

# The Proof you are Filled is the Overflow

by Fred Tomlinson

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*This sermon focuses on the invitation Jesus gave to those with a spiritual thirst, emphasizing the continuous flow of living water symbolizing the Holy Spirit. It delves into the concept of drinking from Christ to experience an overflow of His life, challenging believers to maintain a constant connection to the source of life and avoid distractions that hinder this spiritual flow. The importance of being continually filled with the Holy Spirit is highlighted, emphasizing the transformation and impact it brings to the lives of believers.*

**Scripture:** John 7:37, Galatians 5:25, Ephesians 5:18, John 4:14, 2 Corinthians 4:10, Romans 8:9, Psalm 1:3, Proverbs 4:23, John 14:16, Ephesians 3:19

**Topics:** "Spiritual Thirst", "Living Water"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Well, Fred Tomlinson here and in the last session, which was a week ago when I spoke, I spoke from John chapter 7 and I feel and believe that the Lord is directing me to go right back there to the same little group of verses. So if you have your Bible and you want to turn with me, I'm going to John chapter 7 and looking down to verse 37. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

He that believeth on me as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

Amen. I can't even begin to count how many times I've read those verses over these years. But as many have said long before me, it's amazing with the Word of God how you can return to it time and time again and continue to find something fresh and real and challenging of God's very Word to your own heart.

And this has been the case for me this week. When Jesus stood up and cried out on that occasion, with a loud voice we're told, he declared two really outrageous concepts. That's how I'd like to describe them.

The first, of course, was an invitation. It was an invitation to those with a spiritual thirst, a thirst for something deep in their own beings, in spite of the fact that they were all profoundly religious Jewish people that he was addressing on this occasion. But he who knows the hearts of men and women, just as he knows your heart as I'm speaking to you right now, he knows what's going on in the hearts of men and women and he has a message for them.

He wants to speak to that deep inward core of our being, of your being. And so Jesus stood up and made this great sort of proclamation, invitation really, if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. And I'm suggesting that that statement was outrageous because it was tantamount for him saying, I am the Messiah.

And to that crowd of people that were around him, that would be a blasphemous claim. That invitation was followed by, I think, an equally outrageous statement. He said that if there were those who would respond to his invitation to drink of him as a direct consequence of their drinking, rivers of living water would flow out from their bellies, says the old King James, out from their hearts, says another translation.

And that has to be an outrageous claim. What on earth was this man speaking about? What was he thinking? Who was he? Who is this man? They could very well have asked. You know, so there's those two concepts, the drinking and the outflowing.

And I'd like to concentrate most of the rest of my time here to that second category in this session. The question really is, how should we understand what Jesus meant when he spoke of rivers of living water? I mean, let's face it, of course, he's using symbolism to describe something that in so many ways is indescribable. But he chose the symbolism, he chose to speak of it in this particular way.

And there's no doubt at all that when he was making that statement, he was choosing that statement because it was dramatic. Not that he was a dramatist by any stretch. But what he was describing that would happen in the lives of those thirsty people who would drink what he was offering could only be described as supernatural.

In other words, he was talking about something that was, it was transcendent, it was beyond human understanding. I think in many cases, we, even we as Christian believers, we tend to lose the deeper significance that lies behind so many of the biblical terms and phrases that we use commonly. You know, it was Martin Lloyd-Jones, I think most of you will know who I'm referring to, he's gone on into a closer sense of God's presence now.

But in his own inimitable style, he put what I think I'm thinking about right now, in a very poignant and powerful way, I'll quote him. He said, we have not merely been saved, that we might escape hell. But we have been saved in order that God may present a people who will astonish the world.

How about that? Let me repeat it, just because I want to repeat it, because it's so incredible. It's a statement that sort of captures this transcendent feature of what Jesus was talking about to that crowd, and what he's speaking to you about, I believe, even in these moments. We have been saved in order that God may present a people which will astonish the world.

The heading that we chose for the YouTube channel that we have was a part of a verse of scripture that was showing the way of God more perfectly. If ever there is a need that exists within the broad Christian community, I believe it is this. We need not some clever intellectual man or woman, but we're needing the

Holy Spirit of God himself to somehow speak that word that penetrates to the core of their being and of our beings, and somehow illuminates our understanding, and enlarges our concepts of who God is, and what this salvation is that he wrought on a hill called Calvary, and who this Holy Spirit of God is that is intent upon entering into our lives.

Fulfilling the very purposes of God within us, even me, and even my life, even your life, no one excluded. If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

He wasn't even satisfied to say a river of living water. He said rivers of living water. You know, let the Apostle Paul throw some light on this here.

Do you remember when he speaks in three of his epistles about the mystery of God, that which has been hidden from the ages, and from the dispensations of time, and in referring to this as the new covenant blessing and provision of God through the redeeming work of Jesus. He's speaking about the life of Jesus, that Christ may actually dwell within us. At writing to the Corinthians, he's not using the word mystery at all in this context, but he says this in chapter 4 and verse 10.

He says, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. And just the next verse is though to underline or highlight and put into bold type what he's seeking to express. He said that this life of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal flesh.

Do you hear him? He's saying in your body, yes, but in your mortal flesh, in you, who you are. What a wonderful, wonderful concept. Amen.

And so I think when I hear Jesus making this statement about rivers of living water flowing, and the apostle John adding that parenthesis that I read to you, and saying, in case you're wondering what Jesus was talking about, this is a paraphrase of course, in case you're wondering what Jesus was talking about, he was talking about the Holy Spirit. So he's really saying the Holy Spirit, whom as the result of Calvary and then Pentecost, men and women would be able to drink that very Spirit, this very Spirit of Christ. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, but to drink in that Spirit of Christ into their being and that the life also of Jesus may become manifest in our mortal bodies.

That's what Jesus was talking about. Amen. And so as we think about these rivers, I'm thinking of this as being an outflow.

This is obviously an outflow, so flow out of your heart, out of your inner being. An outflow which is probably, and I think certainly, best thought of in terms of not merely an outflow, but rather as an overflow. The overflow of Christ's life, mingled with redeemed humanity.

Remember the apostle says on another occasion, he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Or if I branched out and thought of this with a different metaphor altogether, I'd be perhaps thinking about a spontaneous or the spontaneous fragrance of the life of Jesus, the life that he lived, flowing out of the very lives of men and women. Men and women who were all dead to God, who were all once sinners, bound by sin, hell bound.

But God who is rich in mercy, he intervened in the situation and provided a way out for us. Hallelujah. And not merely a way out of hell, as Martin Lloyd-Jones said, but a way out and then a way in to something that would be in the mind of God and in the provisions of God, something that is transcendent.

Contrast that with this sort of mediocre kind of Christian religion that is all too commonplace. May God by his Spirit elevate our thinking and open up our hearts and our minds, and dare I say it, even our imagination. My whole being opened up to begin to conceive and understand something more of the fullness of this great salvation that John Wesley, Charles Wesley called so great as well.

Amen. And so this clearly is in the heart of Jesus as he speaks to the crowd on this occasion. And it's very evident, once again, thinking of the metaphor that he was using.

He was thinking of a flow that was to be continuous. Rivers flowing. When rivers flow, they just keep flowing.

And that's clearly what Jesus was wanting to emphasize. In other words, he's not speaking about a particular event in a particular moment of time. He's talking about something that's flowing.

That life, that Christ life, that divine life, that holy life, that focused life, that divine life. How else can we think of it? That razor sharp life flowing through you, my dear friend, and through me. Nothing less than this is the intent and purpose of God for each and every one of us.

Rivers flowing, rivers flowing and with the fullness of an Amazon river and with the force of a Niagara river. Rivers of living water flowing and he's speaking about the Holy Spirit. Amen.

But the context in which Jesus is speaking here is very important for us. That is the fuller statements that he was making. So what I'm learning from reading these words of Jesus again and again is there can be no overflow without their first being an inflow.

And the fact of the matter is that none of us can give what we have not first received. And the fact is that the first of these two categories, the first would produce the second. The drinking would produce the outflow, the overflow.

And the second, that is the outflow or the overflow, would validate the fact of the first. Do you understand? The first would quench the thirst, the inward thirsting of the individual partaking or of the believer. The first would quench the thirst, the second would exhibit the life of Jesus.

What a wonderful thing. Amen. And once again, and I think it's important perhaps for me to repeat this, let's get this clear.

It's something so basic and so elemental really in this context, but it's missed by so many. And that is that Jesus is not talking about a one-off experience. It's not me coming to Jesus with my empty cup and saying, fill my cup because it's Sunday today and I'll be back next Sunday, all being well, for another fill up.

It's not like, Jesus is talking about a constant, continuous experience. I don't know a lot about Greek. What I've learned about Greek has been from people who know a lot more about it than I do.

I started out one time, there's someone listening to me today I know who knew a great deal more than, I knew nothing. And he gave me some books and I thought, okay, I'm going to get into this. And then I remembered that a little bit of knowledge can be very dangerous.

And I decided I'd put my vehicle in reverse and pull out of what otherwise would be a horrible cul-de-sac, I think. And let other people who know more about it than I do. In any event, my dad used to have a Newbery Bible.

And this is a long, long time ago now. And I won't pause to tell you much about that. But the Newbery Bible is very, very helpful when someone wants to know something about Greek tenses or Hebrew tenses and etc.

But I do know this, that when Jesus was speaking to that crowd, he said, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink and keep drinking. It was in the present continuing tense. Let him drink and keep drinking, and out of his belly shall flow and keep flowing rivers of living water.

So the drinking was essential, so there would be a flowing, but not as a one-off event, but as a life experience, that men and women by God's grace and by his power and by his indwelling might experience the transformed life. Amen. And you know, there's a lovely song that many of us have sung often over the years, Channels only, channels only, blessed master, but with all thy wondrous power flowing through us, thou dost use us every day and every hour.

If we must think of a cup, and I just have one here, it's not filled with tea, it's filled with water, I should tell you. But if we must think of a cup, let's think of the cup of our lives being held continuously under a faucet that is turned on and that is connected to the main supply coming from some huge, huge lake out there in the mountains somewhere that we can't ever exhaust. Think of it like that if you must, but not just coming, we say, as we sing sometimes and think about it, you know, we've come for our refill.

God's not into refills, he's into connecting us to the source, to putting an inward spring inside of us. That's how he talked to the woman in John chapter 4. And this is God's plan. And let me add this, this is not a word to bring condemnation to people who are not finding this experience in this way, but rather, I trust I'm opening to you the fact of the truth and purpose of God for you.

And let's accept the challenge. Sometimes that can be very humbling, because we've been on the Christian road for so long, and we think we've got it sort of more or less all figured out. And we can get very proud if we're not careful.

But we need to come before him with a sense of brokenness, with a sense of need. And we say, Lord, I can't do this. This is beyond me, unless you make this possible.

And I hear your invitation, and I'm grasping it with both my hands, with my whole being. I get hold of, I apprehend this for which you have apprehended me. Live out thy life, O mighty Saviour.

Amen. What a wonderful thought. So the proof that a man or a woman is filled with the Spirit of God is the outflowing or the overflowing of that Spirit of God in that life.

Amen. You can store up in your mind information, and you can dish it out at appropriate times. You can sort of learn the mannerisms and the gestures and the style, and you can imitate men or women that you esteem highly.

But let's never forget that you cannot stockpile life. You cannot do that. Life must be lived.

And the song said, moment by moment I've life from above. It's true that the new birth is a one-time event. But the fruit and the enjoyment of that new life must be a continuing experience.

It must be a continuing fruitfulness. It must be a continuing enjoyment that we experience. It's crucial that there's a moment of birth, but that must be followed by consistent breathing.

And so it is true in the realm of the Spirit. We must drink and keep drinking. Sadly, many that we meet and I have met in the course of my life seem to exist in kind of a state of spiritual comatose.

And they've clearly never discovered this vital secret, which is not some merely some emotional sort of Pentecostal experience. Mentioning something like that can lead people to get different impressions about me. I'm not trying to give any impressions.

I'm not trying to make any point. I'm just saying that what God wants to do in your life and my life is substantial. It's real.

And as far as God's provision is concerned, it's there for the living. It's there for the enjoyment. It's there for the duration.

It's there for the journey. Glory be to God. And I think, you know, here's the thing.

We make a mistake. I think it's made by many people. We feel, well, you know, we're fundamentally good people.

We do our daily devotions. We bring our various needs to God in prayer. We listen to good preaching and teaching.

We've got some lovely friends. But regardless of the value of any of those items or categories I've just mentioned, regardless of any benefit that is gained from them, there is no substitute for that intensely personal, secret, inward sitting in the presence of God and drinking in his love. And I'm seeking to encourage you to catch the vision of that which God has made possible.

I'm well aware, from my own experience, I am well aware that we have a very real enemy who is continually working against us. He's working over time. This could be many different subjects related to that statement that we could take.

But I'm thinking right now that a primary feature of the enemy's work, so far as my life is concerned, and indeed I believe your life, is to stop at nothing to keep you from that supernatural stream of life flowing through and from your belly and through your life. He'll seek to keep your mind busy with many things. Some of them may be very good things.

He seeks to keep men and women busy in their minds. He seeks to keep us distracted. I woke up very early this morning, like two o'clock, and a number of things going on in my life and situation right now.

And my mind was thinking a lot, and it didn't look like I was going to get to sleep. And then I glanced over at the side table, and I'm probably not supposed to have my telephone next to me when I'm sleeping. My wife didn't make that rule, by the way, just for your interest.

But it just lit up. The screen just lit up for just a few moments with a message on it. And I was intrigued, so I clicked on it, and it was someone making a comment on that YouTube channel that you know about.

And I won't quote to you what it said. It was very brief, but I immediately got up and I responded to that person. And I said, you'll never know just how meaningful that word was for me on this occasion.

The enemy wants to trap us in dead-end roads, cul-de-sacs we call them in England often, with no way out. He wants to trap us in those places where we're locked in with our thoughts, our thinking, our worries,

our concerns and questions, and so on. And how important it is to recognise that this is a snare of the enemy.

He's seeking to keep me busy, my mind dominated with other things, and to, as the result, distract me from this life of continual drinking. Praise God when the Holy Spirit wakes us. He gives us a shake, as it were.

A little alarm system kicks in and we realise we must not go down that road. This is not for me. And the Lord in his grace speaks his life to us again, and we drink his life and find peace in him.

Amen. But you know what happens when we allow ourselves to be distracted? When we stop feeding on the living bread and drinking at the fountain head, as a direct result and consequence of that, that which was once fresh becomes stale, and it becomes immediately stale. And this is the downfall of so many believers.

They allow this to happen, and what was once upon a time fresh is now stale. I'm reminded of the Apostle Paul's words, writing to the Galatians. The context is different, but he addressed the Galatians.

Do you remember? He said, you ran well. Who hindered you? How many I've known who have started well and started with such promise and experienced at some point that which was fresh and alive, but now it's become very obviously stale and dead. And all that exists when that happens is for us to minister nothing but self, self.

You know, this is a huge issue for all of us, without exception, but it's particularly a powerful snare for those men and women who are involved in some form of Christian work or Christian ministry. You know, there's an apocryphal story that is apropos. It goes like this, you won't find it in your Bible, that on one occasion Jesus was walking with his disciples and they were climbing up a hillside, and at a particular moment, Jesus said to Peter, so the story goes, and said, Peter, pick up that stone and bring it.

And so Peter responded and picked up the stone and walked with the crowd of disciples, all of the time wondering to himself what this was all about. And then presently, Jesus once again turns back to Peter and says, Peter, put that stone back over there, now put that stone over there, and he did it. And then he turned to Jesus and said, Lord, what was that all about? And once again, I'm qualifying this by saying this is apocryphal, I don't know if it's true, it's not, it could be, but the message out of it is real.

Apparently Jesus turned to Peter and he said, Peter, for whom were you carrying the stone? And that's something that we forget, we become so self-absorbed with what we're doing and how right it is sometimes, the ministry that we're involved with, we become absorbed by it, that we can so easily forget for whom we're doing this, for whom we're doing it. If someone were to ask, we would respond quickly and say, well, I'm doing it for the Lord, or I'm doing it because of my love for souls. But is that really true? I may be witnessing, I may be preaching, but the river that's flowing is filled with self, it's me doing it.

The flesh craves for attention and recognition, and this is the truth. And this is true, as I say, for all of us, but it's particularly true for preachers. I know that this craving for self-worth, for status, for recognition, to be impressed, to impress in one way or another.

Jesus would say much later, I know your works, but you've left your first love. Note this, your first love is your worship of him alone. When it's all about you, or it's all about me, something dies as a direct consequence.

Amen. You know, the stale, lifeless flow of self is a sure indicator that the inflow has ceased to exist and ceased to function. That consistent overflow of this heavenly life is both the initial and the unerring evidence that a man or a woman is filled with the Holy Spirit.

It's the initial evidence, it's the unerring evidence that a person is filled with the Spirit of God. Amen. This is what Paul meant when he wrote to Ephesians in chapter 5 and verse 18, when he said in the Greek margin, be being continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

Not every Sunday as a regular thing, not twice a week as a regular thing, but be ye therefore continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Dear friend, I trust that I've succeeded in encouraging you to discover that spiritual secret of the continual drinking of the water of life. And be sure also to maintain the channel of your life uncluttered, that the water that flows from you may be truly astonishing to all the world, as Martin Lloyd-Jones put it.

Amen. Let me just pray. Father, Father, we're so slow to recognise, as we ought, that your plan of salvation far outstrips every meagre notion that we have gathered and gleaned along the way.

And we pray, Father, that you will enable your Holy Spirit to have great success with each and every one of us and lift up the standard for us, Lord, to make the way of God more perfectly clear to us and minister faith with your Word and with the revelation that enables us, Lord, to get hold of this and to enter into the fullness of the blessing which is in Christ Jesus. In his name we pray. In the name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. I very much appreciate those who have subscribed to this channel.

And if you've not done so, maybe you would like to do that. And I encourage you to contact or click on or visit the Mackenzie Christian Fellowship website. It's just mackenziefellowship.com and you'll learn a little bit more about us.

And I hope you'll join us next week. God bless you. Bye-bye.

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