

Rev. 22:1. the Life River

by Horatius Bonar

The river of life is a symbol of God's love, grace, and power, and is a source of spiritual blessings, life, purity, and radiance.

Scripture: Genesis 2:10, Psalm 36:8, Psalm 46:4, Psalm 65:9, Isaiah 33:21, Isaiah 48:18, Ezekiel 47:9, John 7:37, Revelation 21:6, Revelation 22:1

Topics: "Spiritual Nourishment", "The River of Life"

Description

Horatius Bonar preaches about the 'Life River' described in Revelation 22:1, emphasizing its significance as a source of spiritual nourishment and blessings. He draws parallels between the earthly rivers of Eden and the heavenly river of life, highlighting its qualities of grace, power, purity, and brightness. Bonar illustrates how this river, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, offers eternal life and refreshment to all who partake of it. He encourages believers to seek this river for cleansing and vitality, reminding them of the promise of eternal life and the glory that awaits in the heavenly city.

Transcript

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."--Revelation 22:1.

In the first Paradise, and in connection with the first creation, we find a river--'a river went out of Eden to water the garden' (Genesis 2:10); and in connection with the second Paradise and the new creation, we find a river also--a river without a name--but simply designated 'a river of life.' The earthly and the heavenly thus run parallel with each other, though the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

In connection, not merely with earthly fruitfulness and beauty, but with spiritual blessings, we have many allusions to rivers. 'The river of Your pleasures' (Psalm 36:8); 'there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God' (Psalm 46:4); 'you enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water' (Psalm 65:9); 'peace as a river' (Isaiah 48:18); 'the Lord shall be to us a place of broad rivers and streams' (Isaiah 33:21).

The earthly river beautifies, fertilizes, refreshes, gives life, quenches thirst. All these and much more does the heavenly river do for us. In this life-river is the reality of those things of which the earthly river is the shadow. What would the first Adam's Paradise have been without the river? What would the second

Adam's Paradise and city be without the river of life?

But let us gaze a little on this life-river which John describes, and see its qualities and glories. Of it we may say, 'It is good for drink, and pleasant to the eyes, and a river to be desired;' for no river on earth, Nile or Jordan, can be compared with it. It contains all that a soul needs; and it is not for angels--but for men.

I. It is a river of HEAVEN. These two concluding chapters speak of no earthly city, no earthly Paradise, no earthly tree of life, and no earthly river. It is a stream fed from heavenly sources, filled with heavenly water, and resplendent with heavenly beauty. Everything pertaining to its origin, and course, and nature, partakes of heaven. It is the river of God, conveying on its pure water all that heaven contains of blessedness. Those who drink of it must drink immortality and love. 'It is the river of God.' To gaze on it, to wander by its banks, to bathe in its pure flood, to drink of its waters--this is heaven itself!

II. It is a river of GRACE. It flows from the throne of the Lamb; and everything that has connection with the Lamb is necessarily of grace. The Lamb is, of all the names of Christ, that which most explicitly expresses grace, and the channel through which that grace flows to us. Name but the Lamb, and you proclaim God's love to sinners, His riches of grace towards the most worthless of human creaturehood. The Lamb is the name by which Christ is most commonly spoken of in this book; and this seems to be done, in order that we may, in the midst of the terrors and the glories of which it is full, be made to feel the grace of God as it pours itself out over the dwellers in this poor earth. And this grace goes on through eternity; there is grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. There is the grace of earth, there is the grace of heaven. There is the grace of the first coming, there is the grace of the second.

III. It is a river of POWER. It comes from the throne--the throne of God; and therefore possessing the properties of that throne. It communicates, it infuses power into the soul of every one that drinks, or even that walks along its banks. The power and authority of God are in it; for it issues from the fountainhead of universal owner. O mighty river of God! How mighty do they become who betake themselves to you! Mighty river! The symbol of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37), proceeding from the Father and the Son, from God and the Lamb--what infusion of power may we not receive from you here; how much more hereafter! In this wilderness much; in the glorious city, more.

IV. A river of PURITY. 'A pure river of water of life!' The word pure almost invariably refers to priestly or sacrificial cleansing. This river then owes its purity to the same blood which makes the garments of the redeemed white; and just as the gold of the city is called pure gold, like unto clear glass--so the river gets the like designation. A pure river! Like the Lamb from whose throne it comes, who is without blemish, and without spot! A pure river! Like the city through which it flows, into which nothing that defiles shall enter! As it pours its heavenly waters on us now, it purifies, it cleanses; and hereafter it will preserve in us eternally that purity which it began in time, as the tree of life will preserve forever the immortal life which it created here in us. Think often of this river, you who feel the impurity of your soul; wander by faith along its banks even now; refresh yourself with its transparent waters; for is it not promised, I will give to him who is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely? The pledge of this we get just now; but the full accomplishment is reserved for the day when 'the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall lead us to the living fountains of waters' (Revelation 8:7).

V. A river of LIFE. Wherever the river comes it quickens; just as of Ezekiel's river it is said, 'the waters shall be healed, and everything shall live where the river comes' (Ezekiel 47:9). Each drop is life giving; it contains everlasting life, for the Spirit of life is in that river. And He from whom it comes is the Lamb, even

He who said, 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish;' 'because I live, you shall live also.'

VI. A river of BRIGHTNESS. The words 'clear as crystal' should be 'bright as crystal'--the same word as in verse 16, 'the bright and morning star.' It is a river of splendor, divine and heavenly splendor. No earthly river, shone upon by the brightest earthly sun, can equal this. It is radiant all over, and it communicates its radiance to those who dwell upon its banks. It makes them shine as the sun. It is a river of glory--God lights it, and the Lamb is the fountain of its splendor! O river of brightness, will you not cast down on us here some of the radiance of your pure water? River of glory and holiness, will you not gladden and purify us, by causing us to behold your beauty in some measure here, that we may be prepared for beholding that splendor in fuller measure hereafter, when the days of our shame, and sin, and mourning are ended?

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