

“WATERS TO SWIM IN”

NO. 1054

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 25, 1872,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Waters to swim in.”
Ezekiel 47:5.*

THE whole vision, though bearing other meanings, may be applied to the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It began at Jerusalem as a tiny rivulet. By our Savior’s preaching, a few disciples, some of whom became apostles, were converted. These were the means of the conversion of a still larger number. But at first the stream was very shallow, for the whole church could meet in one upper room. Even after the Pentecostal increase it was but as a small brook. Herod thought that he could leap across it, or could dam it up, but his persecutions swelled the stream. Very shortly after, the watercourse grew broader and deeper, till it attracted the attention of the Roman Emperors, and excited their alarm. They thought that it was time to drain the river, lest it should become a torrent so great as to sweep them away. Their attempts to stay its course only added to its floods. Its current became stronger and wider than before, and on it went from age to age till at last it had become a mighty river, watering the whole earth, and greatly blessing the nations. It is destined to grow until it shall be like the main ocean itself, for, “the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.” We bless God that the day of small things which dawned at Bethlehem has already grown to a day of great things, and our faith fully expects to see greater things than these!

The vision might equally well be applied to the growth of Christian *experience*. When we first know the Lord, the gospel is a very precious thing to us; we rejoice in its pardon and the consequent salvation which we expect to receive through it, but, compared with what we shall know of it by-and-by, our knowledge of the gospel at first is like a tiny rivulet; as we advance in grace it becomes a river flowing up to the ankles; as we are further instructed, so that our faith is confirmed, and our graces are developed, it deepens into a river up to the knees, and by-and-by up to the loins. And farther on (with some it has already happened—I trust it may happen to us all) it becomes “waters to swim in.” I shall speak of the text as illustrating the Christian’s experience when he arrives at that stage, but at the same time the vision might be applied to our knowledge of the gospel as well as to our experience of it. The gospel was gradually revealed, first, in outline in the Old Testament—in symbol and type to the older saints—and then was taught by our Lord. Then the details were, as it were, put into His outline by the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and so, to our own soul, the knowledge of the gospel does not shine forth all at once. There is a daybreak before the fullness of noon; there is a blade—a tender green blade—before the full corn in the ear; the babe cries in penitence before the perfect man in Christ Jesus sings the song of assurance. Perhaps we have not yet come to know the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ—neither have we yet discovered how exceedingly broad the gospel is, but what we now don’t know, we shall know hereafter. Contracted notions we shall leave behind as the bird casts off the shell in which it was imprisoned; dim ideas will vanish as the trees walking were seen no more when the blind man’s eyes were fully opened. Childish knowledge makes us dream of comprehending the gospel in the hollow of our hand, but when we become men and put away childish things, we shall find in it “waters to swim in.”

I see in the metaphor before us three ideas. The first is *abundance*; the second is *space*; and the third is *trust*, for there are not only great waters, but “waters to swim in.”

I. The first thought of the text concerning the gospel is this—the idea of ABUNDANCE.

Beloved, God has provided for His people, in the gospel of His dear Son, no stinted store; He has not killed a sheep and invited one or two to His supper; His oxen and His fatlings are killed, and “All things are ready.” The provisions of God are on a royal scale—on an *infinite* scale! There is so much provided

at the gospel feast that none need keep back from fear that there is not enough; neither shall the greatest eater at that feast ever say, “I have exhausted what was provided for me.” The wine ran short at the marriage feast at Cana until the Lord came in and then there was enough and to spare. As a king gives to a king so has God given to the poor ones of the earth—to His afflicted—to sin-stricken souls who seek His face. Honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock He gives His people. Moses spoke concerning Israel, “Butter of cattle and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats with the fat of kidneys; with wheat; and you did drink the pure blood of the grape.” But the food of the *spiritual* Israel is richer by far! The child of God, as he advances in the divine life, rejoices in the abundance of covenant provisions. Let me mention some which strike me as exceedingly abundant.

And the first is the abundant provision *for the removal of sin, and for making us accepted in the Beloved*. To put away my sin there needed an infinite atonement; I do not marvel, therefore, that it should have needed the Son of God to die for exceedingly great sin; but sometimes, as my soul has stood at the foot of the cross and considered who He was that shed His blood for me, I have felt as if the price were too much. When I have seen my sin, I thought it impossible for it to be removed, but when I have seen my Savior, I have thought it equally impossible that there could be any conceivable sin which Jesus’ blood could not wash away. An infinite degree of merit must reside in the sufferings of our blessed Lord! Such sufferings as they were, of body, of mind, and of spirit—the suffering of being forsaken of man and of God, too, and being left alone in utter desertion to die when He became obedient even unto death. It is the astonishment of all worlds that Christ should be the victim for human sin, and, when we think of Him, we say, “O God, what waters there are here of pardoning love—what ‘waters to swim in.’ Surely whole hosts of sin shall be swept away by this mighty river of atoning blood.”—

*“It rises high and drowns the hills
Has neither shore nor bound.
Now if we search to find our sins,
Our sins can ne’er be found.*

The wonder is, however, that while there is provision made to put away our sin, there is equal provision made *to impute righteousness to us!* We were guilty, for all broke the law; God provided a substitute who suffered the penalty of our law-breaking, but He has done more—He has found a representative who has kept the law for us, so that after washing us, He clothes us; after taking away our guilt, He makes us positively righteous and praiseworthy before the throne of justice through Jesus Christ, His Son, whose righteousness we wrap about our loins, and in it stand fair and comely before the eyes of infinite purity. Oh, this is right royal and truly divine! Here is blood most precious removing every spot, and righteousness most glorious conferring a matchless beauty, a beauty such as Adam in his perfection never had, for his was but human righteousness! But this day the children of God wear the righteousness of the Lord Himself—and this is the name which Jesus is called, “The Lord our righteousness”! Brothers and sisters, here are “waters to swim in,” if we only contemplate this one particular of the arrangement for our justification in the sight of God!

Turn next to God’s stores *for our sustenance and for our protection*. For our sustenance there is bread provided from heaven such as angels have never tasted; there is water leaping from the rock such as the fathers drank not in the wilderness. There is no fear that either the heavenly granary or the celestial fountain shall ever be exhausted; the manna was without limit except according to the capacities of the people—and so the bread which we eat, even Christ, The infinite one, is not measured out to us by weight, but each may have according to his eating. We are never straitened in Him—if stinted at all, we stint ourselves. After feeding millions of saints upon Himself for these hundreds of years, Jesus is as full and as precious, and as soul-satisfying as ever He was. O blessed food! How well has God stored His granaries for all His people! And the heavenly drink is equally abundant. Rivers are ours to drink of—floods and standing pools of living water; drought can never befall us, for “the deep which lies under” has been broached for us. And as for our protection, think, my brothers and sisters, how the Lord’s right arm is uplifted that His power may preserve the saints; how His wisdom goes to and fro in the earth watching for their good; how His heart of love beats high with constant affection for them. Just think how the whole of Godhead bows itself to protect the chosen—for does He not compare Himself to the hen that covers her chickens? Has He not said, “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His

wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler”? God, even our own God, is both the sustenance and the preservation of His people! And if we should need more, though more there cannot be—yet, if our unbelief should think of more, is not all providence on our side? Blows there a wind that does not waft us blessings? Breaks there a wave upon any shore which does not bear us good? The huge wheels of providence, as they are, are full of eyes, and these eyes look toward the chosen of God. “All things work together for good to them who love God.” And don’t you see? If your eyes are opened, you will see them—horses of fire, and chariots of fire surrounding all the saints! Invisible spirits of superior race are servitors to the beloved sons of God! All heaven’s hosts are ready for our defense! If it were necessary, the New Jerusalem would empty out itself of its thousands, as Thebes did of its myriads from all its hundred gates, and every angel would, with sword drawn, assail our foes and put them to utter rout, for the Lord will not allow one of the least of His own to perish! See then, beloved, what “waters to swim in” are here so that for our provision and our protection we need not fear! Our needs are great, but the supplies are greater; our daily dangers are enough to provoke our anxieties, but the Lord’s eternal preservations lay those anxieties at once to rest. Blessed Lord, we are poor feeble infants, but when we lie on Your bosom we feel ourselves mighty in Your strength; we are penniless beggars, but when we feast at Your table we would not exchange our position for the banquets of Ahasuerus or the feasts of Solomon! It is our bliss to be *nothing*, and to find our all in You!

We must not tarry, however, but remark that the same breadth and depth will be found if we reflect upon the provision made *for our training, and our perfecting*. Beloved, the Lord will not merely keep us alive and preserve us from perishing, but He means to make something of us! He has great designs in view. The poor clay of the earth, when it is first dug up for the brick maker, does not know what is to become of it; it passes through many processes, and at last is built up into a goodly house—a mansion for its owner! The clay of the pit may yet be built into a palace for a king! And shall we, poor earthly things, ever be living stones in the temple of God? I trust we are in some sense already so; but shall we ever glisten and glow like rubies and emeralds, each one after his own kind, as a portion of that city whose jeweled light is enough to blind the eyes of mortals by its excess of glory? Shall we ever be a part of the radiance of heaven? Shall we be revealers in our measure of the glory of God? Yes! We shall come to that, and though it may seem impossible, yet we shall believe it if we reflect a moment: God has already done much for us by giving us the Inner life—a matchless miracle! It needs as much of His power to make new hearts and right spirits as to create new worlds, yet He has done that for us! He has, moreover, preserved us up to this moment amid a thousand dangers, and has made those dangers contribute to our growth in grace; He has made our afflictions minister to our spiritual advancement; I owe more than I can tell to the engraver’s tool, and yet ‘tis sharp, and I feel the lines of its cutting even now. Yet, let not the engraver stay His hand, for how shall His work be done if He does not bear hard and cut deep? If there are no sharp cuts, surely there shall be no working out of His grand idea! Moreover, in addition to affliction, He has provided all the truth of God in the Bible to sanctify us; He has given us the blood of Christ to purify us; He has sent forth the blessed and eternal Spirit to refine us, and, as subordinate agencies, He has provided all our comforts, as well as all our trials—all our companionships with holy men, and all the beacons of unholy lives—that we may be educated for the skies! He is putting forth His wisdom and His strength, and His prudence, and His love—I must repeat myself—to make something of us, though we are nothing by nature, and “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” I think, sometimes, when I see my own nature, that it were difficult for me ever to become a vessel fit for the Master’s use in the halls of the golden house above. And then, when I think who has begun to work us to the same thing, and who it is that still is persevering in the work—why then I conclude that if I were even worse than I am, He could yet make me what He would have me to be! And seeing the power that is ready to work it out, my soul rejoices in hope of complete conformity to the divine ideal. Here, again, are “waters to swim in.”

Brothers and sisters, take another view of God’s great goodness to us. What “waters to swim in” have we by way of *consolations and strengthening*? Are you ever cast down? I hope you are not, but if you are, as some of us are frequently bowed down into the very dust, what a relish you will have for the promises of God! I am sure that a number of promises in the Bible were written on purpose for me; you may dispute it and say, “No, they were meant for *me*.” I have no wish to contest the point, but I still be-

lieve, as I have said, that they were meant for me, for they fit my case so exactly even in their very words, that they appear as if my case were especially intended. No doubt other believers think the same, and will join with me in blessing God for such a grand Bible! Well does our hymn-writer put it—

***“What more can He say than to you He has said
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”***

None can comfort a child like a mother; the mother knows exactly the child’s state, and by her very love she throws sweetness into what she says which another could not successfully imitate. There are no comforts like the comforts of God; the Comforter puts into the inspired word a singular sweetness which the most able ministers cannot arrive at, even though they should be, like Barnabas, sons of consolation.

Brothers and sisters let us think over our comforts now, for a minute, and our consolations. Have we not this for consolation—that God has loved us with an everlasting love, even the Lord who cannot change? Up to now He has never failed us; He has promised that all good things shall be ours as we need them, and it has been so. Have we not this for a consolation—that He has given us Christ, and therein has given us all things? Can He deny us anything, after having given to us His own dear Son? Let us think how dear we are to Christ, how much we cost Him, how precious we are in His sight. Can He leave us? Can He be unkind to us? Let us reflect upon the way in which the Lord has always appeared for us in times of difficulty, and rescued us in days of jeopardy. Turning to the Book and finding it written, “I am God: I change not,” let us be consoled for the future, and go on our way confident that all shall be well! All the covenant promises are meant to console us; all the gifts of sovereign grace are intended to give us joy; the attributes of God are springs of consolation for us; the human nature of Christ in which He comes near to us is a source of bliss! The gentleness and tenderness of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us on purpose to be our Comforter, are dear subjects of delight! Indeed, if we are down-cast we must blame ourselves. “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him.” The consolations of the Spirit are “waters to swim in.”

Beloved, we must draw to a close upon this one thought of abundance—just think of what God has done for us by way of *making us happy and noble!* He has not only pardoned us, but He has received us into His *family!* And He has taken us there, not to be His hired servants as we once thought He might do, but He has made us His own sons and daughters! And what is more than that, He has made us *heirs*—and not secondary heirs either, but “joint-heirs with Christ Jesus,” so that we have come right up from the place of the slave into the position of the heir of all things! Our Lord Himself, our dear and ever blessed Savior, was not content to pluck us like brands from the burning; not content to make us His sheep whom He should watch over with tender care; but He has taken us to be His *spouse*, and He calls us His beloved! Yes, and He has done more! He has taken us to be members of His body, and we are of His flesh and of His bones. Was there ever such exaltation as this? When Scripture speaks of lifting a beggar from the dunghill, and setting him among princes, surely it falls short of this wonder—that of taking a worm of the dust, a sinful wretch that was only fit for hell, and putting him into union with Christ Jesus, so that he should be a part of the mystical body of the Son of God! This is marvelous, and as I think of it, I feel that I have brought you to the seashore and shown you an ocean to swim in, the depth of which you cannot fathom! Oh the depths of the mercy of God!

Now, in all this nobility which God has given us there is not a single piece of unhappiness. I should imagine that to rise into some positions in society must entail sorrow instead of happiness, for as you ascend the heights, the air grows chillier, and the frosts are more perpetual. But the nobilities which God bestows are, all of them, of that happy—what if I should say—homely, divinely comforting sort, that the nobler we are, the happier we are? If He makes us sons, our sonship is not all responsibility—it means love; and if He makes us heirs, oh, what happiness to be possessors of earth and heaven! And if He makes us His own spouse, the chief thought of our marriage union is not service, but love! God is not to us, “Baali,” but “Ishi shall His name be called.” Not, “lord,” but “husband”—duty is there, but love is in the forefront. We become members of His body; it is an honor, but it is much more than that—it is bliss to be vitally, eternally united to Christ, our covenant head! Why, dear saints of God, however poor you may be, and however low in spirits, and however sickly in body, you have a whole sea of happiness before you! You have a drop of bitterness now and then, but you have an Atlantic of sweetness, rivers of

wine and milk! “Rejoice, rejoice,” says the Scriptures, and that most fitly, too, because there are, after all, more reasons for rejoicing than arguments for sorrow.

And then, beyond! Beyond! Think of that which remains in Immanuel’s land beyond Jordan! Open your eyes a moment; do not let them rest upon that stream which is not near as wide as you have fabled it, whose waves are not as rough as your fears have made them. Look beyond that narrow stream of death—what do you see? Moses’ sight from Nebo is nothing compared with the view which faith gets of the glory to be revealed! We shall see Him, and shall be like He is, and shall be with Him eternally! His glory is our soul’s delight on earth—it shall be our soul’s transport in heaven! What will it be to see the shining ranks of the glorified, and hear their blessed song, and join with them and with the angelic choirs forever and forever?—

*“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”*

Oh, beloved here are “waters to swim in!” Let us bathe our weary souls in them by faith before we leave this place. The Lord grant it, in the power of His Holy Spirit, and He shall have the praise!

II. But now, secondly, our text gives us the idea of space, amplitude, room. “Waters to swim in.” Room enough.

And here, let us remark that in the gospel, when our experience and our knowledge have deepened, we shall find a place of broad rivers and streams under the following aspects.

First, as to *thought*; many persons have the notion that the gospel is very contracted and narrow. I am afraid that a large number of our members have not yet obtained a comprehensive idea of the gospel—no, I am half afraid that they never will under some preachers who do not seem to have any clear view of the gospel system themselves, or, if they have, they fail to communicate it. Some deny the need of a system at all, but, somehow or other, everything we know throws itself into a systematic shape. And though we ought, beyond all things, to deprecate a cast-iron creed and the attempt to force every truth of God into one circle, yet it is a good thing to have a definite idea of what we believe in the things of God. Some have a tolerably clear idea, but it is a very narrow and contracted one. Now there is nothing contracted in the Bible—it is a great Book of a great God, inspired by the great Spirit, and calculated to give men great minds—for it is, in the great subjects of holy thought, “waters to swim in.”

Think only for a moment of one or two subjects of thought, and you will see the “waters to swim in.” Think of God as He is revealed in Holy Scripture; the Father ordaining all things, according to the council of His will; take the whole line of truth which connects itself with the Father. Then consider the Son as man and as God, the surety of the covenant, the substitute for His people, the intercessor, prophet, priest, and king—the Lord who is yet to come! You have a wide range of thought. Then consider the Holy Spirit. Dr. John Owen has written a massive volume upon the work of the Spirit, and you might write a thousand such volumes and not exhaust the mighty theme! He dwells upon the work of the Spirit in creation; the work of the Spirit in sustentation; the work of the Spirit in inspiration; the work of the Spirit upon the human body of Christ; the work of the Spirit upon our Lord in His ministry; The work of the Spirit in regeneration, in illumination, in consolation. Here are “waters to swim in” brothers and sisters! Indeed, the waters are so broad that I cannot attempt even to number them or make a map of them. Take only those lines of thought which come from the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—and you have boundless truth before you! Young man, you need never say, “I need to get a thought-breeding book.” Man alive, was there ever such a thought-breeding book as the Bible? You need never say, “I found myself stunted for need of subjects.” Oh, if you know anything at all in your soul about the things of God, you will admire the infinity of Scripture, and never complain of having slender room for thought! Then think of the doctrine of election and all those stupendous truths of God which spring out of predestination! If you love deep subjects, you certainly will find “waters to swim in” there! But if you are not a child of God, you are likely to find them waters to drown in as well as waters to swim in, for it needs a man to be taught to swim by God’s own grace in such waters as these! But when he once knows how to swim, it is one of the most delightful exercises in the world to take a bold stroke into the everlasting covenant and dive into the deep things of God. Think again of the subject which lifts itself aloft from the opposite point—human responsibility, and turn that over—a rugged subject, assuredly, but most true, and as certainly taught in the Scripture as the doctrine of divine sovereignty in election! There are many

who will not believe both these truths of God, but rest assured, you will have to put out one eye, and you will practically lose one arm unless you will believe both, for they are both taught in the Scriptures, and both sides of the truth will furnish you with “waters to swim in.” If a man should have the largest mind that ever existed upon the face of the earth; if he should be a Newton or a Locke—still, if he would set himself down and prayerfully study Scripture, he would find that the themes for meditation are altogether boundless “waters to swim in.” I could enlarge, but that might not be as profitable to you as to go forward.

Brothers and sisters, there are “waters to swim in,” next, not only as regards subjects of thought but matters of faith. There are topics in Scripture which one can hardly think of very long together—they are too perplexing. If we bend towards them, and fix our eyes upon them, we may strain our eyeballs before we shall see with understanding. There are mysteries beyond us. I thank God—I bless God that He has given me a gospel, much of which I cannot understand! For I am sure if I were able to grasp all revealed truth, and I met the devil in my vestry tonight, and he said, “Why, you have comprehended it all in your small brain: therefore it cannot be from God!”—I would not know how to answer him. But now, if he ever meets me and tauntingly inquires, “How do you make these two doctrines square? How do you make them consistent?” I answer him thus, “Are you, also, omniscient? Is nothing too hard for you?” It is no business of mine to make God’s teaching consistent in man’s judgment! If the Lord has revealed a truth, all I have to do is to believe it. I will look at it as long as ever I can—I will pry into it as far as I can go—but when God locks the door, and does not leave me the key, I shall not attempt to break the door open! And if He does not tell me, I believe it is my wisdom not to need to know; going to heaven does not lie in untying Gordian knots. Oh, how sweet to have something to believe where you get right out of reason’s depths! We thank God that in the Scriptures there is a good deal which you cannot reason on—which you could not explain to a man who has only reason to go upon—something which he scoffs at because he cannot see what it means by his blind carnal eyes. I am glad to think that there is something for higher faculties to grasp—something for the spirit, the new-born spirit, to lay hold upon! I thank God that there are great things to be believed as well as great things to be understood. And if I were now to try and show you the vast area which is opened up to faith, I am sure you would exclaim in the words of the text, “There are, indeed, ‘waters to swim in.’”

Then, blessed be His name, there are “waters to swim in” not only for thought and faith, but also for *love*. Some make the doctrines of the gospel a cold stream, like the waters of the Arctic pole, and love would be frozen if she were to venture into them. But the Scriptures are like the gulf stream, warm, as well as deep, and love delights to plunge into them and swim in them. Time would fail me if I were to try and show you the room there is for love in the Scriptures. We will therefore dwell only on one thing.

Think of the love of Christ to us, the love which nailed Him to the cross, the love which made Him give up His reputation on earth as well as His royalties in heaven. Think of the love which made Him become a worm and no man, despised of men, and a reproach of the people for our sakes! A certain writer has written two volumes upon the sufferings of Christ upon the cross. He has managed to write a chapter upon the nails, and upon the sponge, and upon the thorns, and upon the vinegar; and I must confess I have read his book with much delight, and I have thought that he did not make too much of anything he handled, and if he did seem to strain a point here and there too much one way, he might have gone a great deal farther the other way if he but had his eyes more open. In the agonies of Christ there is, to the contemplative mind, a fullness of unspeakable love which makes the heart feel, “Now I can love here without stint.” I can love the dear companion of my life, I can love my children; but there comes the thought, “I may make them idols, and I may thus injure both them and myself.” That is *not* “waters to swim in”; but if we loved the Lord 10,000 times more than we do, we should transgress no command in so doing—no, rather, the only transgression lies in falling short! Oh, that we could love Him more! There can be no excess of love in loving Him supremely; the coolest logic can justify the most intense enthusiasm towards Christ; if a man had no heart, but were all head, he might reasonably act towards the Savior as those do whose whole nature is on a blaze with affection for Him, and who seem, sometimes, to have forgotten the dictates of reason in the impulses of love! Oh, what “waters to swim in” is the love of Christ us! But, it is just the same with the love of the Father, and (I think I have told you once or twice lately), I am sure it is so with the love of the Holy Spirit! While it was most gracious of the Lord

Jesus to come and live with men, is it not quite as gracious of the Holy Spirit to dwell in men? I marvel at Christ among sinners, but I marvel quite as much at the Holy Spirit *in* sinners, for the best of saints are still sinners! To *live* in us, indwelling in these poor bodies of ours—oh, the love of the pure and Holy Spirit to do so! Here are, indeed, “waters to swim in.”

Yet, once more, for I have not exhausted this thought of space. There is room here *for the exercise and expansion* of every faculty within the range of the gospel. These are days of “modern thought.” As you are all aware, men have become wondrously wise, and have outgrown the Scriptures. Certain unhappy children’s heads are too big, and there is always a fear that it is not brain, but water on the brain—and this “modern thought” is simply a disease of *wind* on the brain—and likely to be a deadly one if God does not cure the church of it! Within the compass of the orthodox faith; within the range of the simple gospel, there is room enough for the development of every faculty, however largely gifted a man may be! It doesn’t matter, though the man is a Milton in poetry, though he is a master in metaphysics, and a prince in science—if he is but pure in his prose, accurate in his metaphysics, and honest in his science—he will find that the range of his thought needs no more space than Scripture gives him. It has been thought by some that these persons who run off to heretical opinions are persons of great minds. Believe me, brothers and sisters, it is a cheap way of making yourself to be thought so, but the men are nobodies! That is the sum of the matter. We are satisfied with the theology of the puritans, and we assert this day that when we take down a volume of puritan theology, we find in a solitary page more thinking and more learning—more Scripture, more real teaching, than in whole folios of the effusions of modern thought! Modern men would be rich if they possessed even the crumbs that fall from the table of the puritans! They have given us nothing new, after all. A few variegated bladders they have blown—and they have burst while the blowers were admiring them! But as for anything worth knowing which has improved the heart, benefited the understanding, or fitted men for service in the battle of life—there have been no contributions made by this “modern thought” worth recording! Whereas the old thought of the puritans and the reformers, which I believe to be none other than the thought of God thought out again in man’s brain and heart, is constantly giving consolation to the afflicted, furnishing strength to the weak, and guiding men’s minds to behave themselves aright in the house of God, and in the world at large!

There are “waters to swim in,” in the Scriptures, but you need not think there is no room for your *imaginings* there. Give the coursers their reins; you shall find enough within that Book to exhaust them at their highest speed! You need not think that your memory shall have nothing to remember if you had learned the Bible through and through, and knew all its texts—you would have much to remember above that! You would still need to remember its inner meaning, and its conversations with your soul, and the mysterious power it has had over your spirit when it has touched the strings of your nature as a master harper touches his harp strings, and has brought forth music which you knew not to be sleeping there. There is no faculty but what will find room enough in the word of God, if we will but obediently bring it to the service of the Lord. There are, in this respect, “waters, to swim in.”

III. But now, lastly, the text has the idea of TRUST, at least, to my mind; I think it will have to yours, also. “Waters to swim in.” I like to swim very much. When I have been at the seaside I have had a great passion for swimming, and I think I should have been able to swim by this time, but I could never persuade myself to take both feet off the bottom at one time. I have gone into the bath, and when I have felt a little of the buoyancy of the water, I have lifted one foot, and I have been half inclined to remove the other, but somehow it was not done! I could not, after all, quite trust the liquid element.

The text speaks, of “waters to *swim* in,” and swimming is a very excellent picture of *faith*. In the act of swimming it is necessary that a man should float in the water—as far as he is passive and the water buoys him up. You must keep your head above water if you are to swim. We are told that the body is naturally buoyant, and that if a person would lie quite still upon the water he would not sink—but if he kicks and struggles he will sink! The first sign of faith is when a man learns to lie back upon Christ—to give himself up entirely to Him; when he ceases to be active and becomes passive! When he brings no good works, no efforts, and no merits to Jesus by way of recommendation, but casts his soul upon the eternal merit and the finished work of the great substitute. That is faith in its passive form—floating faith. In the heavenly river you must float before you can swim. I pray God to teach every sinner here to rest upon Jesus. You need to save yourself, do you? You will drown, man! You will drown! As surely as

you live you will drown! Will you just give up, and let Christ save you? Will you believe that He *can* save you? Fall back into His arms! You will float, then! There is no drowning a soul that gives itself up to Christ, and trusts entirely to Him!

But the text does not speak of waters to *float* in, though this is essential. Many people never get beyond that floating period, and they conclude that they are safe, and all is well because they fancy their heads are above water. But the man who is really taught of God goes on from the floating to the swimming. Now swimming is an *active* exercise. The man progresses as he strikes out; he makes headway; he dives and rises—he turns to the right, he swims to the left, he pursues his course; he goes where he wills. Now, the holy word of God and the gospel are “waters to swim in.” Many of you know only what it is to float; you are resting in the truth of God for your salvation, but making no advance in heavenly things. Oh, beloved, let us learn to *swim* in those waters; swim in them! I mean let us learn to trust God in active exertions for the promotion of His kingdom; to trust Him in endeavors to do good. How blessedly our friend, Mr. Miller of Bristol, swims! What a master swimmer he is! He has had his feet off the bottom many years, and as he swims he draws along behind him some 2,000 orphan children, whom, by God’s grace, he is saving from the floods of sin, and bringing, we trust, safe to shore. Dear brother, dear sister, could you not swim, too? “Oh, but I have no money.” You need to walk, I see. “But I have very slender gifts compared with what I need.” Cannot the Lord give you gifts and graces? Will you not trust Him? Dear brother, are you called to serve God in a very difficult sphere of labor? Cannot you go on? “I have nobody to hold me.” Oh, I see, you are all for walking on the bottom. Beloved, it is “waters to *swim* in.” Cannot you swim without any help except the help of the All in All? See how the arch of heaven stands without a pillar? See yon lamps of heaven, how they burn? Who gives them oil? See how they are swung in heaven without a golden chain to hold them in their place? Yet they flicker not! Neither do they fall from their sockets—neither does the arch of heaven tremble!

May the Holy Spirit teach us to trust! Oh, may God teach us not only the passive trust which leans on Christ and floats, but the *active* trust which manages the waters, walks them, swims them, dives into them at will, as God helps it! We are not trustful enough of the invisible God. We are young eaglets, born of God to mount up to the sun, but we stand shivering by the nest, not daring to try our wings. Young eaglets trust the invisible air—trust it and rise aloft! It shall bear you up, and you shall not fall! Trust it more! Put out all your wing strength; lean on it more, and it will bear you up, up, up, beyond clouds and mists, up to the very sun itself! He shall rise highest who can trust most; he shall have most who can believe most in God. If you will treat the eternal on His own terms of boundless credit, and trust yourself without reserve to Him, there are great things in store for you! Blessed Master, give us “waters to swim in.” Though they should be stormy waters; though they should be drowning waters to our unbelief—they shall be swimming waters to our faith! And as we swim to heaven we will rejoice in You, “Having no confidence in the flesh.”

May God bless these few words to you, beloved friends, and comfort us all with His own consolations, and be unto us ever more and more God all-sufficient. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— EZEKIEL 47.

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