

Thirsting After God

by Keith Price

Jesus offers spiritual satisfaction and fulfillment to those who are thirsty, which can only be found in Him.

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Isaiah 58:11, John 7:37-39, Philippians 4:6, 1 Timothy 2:1, 2 Timothy 2:15, James 1:22

Topics: "Salvation Through Faith", "Intimacy With God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of walking through a narrow passageway with his friends. He then introduces the concept of the various images of Jesus in the Gospel of John, such as 'I am the bread of life' and 'I am the light of the world.' The speaker emphasizes the importance of coming to Christ and believing in him for forgiveness and salvation. He also mentions Blaise Pascal's idea of a God-shaped vacuum in our hearts that can only be filled by God. The sermon concludes by highlighting the need for a meaningful and purposeful life found in a relationship with Jesus.

Transcript

Gracious and forgave me and I'm afraid it'll happen again. I mean, I know I shouldn't think it will, but it sort of does happen from time to time. And anyway, you look alarmed like you've never had anything on your conscience.

Is that right? You've never had any? No, no. Okay, that's fine. Well, in that case, I'm through, brother.

There's nothing to preach about. Let's quieten our hearts. Lord, what we know not, teach us.

What we have not, give us. What we are not, make us. And take my lips and speak through them, and take our minds and think through them, and take our hearts and set them on fire with love for you.

In the strong name of Jesus, we pray. Amen. I'm just trying to, oh, there's the clock, okay.

I always want to watch that clock because when I see you looking one direction, I know whether you're looking at the clock or out of the window. So, you know, just a little over 20 years ago now, I was standing in a strange place. I was in a narrow passageway with my hair touching the ceiling of the rock, the rock ceiling.

My right shoulder was touching the wall on my right as I tried to walk. My left shoulder was touching the wall on my left as I tried to walk. And there was six or nine inches of water under my feet.

And I was walking and walked for about 40 minutes, as far as I can recall, with six of my friends. We had got into a spring. We'd stumbled over some boulders there, down about eight or ten feet, and eventually got down to this passageway.

And we walked where, not too many tourists walk, but some do. We walked right through, tunneling through Mount Zion. Now, some of you have done that.

How many of you know what I'm talking about? One. Oh, well, two maybe. All right, not too many.

But let me tell you what we did was we stumbled across the Spring Gihon. And the Spring Gihon goes from just outside the eastern part of the city of Jerusalem, outside the wall. And, of course, what happened is when King Hezekiah, now what, 2003, maybe 2700 years ago now, when King Hezekiah knew that Sennacherib and the Assyrians were going to attack him, he thought, wow, they're going to cut off the water supply.

So what he did was he got two sets of engineers, must have been brilliant men, they must have gone through U of T or something, or Trent, I don't know what it was, but they started tunneling one side, the engineers did, and in an S-shaped sort of tunnel, the other group started tunneling the other side, and believe it or not, their drills met in the middle. And you can actually see where the chisel marks go, one way, one way, and one the other way, where they meet. It's just an amazing thing.

And he did that to make an aqueduct so that the water could go from the Spring Gihon, and eventually as we walked through there, we finished up, came out into daylight, and here we were standing in the Pool of Siloam. Now, I thought that's wonderful. This man built that and saved the city from being besieged and all the water cut off, and of course people were forever thankful for that.

But frankly, I've got another reason why I want us to talk about the Pool of Siloam tonight. Because this Pool of Siloam, if I had gone there a couple of thousand years before I did, and I'd gone there around, oh, maybe 28, 29, 30 AD, and I'd gone into that pool, and I'd stood there, what would I have seen as I got out to that pool from Hezekiah's tunnel? What I would have seen would have been the priests coming down from the temple courtyards, and they would have been followed by all kinds of people who were worshippers in festive throng, and it was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Booths, when they built booths or tents to remind them that they had been all that time in the wilderness, and they lived in tents, and God put a big tent in the And in order to remind them of that, they went and cut down branches of trees and fronds and all kinds of other things, and they built these things in their own rooftop, most of which were flat, of course, or in their own courtyard, sometimes in the streets, sometimes in the courtyard of the temple, and they would build all these, and they'd live there for all of the seven or eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles. And every day, every day, just before that offering, the priest would come down and lead the people all the way down, about a thousand meters south, I guess, to the pool of Siloam, which was just inside the wall, so that the water came from outside, inside, and Sennacherib wouldn't have cut them off.

And the priest came down, and as he did, he brought with him a golden pitcher, and with his golden pitcher, he dipped it in the pool of Siloam, and he got water from it, and everybody began to sing praise to God, and they would sing praise all the way back, and they'd go back all the way to the temple, just at the time when the smoke was coming up from the offering, and at that time, they would march right around that altar of burnt sacrifice, and then they would pour out that water, spill it out on the ground, as thanksgiving to God for what he had done for them, and with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of

salvation, quoting Isaiah chapter 12 and verse 3. They with joy drew this out. It was the most joyous, the most joyful festival of all the festivals of Israel. Now then, on that special day, something happened.

This was the eighth day I'm talking about now. There were seven days of feasts. They did this every day for seven days, but on the eighth day, it was a solemn assembly, and this solemn assembly, they did something different.

When they came up from the pool of Siloam with this golden pitcher of water, they marched around that altar of burnt sacrifice, not once as they had the other days, but they marched around it seven times to remind them that as they came out of the wilderness, they had marched around Jericho seven times, and God certainly showed that he was on their side, for the walls collapsed, and they took the city, and they did that. And on this last day of the feast, the last and great day of the feast, we come to our passage. Will you turn to John chapter 7 verse 37.

John chapter 7, the Feast of Tabernacles, and Jesus only went up halfway through, and he was teaching in the last part of the week, just in the courtyard, but people didn't lay a finger on him, because time had not come. Now it says in verse 37 of John 7, on the last and greatest day of the feast, most likely the eighth day, although some think it was the seventh, here's the eighth day, on the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.

By this he meant the spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time, the spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. So here now, when they'd marched around seven times, and they'd poured out of the water, poured out of the water, to remind them that when they were in the wilderness, God, they'd grumbled it up to God, saying we don't have anything to drink, and God had instructed Moses, strike the rock in the wilderness, and he struck the rock in the wilderness, and from that rock, water flowed from it, and all of the people had their thirst slaked.

It was like drinking out of a fire hydrant, just somehow all kinds of water just came out of the rock. Now then, when you get to the New Testament, the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, in the early verses, he says the things that happened to these people in the wilderness were for a very special purpose, and they had a meaning which many of those didn't understand, but he says that rock was Christ. Now Jesus, of course, not only knew this then, but he'd known it before, because after all, he's God, and certainly he knew what that meant, and he knew what he was going to say, but now, predating Paul, who quite a while later said that in 1 Corinthians 10, here's Jesus now, as soon as they poured out the water, symbolizing the water they got from the rock that God had supplied their need, there's this clarion voice just rang out in the temple courtyards, if anyone is thirsty, let him come unto me and drink.

You can imagine the electric effect that that must have had. They all knew exactly what that water stood for, and now he was saying, look, I am the fulfillment of that. I am the one that's going to meet your inner thirst.

Now, I hadn't planned to talk on this topic this week at all. Somebody asked me if, two people, in fact, asked me if I was going to speak on the topic of this book we mentioned this morning, which is one recently released, *Thirsting After God*, a book I wrote, a 300-page book of four-page devotionals on thirsting after God, and I wasn't going to speak on that at all, but it seemed that people wanted you to say something about it, so I thought, well, tonight's a good opportunity. I'm not going to speak on anything in that book, but it's on the same kind of topic.

I don't take this passage in that book, but this is the same kind of passage, and it's all about an inner longing, an inner aspiration after God. It's all about what St. Augustine's most quoted sentence, surely, of anything he ever said, the one you hear more often than anything else, is, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts can know no rest until they find that rest in you. Or was it Blaise Pascal, the French philosopher and mathematician? You remember what he said? He said that there was a God-shaped vacuum in our hearts, and of course it's only God that can fill that.

So when people long and cry out for something, they know there's no fulfillment in what they're doing. There doesn't seem to be any meaning to life. There doesn't seem to be any purpose in what they're doing.

They go to work to earn some money, to buy some bread, to get some strength, to go to work to earn some money, to buy some bread, to get some strength. You know, you cook the meal, they eat the meal, you wash the dishes, you lay the table, you cook the meal, they eat the meal, you wash. You know, it sort of goes on.

Life becomes a monotonous cycle, doesn't it? And they say, God, there must be some meaning in life. Well, there is. Oh my, I'm so glad that I too found that.

At 20 years of age, in Hong Kong, on the runway at Tai Chi Airport, God broke into my little world of time and space and said, Price, I want your life. And through that marvelous hymn, Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee, of Francis Ridley Havergill, I became a Christian that day. In fact, I won't tell you the way, well, I'd better tell you, but don't do it this way.

I said, Right, God. I was actually obsessed with sport up to that time. Now, it doesn't look like at the moment, but I was absolutely obsessed with sport.

I was crazy on it. I would eat it, I would drink it, I would write it, I would sleep it, I would teach it. I used to write in the South China Morning Post on sport.

I was a sports writer there, as well as doing other things, which wasn't supposed to be my job, and I was obsessed with it. And I remember saying, God, I'm not satisfied with this. Every rung I climb on this ladder, it seems there's always another rung beyond.

Lord, there must be something more to life. And I knew, of course, what it was, because I'd been brought up that way, but I wasn't prepared to accept it myself. That day, I said to God, All right, Lord, I'm not sure whether you can rid me of this obsession, but I'll tell you what I'll do.

I'll strike a bargain with you. I'll put you on trial for a month. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

You don't put God on trial, he puts you to the test. But you know, God is so gracious. Do you know he meets us where we are? Not where he thinks we ought to be.

Isn't that wonderful? My good friend Hoffman's there. How wonderful. I just see these dear friends.

I've seen them twice now in the last three years. I hadn't seen them for how long, Karl? Thirty years? Oh, boy, so wonderful. So that's what happens.

And God broke into my life and made a tremendous difference. And I trust that's so in your life too. Well, I want us to think about this particular parable tonight.

It's not really a parable, and yet it is a parable. Because what we're going to do in the mornings is we're going to go through in the Gospel of John, those various images of Jesus, those various images which, you know, I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the true vine, I'm the good shepherd, I'm the gate of the sheep, I'm the way, the truth and the life, I'm the resurrection and the life. Now, we won't be able to cover all those, but I'm going to go through, I am the bread of life tomorrow morning.

And I'm just going to give you some kind of introduction to that. And they're going to give me one of these move-around microphones here. You've got one of those, good brother, haven't you? And I'm going to move down here.

Now, I'm not going to put anyone on the spot. So if you don't want to say anything, nobody's going to put that mic in your face. But if you really want to say something, and I believe we can get something rich going here, because God can move into our lives and feed our inner lives with the longing to meet the needs of the longing that's in most of our hearts.

So I want us to do that tomorrow. But this one is not bread, this one is water. Now, this isn't one of the I am statements, but nevertheless, it's a marvellous picture.

And I want you to notice this marvellous setting that we've seen in which Jesus says this. Look at the second thing, not only that marvellous setting, but look at the amazing invitation here. On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, here it is, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. I find that strange, if anyone is thirsty. Isn't everyone thirsty? I think so.

And yet, you know, my gas tank may be empty, but I can leave it on the side of the road for a week in the car, but it may not be thirsty. Similarly, we may be empty, but are not conscious that we're thirsty. Many of us are conscious.

Many of you tonight are conscious that you're thirsty. And I don't care whether you've come to Christ a long time ago, you've become a Christian, you've given him your life, or whether you've not yet done that. That thirst is an ongoing thing in our lives.

I believe that when people say they're not thirsty, it's either because they're smothering that thirst, trying to cover it up, they're preoccupied with something completely different, or they are, in actual fact, using some substitute to try to meet that need that's within them. For there is that thirst within us all. And people have all kinds of substitutes.

I've written about a lot of those substitutes in that book, but there are lots of them. We're not going into them tonight. But I wonder tonight if you've been trying to slake your thirst with a substitute.

Some people say, right, I'm going to give myself to knowledge, I'm going to give myself to my work, I become a workaholic, I'm determined to be promoted and get on and on and on, I'm going to give myself to that. Other people give themselves to pleasure, I'm going to get the most out of life. Other people want power in all kinds of different ways.

There are many ways in which we have substitutes to try to satisfy the inner longing of our hearts that nothing can satisfy except Christ Jesus our Lord. Now then, he says, if anyone is thirsty. I want to ask you

tonight to be honest with me.

I'm not asking you now whether you've come to the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ and admitted your sin and guilt and asked him to forgive you your sin and become a Christian. I'm not asking you that. Because it's quite possible, as I said this morning, to be a nominal Christian and a nominal evangelical, to know all the truth, to dot every i and cross every t, and yet still not have that experience.

Dr. Tozer, who was my mentor, came a morning a week with me in my car, and that's what that book's mainly about. Tozer used to say to me, young man, you better be careful that you don't substitute the understanding of the concept for the experiencing of the reality. Now have you got that? So many of us, we substitute in our churches the understanding of a concept and put it in the place of experiencing the reality.

So as long as we've got it all up here and we can explain it to someone, teach a Sunday school class or lead someone to Christ or do something like that, as long as we can understand it, that's fine. But it's not. It's not.

That's a sterile textualism that can be. You've got it all up here and you know everything about it, but the life isn't there, the experience isn't there, the joy of knowing Christ personally in your life isn't there, and we're still thirsty. So whether you're a Christian or not tonight, you may still be thirsty.

Frankly, I believe that when we're thirsty, we're healthy. I was at, where was it, Briarcrest, I believe, in Saskatchewan, some four or five years ago, and a young freshman girl came up to me, when you say a fresh person now, it doesn't sound right, anyway, came up to me and she said, you know, I'm very worried. You know, I'm not satisfied.

You know, I'm not satisfied. And they told me that if I become a Christian, I would be satisfied and everything would be fine and so on. But you know, there's something I'm longing for.

I don't know what it is and I can't put my finger on it. It's like a jellyfish. I try to get a hold of it and then the thing slips away.

I don't know what it is. There's something wrong with me. Can you help me? I looked at her and smiled.

I said, young lady, you're very healthy. Be careful of those that come and say, yes, I've got it all and I'm fully satisfied. Now, don't get me wrong, mine.

Of course, we're satisfied with what Jesus has done. That's the finished work of Christ. You don't take the work of Christ and try to add something to that.

There's nothing you can do. That's completely paid for. He's taken the wrath for me.

He's taken the wrath for you. There's nothing more we can add to that. We need to be satisfied with his sacrifice.

But to be satisfied with my understanding of God, my experiencing of God, my getting into the very heart of God, if you're satisfied, then there's something wrong. You're very unhealthy. You're sick, in fact.

As Abram Heschel says, he who is satisfied has never truly craved for God. Have you got it? He who is satisfied has never truly craved for God. I meet people all the time as they get older.

Oh, yeah. They've kind of got it all and they act like they know it all and got it all and there's nothing more to get. Well, of course, you can't have a little bit of God.

Of course, God either lives in your life by his Spirit or he doesn't. He comes in. The trouble is that we limit him to our inner spirits and don't allow him to get out through into our minds and emotions and will and through into what we look at and what we listen to and all kinds of things like that.

And we need to yield that completely to him. But then we need also to take the meditation on the Word of God and we need to go beyond it. Oh, now, that upsets some people here.

How can you go beyond meditating on the Word? Closier used to warn me about that. Be careful you don't settle for meditation of the written Word, he said. You take Mary Lathbury's hymn, Break thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me.

Remember, one of the verses, one of the lines goes, Beyond the sacred page, I seek thee, Lord. And you know, sometimes you get hymn books in some churches and they change a lot of words. You know, they can't stand poetic license.

They've got to change all these authors' words. You get hymn books like that. And I looked at one of them the other day and it said, Not beyond the sacred page, I seek thee, Lord.

But they changed it to, Throughout the sacred page, I seek thee, Lord. No, it's beyond because we can do this. And I have time on this word.

How wonderful it is to spend hours because I don't work, I just preach. So as a result of that, I can get into... Thank you for laughing. I appreciate that.

That's hard work. But I get into this book, but I can spend time on this. I can go through the Bible in a year.

I can do my passage. I can read the scripture, you know, and say, fine, got it, and have no effect on my life. That meditation on the written word has got to be turned into contemplation of the living word.

Now, this word is living too, but we call this the written word. The words I speak, they are spirit and life. So that's living too.

But we call this book the written word and we call Jesus, the word of God, the living word. So I've got to move beyond this page and with it in my hand because nothing will tell me what he's like, like this book. I take those words and I say, Lord, I'm not going to be satisfied with Bible study.

I wish we'd never invented that word because people think that means it's an academic exercise to know God. No, no, no. There must be something better.

The Bible doesn't tell us to study. Only that old-fashioned King James one tells you to study to show yourself approved, but it doesn't mean that at all. It means give all diligence to show yourself approved.

But what the Bible tells us to do is to read it and to memorize it and to start to see how it can affect my life. So I go beyond that page and I say, Lord, I'm going to read it, memorize it, think it through, and then I'm going to translate it into prayer. And everything I find that's written there in my today's reading about you, I'm going to praise you for and give thanks to you for.

And everything I find written there that's a promise for me or something that could be wrong in my own life, whatever it is, I have to turn that into petition for myself. And wherever I find what God wants to do in the world, I want to cooperate with him and I turn that into intercession for other people. But you go beyond that then you say, Lord, now I've taken the word.

Now my spirit wants to enter into communion with you. And I don't know about you. I'm glad you can't see me in my quiet time.

You probably would never ask me to speak here. I do strange things. Anyway, I'm not going to tell you what I do.

But I do. But one thing I do do is this. I turn my meditation of this book, with it in my hand, close my eyes, see myself in the very throne room of God, to think that I, the worst of sinners, could be welcomed into God's throne room because Jesus died instead of me.

And I plead his name. And God says, come in, sit upon my lap. And I can then look up into his face.

Oh my, I'd far rather see God's face than God's hand. Some people always want God's hand. Give me, give me, give me.

You know, the prosperity theology. You know, name it, claim it. Whatever you want, you're going to sort of get.

Poppycock, that's not the way it works. I'd rather see God's face. I want to lean against his breast, feel his heartbeat, and look up into his face.

And I want to get to know him. And I want to contemplate God. That's the communion that we read about in the Psalms.

That's the communion that God wants us to enter into. So I'm asking you tonight, if you've ceased being thirsty for God, have you reached the limits of doing that? Or has someone told you that all you need is to make some decision, which is essential. You've got to make a decision to start.

But a crisis not followed by a process becomes an abscess. You've got to have a process beyond it. There's the crisis of justification.

God pronounces me free from sin because of Christ. And then there's the wonderful process of sanctification that God wants to make me like his son. Do you know, I remember hearing people say, and some of you, I noticed a number of Irish accents here, isn't that wonderful? All these Irish accents, look at them, they're on the organ, they're singing.

I guess the Celts sing a lot, don't they? You and us being aware. What was I saying before I got into that? I was saying something. It's gone.

Anyway, it doesn't matter. That means it's about time I got down to my business, all right? So I want to ask you this, whether in your own quiet time, whether you enter into such a time of communion with God, that each day you can turn to your wife, to your husband. I don't do it every day, but every once in a while over that second cup of coffee, I turn to my wife, I say, well, dear, tell me, what's wrong with my life that you've noticed? Have I grown in any way? I've got a wonderfully honest, most guileless person I've ever met for a wife.

Never known her tell a white lie. God's colorblind anyway, they're all lies. But I've never known God.

Well, I shouldn't say that. You know what I mean by that, don't you? But I said, have I grown? She's very honest. She'll say, well, there's this and this, or you blew it again, or you came on strong with somebody.

I have to stop that. Then she won't say, have I grown? But I say, I want to tell you this, that you're my model. You're my model.

Each day I see you before the Lord. She's got to take that 45 minutes at least in the morning. She'll find it either in the bedroom, or in the kitchen, or in the living room, depending on where the guests are, or who's coming to breakfast, whether it's before or after breakfast.

She's got to have that 45 minutes alone with God. And her life is just a beautiful model for me. It's so like Christ.

I know what I was going to say just now. It usually comes back. I was going to say, I heard it in Wales, and you probably heard it in Ireland, that God said, you know, I love my son Jesus so much that I want to populate heaven with millions like him.

Do you hear that? You've heard that many times. And that's what God wants to do. He wants to conform us to the likeness of his son.

And that's what he's doing down here now. One day that's going to be perfect. One day he's going to do a great job on that.

Even then, I hope it's not all going to be settled like that. I want to enjoy eternity getting deeper and deeper and deeper into the heart of God. I will hope it won't be all suddenly, that's it, boy, 100 percent, no more to go.

The joy of getting to know God is the unsatisfied satisfaction of the longing that's still gnawing away inside you. The unsatisfied satisfaction. Because as C.S. Lewis says, it's the actual longing itself brings the satisfaction.

You're never going to know complete fulfillment of that longing down here. And it's the longing that gets deeper and deeper. Now, the more you drink, the more thirsty you become.

That's the strange thing about the Christian gospel. The more you drink from God, the more you drink from that river, that fount of living waters, the more thirsty you become. I've never started drinking salt water, but I imagine I may well have to if I were shipwrecked or something.

I don't know, but boy, it would drive you crazy. Because the more you get, the more you want. But it's different.

This is the good thing. This is the way God made it. The more you drink from God, the more my infinite and eternal soul that has no limits to knowing God, and God who is absolutely, it was infinite.

God who doesn't have any borders, any limitations. My soul that he created within me that's eternal. That soul gets to know this infinite God and there's no limit to what I can get to know about him.

So it goes on and on and on. No wonder Abraham Heschel said, he who is satisfied has never truly craved for God. So here's the invitation.

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Trouble is, when people are thirsty, they go to other types of things, only to find that they're going towards a mirage, appearance without reality. But when it says, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink, it explains in the next sentence what it to come to me and drink.

He says, let me put it another way. Whoever believes in me, whoever believes in me, will have, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. So to come to Jesus Christ and to drink from him is the same as believing.

Now a lot of people can't stand that. They want to do something. After all, I'm a self-made man.

You know, I'm proud of who I am and I've always got all sorts of resources and wherewithal and I can make it on my own. Well, you cannot here. You've got to be willing to get down on your knees and in humility come to God and say, Lord, I'm desperately thirsty.

I cannot possibly be satisfied from anything on earth. Or as I quote in this book and the beginning of it in Samuel Rutherford, he says at the beginning of the book here I put, it was said of Samuel Rutherford that he had a thirst no earthly stream could satisfy, a hunger that must feed on Christ or die. A thirst no earthly stream can satisfy, a hunger that must feed on Christ and die.

And so you come to him and you say, the way I feed on you is to believe. Believe you are indeed Jesus, the Son of God. Believe you are God come in the flesh.

Believe you truly have come in order to bring us salvation. Believe there was no way out of it, we could never have had communion with you had you not taken the initiative. Now I believe that when you went to that death on the cross, you went there for me.

You took my place. I accept you today as my substitute and I ask you to come in and not be just my saviour. That's kind of easy believers in chief grace of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

No, I ask you now to come in and be my Lord, giving me the benefits of your saviourhood and giving me that forgiveness. Now that's what it means to come and to drink. You come to Christ and you drink by believing.

And what happens when we do that? Well the third thing, the final thing happened, not only that perfect setting for this marvellous passage, not only the perfect setting but the amazing invitation that we've just seen, but look thirdly, the glorious outcome, and then I'm through. The glorious outcome. Jesus stood at that last day and said, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this he meant the spirit whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

It doesn't mean to say the spirit wasn't around. He was around in Genesis chapter one, moving across the face of the waters. It meant that because Jesus had not yet gone through the cross, been raised from the dead, ascended to his Father, that the Father and the Son had not dispatched the spirit as another

comforter of the same kind to dwell in your heart and mine.

In that sense the spirit had not been given, but people in the Old Testament had the spirit of God, the spirit of God clothed himself with someone's body and so on. And I'm perfectly convinced that there's not a lot of difference between that and some ways in which we express things in the New Testament, although we have different language. But the spirit had not been given permanently, so when he comes into my life he's there to stay.

Not being given to anyone who trusts Jesus, it was more selective and it was temporary in the Old Testament. But now he says, look, if you'll only believe in me, this is what's going to happen. The spirit of God is going to be streams of living water flowing from within you.

Well, you know, we struggle with this, some of us. I don't know, many of you know this verse quite well. And it says that Jesus said, whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.

Well, I don't know about you, but I've looked back in the Old Testament and I find it very hard to find streams of living water coming from within me or within you. I can get a little bit out of it in Isaiah 58 and one or two other little passages, but it doesn't really say that. What it does say, and what indeed Jesus was speaking of here, is where the streams of living water flowed in the wilderness, in the rock.

And when the rock was smitten, speaking of Jesus being smitten upon the cross, being crucified on the cross, when the rock was smitten in the wilderness, the streams of living water flowed. Now then, he says, as the scripture says, streams of living water will flow from within him. I believe the scripture says that streams of living water will flow from within him, from within Jesus.

He's the fount of living water. He's the rock. That rock was Christ, says 1 Corinthians 10.

But, but, also now he says, if you drink from that rock which is Christ, the streams of living water, my spirit says God, will come and take up residence in your being, so that from your life too there will be streams of living water. So you're not just like the woman at the well in John chapter 4, three chapters back, where Jesus said that he would give her the kind of water that would be in her, a well of water springing up into eternal life. That was for her good.

This now goes further. It's not only streams within me, but in actual fact it's now going to go through me, and going to affect the lives of other people. Why do we spend all this time telling people about God, telling them about Jesus? The Spirit of God within us now causes us to share with them by life and by lip the wonderful things that God wants to do in our lives, if only people would know about it.

So I believe that that speaks of the Holy Spirit. Let me ask you then, whether God's Holy Spirit is real in your life. There actually are some churches, if you mention the word Holy Spirit, they'll immediately pronounce you suspect.

Or they don't mind reading it in the Bible, but if you mention it, particularly if you get excited about it, now I rarely get excited, but I'm kind of, you know, shy and, you know, but if you mention it with any kind of excitement at all, well, they will immediately label you something. I think what we've done is thrown the baby out with the wasp water there. I tell you, God's Holy Spirit is what makes life real.

I know all kinds of people that say they believe in Jesus, but somehow or other they give no evidence whatever that God's Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ, has taken up residence in their life. For if he has, the fruit that he will produce, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control, that fruit is a nine-fold description of the life of Jesus Christ. And frankly, what a spirit does is he reproduces in me, as we saw this morning, the very life, the resurrection life of Jesus, and it comes out in those other ways.

Now sometimes we don't show them, as I told you I didn't today sometime, but God knows that, and he knows that we're far from perfect yet, but we hope we're growing two steps forward, one step backwards, but that's what God wants to do. He wants to let people see Christ in us. You've seen people, and I've seen people, who you can see Christ in.

I was talking with one at length today. See Christ in them. Now, mind you, sometimes people muddle that up for a biological and physiological difference in people, and it's only the mild, nice people, you know, that never say bull to a goose.

It's only those that are really spiritual, because they don't argue with the ones that wish they were like that. Because if you don't argue with me, I think you must be very, very spiritual. Not necessarily the case.

I always say, what would Jesus have been like if he had been incarnated in my personality? Well, that's quite a question. Now, mind you, that can easily let you off the hook, say, oh, that's okay, he probably would have blown. No, be careful of that.

He wouldn't. He would have been perfect, perfect, even in your person, even in my personality. He would have been perfectly God, and he would have been sinless.

And when God's Spirit comes into our lives, I tell you, it starts to make the difference. Now, this is what happens if we admit that we are thirsty. Are you going to admit you're thirsty tonight, or are you not? If you're not thirsty, you're in bad shape.

If you are thirsty, I mean, by admitting it, at least you're sharing with everybody that you're reasonably spiritually healthy, because you're thirsty. If you're not thirsty and you think you've got it all, well, you're either dead or you're in heaven, but you sure aren't here. But I ask you tonight, is the Spirit of God that Jesus said would flow from his inner being into ours, is he real in your life? Is that the one thing you want? I tell you, the one thing I long for is I want to thirst and cry out after God himself.

I'm nothing I wanted more than anything else in life. I don't care about money. I honestly don't.

I don't care as long as enough to pay the bills. I never want any more of it. I must admit I'm a little bit jealous of people who've got more time than I do.

I love time because I like to read the Word. But frankly, what I want more than anything else, the principle of my life that guides most things is I long that I will know God better and be more like him. God, I say, it's been 70 years and I've only got this far.

I'd be terribly disappointed if you finish with me now. You haven't finished with me yet. But God, would you keep on working on me? Keep on slaking my thirst.

And as you do, do you know what God does? He takes that little thimble of your life and mine. He dips it in the ocean of his love. And you say, wow, the ocean's in my thimble.

I'm not quite all of it. And you say, I'm satisfied. Satisfied.

But no sooner have you pronounced the final D of satisfied, then God changes that thimble into a bucket, gives you an increased capacity. So you're satisfied and you're longing and thirsting, aspiring after God all at the same time. So you cry out again, Lord, fill me.

And he dips the bucket in the ocean of his love and he fills you again. And you cry, satisfied. No sooner the D, then he changes the bucket into a barrel and he keeps on increasing your capacity for him.

That's our great God. And that capacity is infinite. It'll keep on growing.

I want to ask you then, what's your life principle? What is the thing that drives you more than anything else? What is the thing that more than anything else is the crucial factor in every major decision of your life? You see, there's no half-heartedness with God. I'm not a fanatic just because I want to know God better. And they notice they use the full word there.

They don't just say a fan like it would be if I went after hockey. When it comes to Christianity, you're fanatic. You know, they use the full word.

But no, I'm going to ask you, is this your life principle? Do you just every spare moment think about God? Does your mind turn to him, long for him? Ask him just to commune with you, to make himself more real again to you as you cry out asking him to fill you. What is the one thing, the one thing that you seek for in life more than anything else? Let me finish with this. There was a man giving a concert.

He was a cellist. He was on a platform like this, and he kept on playing this cello. A lot of people in the auditorium, but he kept on playing that one, one note.

Kept on, put his ear down, he'd play it, listen again, listen again. Kept playing that one note, and he'd strum the string, then the same note all the time. After about 10 minutes, this woman in the front row got a little fed up, and she started to say, excuse me, mister, but that cello's got several strings, and you've got several fingers, you know, and things like that.

You're not, you're supposed to play all these different notes. Ah! He stopped playing. He said, madam, that's for those who are still searching.

I found the one note I was looking for. Amen? Amen.

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