feverishness in the soul is a condition just the opposite to what the Scriptures describe as a "cool spirit." Feverishness in the soul is a condition of panic, a state of dread, a dry, hot unrest, a thirst for assurance. "He that belleveth on Me shall never thirst." He creates a cool spirit. He puts out the fire brand of fear. He annihilates dread. He takes the threat out of the morrow. He gives assurance. "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink."

Here is another thirst. It is the "lust of bliss" I can use no milder term, for a milder term would leave the greater thing unsaid. It is not merely that we thirst for bliss, there are multitudes of souls which lust for it. There are men and women in every city who do not care what they ignore, or what they destroy, so long as they can obtain a mouthful of bliss! I am sometimes tempted to believe that it is one of the most perilous signs of the times. We have to make everything pleasant to entice the palates of men. We are in danger of changing the strait and narrow way into a way of light and pleasing entertainment, and of smothering the hard, grim, bloody cross under an avalanche of flowers. I am not surprised at the thirst; it is the Nemesis of wilfulness. If men deliberately turn themselves away from the river of water of life, they do not destroy their thirst, they only pervert it, and turn it into a lust for the puddles! That is it, with many of us it has become a lust for the puddles! "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." The thirst for bliss shall be more than gratified by the gift of blessedness, and the lust for the puddles shall be quenched in the attainment of God's pleasures, in an abiding by the river of water of life.

Here is another thirst. Let us call it the thirst for the springs. Do what we like, waste what we please, pervert what we choose, there is always a reminder within us that points us toward God. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" It may be only that; a discontent, a little disquietude, just a tiny vacancy in the soul, which we cannot fill up with the things of time. It is the indestructible reminder to keep us in thought of God. "My soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease." Ease! Yes, if only I could get rid of that vague and pervading yearning which steals into the finest of earth's feasts, and turns all its revelry into a painful insufficiency. It is the indestructible remnant; say rather, it is the God-created thirst for the springs.

God has made the grass very juicy for the kine, but the juices of the grass do not make the kine independent of the water brooks. Even amid the luscious pastures they thirst for the still waters, and they make their way to the brink, and, standing knee-deep, bathe and refresh themselves in the gracious stream. And God has made some things very juicy for His children, in order that the juiciness itself might minister to our delight in growth. The beauty of nature; the entrancing ministry of music -- how very juicy God has made them -- but even in these luxurious pastures the soul thirsts for the springs. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." You may linger in the juicy grass, but you won't destroy the thirst. The thirst for the springs will persist and remain, a vague yearning, a painful disquietude, which will haunt you even to the end. Now let us hear the Lord: "He that believeth on Me" hath found the springs. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst."

Here is another thirst. What shall we call it? It is the thirst of the exile, the thirst of the prodigal, the longing for home. We have a word, most wealthy in its suggestiveness, which offers itself here as an all-sufficient term. We call it home-sickness. Have you ever looked into it? Home-sickness! The sickness of the exile, a fainting because of absence from the old hearth, a yearning to see the old face and to hear once again the sweet familiar voice, a thirsting for home! And how much more poignant and painful is the thirst when the absence is born of rebelliousness and sin! God has such self-exiled ones. They roam through the land to-day in unnumbered crowds, and they are home-sick, thirsting for the satisfactions which are to be found only in their father's house. They have wasted their substance in riotous living. They have spent all. They are in want. They are burdened with a disquieting thirst. Christ claims to be able to appease that thirst. To be with Him is to be at home again, and to be at rest. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest," home-rest; the great sick longing shall be changed into a sweet content, and the feverish thirst shall be quenched in the glorious fellow ship of God.

There is one other thirst I would like to name. Let us call it the thirst for completeness, for holiness, for health. I thirst to make this life of mine, which is so large in promise, and so varied in faculty, as capacious and as wealthy as from its own suggestiveness I think it might be. This thirst for completeness finds its satisfaction in Christ. The missing thing, for which I pant, I shall find in Him. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up." In Christ is the pledge of our perfectness, and the thirst for holiness is only consummated in Him.

I would therefore lead you to the fountain. Every other river has its seasons of drought. Every other spring runs dry. Other resources will fail us. They will not redeem their promise. They will aggravate the very thirst they profess to relieve. Let us take our thirst to the Eternal spring, and find rest and contentment and health in there abiding.