

LIFE'S EVER-SPRINGING WELL

NO. 864

A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”
John 4:14.

YOU have been busy all week with external things. You have had to deal with the questions, “What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?” It is well that at least on this one day in seven we should turn our eyes away from the external to the internal—from the less to the greater, for as life is more than meat, and the body than raiment, so is the *soul* more important than all that which surrounds it. It were most unwise in any man to be so continually attending to the exterior of his house as to neglect the comforts of the inner apartments, and the warmth of the fireside. It would be extreme folly in any of us to be very careful in the dressing of our body, and meanwhile to permit our body to pine away under some dreadful disease. That which is the more important should have the most of our thoughts; and if it must necessarily be otherwise during the week, at least let it be so now. Let us forget our buying and selling, toiling and suffering, caring and enjoying; and turning away from all that lies abroad, let us look at home, and view our inner natures by the light of the Word of God.

We have a great tendency, dear friends, to make even our *religion* too much external. There are certain externals of religion which are exceedingly important, but the danger is lest in our great zeal for these, we forget that after all there is something better and higher to be thought about. I pity the man who takes no interest in the great discussion of the hour with regard to the separation of church and state, but I should far more pity him if he were so absorbed in that discussion as not to inquire whether he was himself a member of the true church of Jesus Christ. Assuredly the questions concerning ritualism, liturgies, episcopacy, and so on, are very important, and a man who takes no interest in them is unmindful of great interests; but still, if a man were so occupied with the circumstances of outward worship as to forget the inward drawing near to God with heart and soul, it were a thing to be deeply deplored.

I shall invite you, this morning, to forget everything that has to do with the external part of religion, whether correct or incorrect. Forget the form of worship, the mode of song, the manner of prayer, and the way of celebrating ordinances—all these may for a while be put upon the shelf, and left there. We have now to do with the *interior* life, the secret power which dwells within; we have to consider that water which the Lord Jesus gives to believers, which is in them, “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

In a word, the subject of this morning is *the spiritual life*, the inward work of divine grace, the life which proves a man to be saved, the life which comes from God, and labors to ascend to God, the life on earth which is the bud of the eternal life in heaven.

I. Our first observation is that THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A DIVINE GIFT. Observe the words, “The water that *I shall give him.*”

First, the new life is a *gift*. It is not a principle dwelling in the man naturally, and to be brought out from obscurity. I have heard it said, and I have been horrified when I have heard so gross a lie, that there is in man something good, noble, spiritual, and that the objective of the Christian minister in delivering the gospel is to take away the ignorance and folly that may overlay this innate nobility, and so to bring out, and train up the precious vital principles which otherwise had lain latent within the human heart. Taking Scripture to be the truth of God, the doctrine I have just stated is of all lies, one of the grossest! There is *nothing* spiritually good in man whatever by nature; the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither indeed can be. We might long enough rake the dunghill of human nature before we found the priceless jewel of spiritual life concealed within it; man is *dead* in sin! How long will you hunt the sepulcher before you shall discover life within the ribs of death? Long enough

may you ransack yonder moldering bones in the cemetery before you shall discover the germs of immortality within the ashes of the departed. If man were but faint, we might perhaps, by a sort of spiritual friction or electricity, arouse him to life; if he were lying in a state of coma, we might by some gracious surgery, at length rekindle the embers, and make the life burn forth in its strength. But when we are informed, over and over again, by the Holy Spirit Himself that man is not only *dead*, but that he is *corrupt*—where is the hope of finding life within him?

The living and incorruptible seed of divine grace is a gift because it is not produced in men by efforts of their own, through the imitation of good example, or through early instruction, or gradual reform. Though for centuries the dead should be located in the neighborhood of the living, they will not, thereby, come to life. The example of life is lost upon dead men! For many a day might you read a homily upon life in the ears of the corpse before you shall thereby cause the skeleton to make any effort towards vitality. In fact, efforts after life are efforts of life; life is where there is a desire *for* life; life is already, in a measure, kindled in that heart where there is a true and sincere effort made to lay hold on eternal life. Life, *spiritual life*, is a *gift*, wholly a gift. It is given according to the good-will and purpose of God. If the Lord gives the new life to some, and not to others, He is perfectly free to do as He wills with His own. Gifts are not regulated according to the law of debts. If God owes to any man eternal life, he shall have it, for God will be debtor to no man, but He owes nothing to sinful man but divine wrath, and if He chooses according to His good pleasure to give a new and spiritual life to His elect, none shall dare to question Him, or say to Him, “What are You doing?” The divine challenge is, “May I not do as I will with My own? Is your eye evil because Mine is good?” The spiritual life which is possessed by any man was given to him as the result of an eternal purpose on God's part, framed absolutely according to His sovereign good will and pleasure—concerning which He has Himself told us, that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. This life is never received in any other way than as a *gift*. It is not obtainable in any other way but as a gift, and coming as a gift, it always illustrates the sovereign rights of God to give or to withhold as may please Him.

Now, I said that it is not only a gift, but according to the text it is *a divine gift*. Christ has put it—“the water that I shall give him,” by which we are to understand that Jesus Christ does not give us the Inner life apart from the Father and the Holy Spirit, but that still He does give it. The fact is that the Father causes spiritual life in us in some respects, for He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. As we are the children of God the Father, we therefore salute Him by the name, “Abba, Father.” But this life also comes to us through Jesus Christ. “In Him was life and the life was the light of men.” He is the medium of life; it is as the *result* of His atoning sacrifice that we receive it; it is when by faith we look to Him, that we begin to live, and it is in proportion as we live upon Him that we enjoy true life. At the same time, this life comes to us from the Holy Spirit, and is a result of the Holy Spirit's graciously dwelling in us. He consecrates our hearts into a temple; He resides within our spirits. Then we, who once were dead, are made to live; it is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the soul which is the great secret source and spring of the divine grace which wells up within us, and causes us to live in the life of Christ.

Observe, then, if you or I would be real and true Christians, renewed and quickened into celestial life, we must receive a mysterious life from God Himself as a *gift*. Take this doctrine to be true, and what is the practical lesson of it but this? If this day I tremble lest I have it not, let me learn the way by which this life must come to me if it comes at all; certainly not by my own striving and struggles in the way of merit, for it is represented not as a reward, but as a *gift*; certainly not by any power of my own apart from God, for it is spoken of as coming from Jesus Christ, and not as growing out of human nature. What, then, had I better do than make a solemn appeal to the mercy of God? This is the only attribute which smiles upon me; justice awards me nothing but death; grace alone can bring me life! If the Lord should refuse the living water to me, I could not complain, but His name is love, and I know that He has made a promise that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Let me come as an undeserving sinner, then, this day, and appeal to the bounty of God, and ask Him for His name's sake, and for His mercy's sake, to have pity upon me! Some of you think, perhaps, because you have been to a place of worship from your youth up, and have been doing your best to lead reputable and respectable lives, that perhaps you shall obtain salvation as a matter of course; but it is not so. You must learn that saving grace can only come to you as the *gift* of mercy—to that end you must feel that

you do not deserve any good thing from God, and you must confess your unworthiness, as I beseech you to confess it this morning. You must turn to the Lord your God with penitential confession on your lips, and pray Him in all His infinite compassion to give to you a life which you cannot create for yourself, and cannot find within yourself, but which He alone can bestow according to the riches of His mercy in Christ Jesus. I wish not, this morning, to preach mere dry doctrine which may seem to be an iron bar to shut up a sinner in the prison of despair, but, rather, I desire to turn this truth of God to a practical and stimulating purpose. You sinners, seek the favor of your offended God in Christ Jesus, for He is the Lord and giver of life, and your quickening must come from Him, and from Him alone!

II. Secondly, we gather from the text that the principle which makes the Christian is something INWARD AND PERSONAL. "The water that I shall give him shall be *in* him." "*In* him." Put the emphasis on another word, and we get another sense, "*In him*," that is, in the man himself.

The worth of true religion, like the value of gold, prompts men to counterfeits. Where there is a life within, it naturally shapes for itself some kind of outward manifestation. Unconverted men find it too much trouble to look after the *inward* life, so they take an easier method, and carefully imitate its outward manifestation. If a man who really fears God does this and that, then, although they do not sincerely fear the Lord, they count it decorous to do the same. Do they suppose that it is as easy to deceive the Lord as to satisfy themselves, or having the imitation of godliness, are they satisfied to inquire no further, and to rest without the reality? Many of the superstitions which encrust the Christian religion have, no doubt, taken their rise from some harmless eccentricities on the part of really gracious men. In them a practice might be pardonable, and possibly commendable, which in others, who have not their holy zeal, has degenerated into a vain oblation. Life demands, and should be allowed great latitude of methods in its display—even Siamese twins, dwarfs, and giants must not be slain, but to set up mere monstrosities of life as *models* is ridiculous! We can endure the odd ways of a really fervent lover of Jesus, but the mere wax-work of superstition is not to be tolerated. I frequently see persons coming into a place of worship looking into their hats, or shading their eyes with their hands, as if they were praying to God to grant a blessing on what they were about to hear. But I suppose in three cases out of four, they are doing nothing of the sort; it is only because it happened to be the custom with some good people thus to pray, that, therefore, formalists must pretend, at any rate, to do the same. In days gone by, certain Christian people set apart days of fasting, and then, in due time, everybody took to a course of salt fish. True Christians love the cross of Christ; therefore formalists must wear crosses of wood or ivory on their bosoms. If earnest believers practice true family prayer, others must sham the doing of it, though their heart is not in it. There is no Christian practice, there is no Christian habit but what has been, or will be before long, imitated by people who have no vital godliness whatever! If there is no good cheer within, at least the landlord will hang out a sign. If there is no kernel, men put up with the shell. Let all washers of the outside of cups and platters remember that true religion is not an outward, but an *inward* thing; it is not a matter of the surface, but of the core of our nature; it is not a robe to be put on, and to be taken off; it is a *life*, an *inward* principle which becomes a part of the man's self! And if it is not so, it is not real at all. "The water that I shall give him shall be *in* him."

How like to a Christian a man may be, and yet possess no vital godliness! Walk through the British Museum, and you will see all the orders of animals standing in their various places, and exhibiting themselves with the utmost possible propriety. The rhinoceros demurely retains the position in which he was set at first; the eagle soars not through the window, the wolf howls not at night. Every creature, whether bird, beast, or fish, remains in the particular glass case allotted to it; but you all know well enough that these are not the creatures, but only the outward semblances of them! Yet in what do they differ? Certainly in nothing which you could readily *see*, for the well-stuffed animal is precisely like what the living animal would have been; and that glass eye even appears to have more of brightness in it than the natural eye of the creature itself; yet you know well enough that there is a secret inward something lacking, which, when it has once departed, you cannot restore. So in the churches of Christ! Many professors are not living believers, but stuffed believers, stuffed Christians! There are all the externals of religion—everything that you could desire, and they behave with a great deal of propriety, too; they all keep their places, and there is no outward difference between them and the living, except upon the vital point, the life which no power on earth could possibly confer! There is this essential distinction—the *life* is absent. It is almost painful to watch little children when some little pet of theirs has died, how they can hardly realize the difference between death and life! Your little boy's bird moped for a while upon

its perch, and at last dropped down in the cage—do you not remember how the little fellow tried to set it up, and gave it seed, and filled its glass with water; and was quite surprised to think that birdie would not open his little eyes for his friend as it did before, and would not take its seed, nor drink its water? Ah, you had at last to make him know that a mysterious something had gone from his little favorite, and would not come back again. There is just such a *spiritual* difference between the mere professor, and the genuine Christian. There is an invisible, but most real indwelling of the Holy Spirit—the absence or the presence of which makes all the difference between the sinner and the saint!

Beloved, as Saving grace is an inward thing, so I also remark that it must be a *personal* matter; the presence of life in 50 relatives of a family is of no service to the 51st person if he is dead. If in the midst of this vast congregation there should be one dead person, the existence of life in us all could have no power whatever to resuscitate that corpse. Everybody knows that is true, and the remark is therefore trite, but everybody does not appear to perceive that in religion the same statement is correct! “We are all Christians”—that is the common talk—“Why, we belong to a Christian nation—are we not born Christians?” Or, “Surely we must all be right; we have always attended our parish church, and is not that enough?” Or, with some, “Our parents were always godly; we were born into the church, were we not? Did they not take us up in their arms when we were little, and make us members of Christ? What more do we need?” Our solemn answer is that all the religion which is not *personal* is vain and void! Men have no spiritual birthrights which can take them into heaven that come to them by the way of the *flesh*, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh! All covenant heritages come by the new birth; we are not heirs of God after the flesh, but by the Spirit; you must be born of the Spirit in order to partake of spiritual things, and if you are not so born, there is no truth of God that you need more to hear than this, “You must be born-again.” All the virtue that adorned your ancestors cannot save you; the divine grace that was in your grandmother, Lois, or your mother, Eunice, can be of no good to you unless you are a Timothy and love the Scriptures for *yourself*! Unless you *repent* and heartily believe in Jesus Christ, you might as well, perhaps better, have been a Caffer than a Christian! Unless you yourself, lay hold on eternal life, you might as well be a street Arab as the son or the daughter of the godliest saint in our Zion! The water which Jesus gives us must be in each of us if we would be saved.

I shall now pause again, and invite you to heart-searching, for my one objective is to be practical, and to deal with each one personally. Dear hearer, what about this matter? How fares it with you? Have you this life within you? I do not ask, “Have you been baptized?” I make no inquiry about whether you have taken the communion of late. Have you within you a life which only God can give? Is your religion only a thing of saying prayers, and reading chapters, and singing hymns, or is it a life? Come, now, suppose there were no churches, no chapels, no sermons, no assemblies for worship, would you still be a Christian? Have you a secret something within you which cannot be weighed in the scales, nor measured, nor comprehended in the balance? Have you a secret something within you which the eagle's eyes have not seen, and which the lion's whelps have not discerned—a secret inner life which philosophy cannot detect, which carnal reason will not perceive, but which is most sure and true—the incorruptible seed within your soul? Have you a life within you, strange, unearthly, and supernatural? Do your prayers come from *within*? Do your praises well up from the deeps of your spirit? Have you had personal dealings with God? Say, have you ever told Him your sins out of a broken heart? Have you looked to Jesus with tearful but believing eyes, and for yourself rested on Him? For oh, remember, as surely as this Book was written by the finger of God, so is it true that you can never enter heaven unless you have within your own heart the Holy Spirit dwelling there, and unless you are yourself renewed in the spirit of your mind. “Except you be converted and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom.” You must be born-again! How is it with you? God help you to search yourself, and give a just and true answer.

III. We must pass on to a third point which is clearly in the text. The inward principle which Christ implants within those who are His is a VIGOROUS AND ACTIVE PRINCIPLE.

“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water *springing up*.” Not a pool of water standing still, and becoming stagnant, nor even a stream of water gently gliding on—but a spring perpetually forcing itself *upward*. You have seen springs at work, and you have noticed that they never cease, they never pause—there is never a moment in which they are quiet. Let all things else change their occupation, the spring could fairly say—

“Men may come, and men may go,

But I go on forever."

In the silent night watches, when no eyes gaze upon them, the springs bubble on, and when the hot and broiling sun is parching the meadows, cool and clear are the ever-flowing springs. Springs are in perpetual motion, and no known power can stop them. If for mischief heaps of rubbish are piled upon them, they somehow percolate the mass, upheave, and find a vent for themselves at last, for their force must win a course for itself. So brothers and sisters, when God puts the New life into a man, it is a very active and vigorous principle. How have I seen divine grace well up from under a mass of ignorance; the man hardly understood the gospel, but yet he had a love to Christ, and that love displayed itself despite his defects. Even when a man falls into error, if divine grace is in his heart, it will yet reveal itself. Even in the case of Romanists, where there has been a true and genuine love to Christ, it is apparent in their looks to every candid spiritual eye; though all around it is the desert of superstition, the gracious heart, like a wellhead, makes a little verdure, and creates a few lovely flowers which none could disdain. We have known persons who could not read the Scriptures, and have, therefore, had very crude notions of what the doctrines of the gospel were, and have, in fact, been much misled, and much mistaken, to their own sorrow and injury, but yet, for all that, God the Holy Spirit being in them, they have shown a crystal life like sparkling well water for purity. How am I to account for it that there have been men of every extreme of doctrine, from Dr. Hawker down to Fletcher of Madeley, men ranging from semi-Pelagianism right up to the verge of Antinomianism, who nevertheless were so eminently holy, that one has hardly room for selection, because they have been equally seraphic, equally consecrated to Christ? Their doctrinal sentiments were so divergent that in some of their minds it is clear that there must have been much confusion, but the life-Spring within was not to be stopped by the rubbish of their misapprehensions, and through all their mistakes of doctrine, the divine life came welling up in all its delightful purity, and produced its legitimate results! God forbid we should foster ignorance or that we should for a moment settle down quietly under any errors of creed, but still it is a delightful thought that the Inner life is not destroyed by our misapprehensions or lack of knowledge, but still gushes upward a vigorous and powerful principle, overcoming all.

The divine life is such a thing of force that surrounding circumstances do not operate upon it as you might have supposed. In frosty weather, when we have seen the rivers frozen across, we have been told by peasants that the old springhead on the side of the hill was flowing on the same as ever. Decorated with icicles up to the edge of the old spout, still the stream gushes out! So a Christian may be placed in the worst imaginable circumstances; he may live in a family so ungodly that the name of Christ is only used to blaspheme with; he may scarcely ever meet with a Christian associate; he may even be denied the means of grace, the Bible itself may be taken from him, but if the Inner life is there, such is its native heat that you cannot freeze it; such is its constant force and power, that it will continue flowing! It might have been happier with the man; it certainly would have been more for his comfort and usefulness, if he had been under other conditions. But here is joy for our heart to recollect that under the worst possible conditions such is the energy of the divine grace which God implants, that it will continue to spring upward into everlasting life!

Brothers and sisters, pause a minute to remember that the life which Jesus Christ places in our souls is one which passes through the most severe ordeals, and yet survives them. Some of you have been in acute bodily suffering, but your love to Christ was not destroyed by that long period of sickness. You have been very poor, but your faith made you rich. You have been slandered—a trial always hard to bear—but your heart was not broken; you still maintained and upheld your integrity. Perhaps you have been under desertions of God's Spirit, which are worst of all: the light of the divine countenance has been hidden from you—still you have said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." And when you have walked in darkness, and seen no light, you have still continued to trust in God. Rough usage from God's hand is a severe trial to the life of the true-born Christian, and yet it is a trial in which the true Christian life has triumphed a thousand times, and it has come forth out of the furnace like gold seven times purified. No afflictions, however severe, can separate the child of God from Christ; none of the trials which surround the believing heart can stamp out the vital spark of heavenly flame.

Temptations, too, how frequently they threaten to devour our spiritual life! Have not some of you known temptations of so severe a character, that you would not like to communicate them to your closest friends? Or, there have been times with some of us, when the temptation which has beset us has been perfectly horrible, devilish. We have stood still and wondered with amazement how such a thing could

be suggested to us, and on the other hand, how we have marveled that we came out of it untouched, without the smell of fire having passed upon us! Ah, there may be temptations yet to assail us of which we have not dreamed. Satan is studying us, he knows most of our weak points already, every day he is considering the Lord's servants to see where will be the best joint in their armor through which to send a poisoned arrow—and he will probably assail us from some fresh quarter in a way quite new to us. But here is the blessed part of it—let man cast what rubbish he may or will into a running spring, the spring will still, by degrees, purify itself and eject the filth, and still continue to flow; and so will the truly living Christian—whatever may be the temptations that would beset him, his life within him will conquer all, to the praise and the glory of divine grace. If afflictions and temptations thus are overcome, so is it with prosperity. Many a professed Christian has been ruined by his prosperity; when the man was poor, he was well enough, but when he grew rich, then he did not like to associate with the poor saints, he carried his head much too high to enter the gates of heaven. Alas! Alas! Alas, prosperity! If adversity has slain its thousands, you have slain your ten thousands! Garnished as you are with gold and silver, yet are your robes purple with the blood of men who have fallen, slain under you, but the genuine Christian is not destroyed by his prosperity. He might be rich as Croesus, yet would he serve his God; he might be wrapped in purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously, yet would he still banquet with Christ! As poverty could not make him envious, so wealth could not make him vain!

Brethren, the inward spiritual life is so vigorous that it is not allowed to be destroyed by negligence and sins. I speak guardedly here—I wish to do so, at any rate—alas, alas, some believers have become very negligent in spiritual things. Who among us must not confess that he has been? But though I hope we shall never try this in order to discover what comes of it, yet we are bound to say that such is the power of the spiritual life in a genuine Christian, that no believer ever could be happy while living in disobedience and backsliding! Whenever I have been base enough to restrain prayer, I have never been at peace; there was no one to drag me to my knees, but I could not help praying; nobody would report upon me whether I spent so many minutes or so many hours in supplication, but, for all that, I could as soon cease to breathe as cease to pray! What if I could not rise from my bed, or reach my accustomed place to kneel, it did not matter—the Inward life pleaded, “Forget not to draw near unto God; lift up your heart!” And if the monitor was put aside, and multiplicity of work called one away, yet if there was a minute's peace, the Inner life could be felt welling up and producing a condemnation of conscience not to be endured: “You have forgotten your God today! You are not walking in communion with Him today as you should!” Such voices as these would ring in the ears, and the conscience would whisper, “You are out of joint today with yourself, and out of order with your God.” A true Christian finds it impossible to live long away from his God—the divine life will not let him leave his Father's house. Though he may sin, and this is a dreadful possibility—he may even sin foully—yet this divine life checks him the moment the sin is past. “How could you do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” He cannot go on in sin as another man does; his heart smites him, and when the heart smites, it is a strike indeed! A wandering believer is not merely pricked by conscience, but all the powers of the mind together cry to him, “After such love, such mercy, such goodness, and such favor, can you, the elect of God redeemed by Jesus' blood, act as you have acted? Oh, what shame is upon you! What a disgrace are you to the name of Christian, that after receiving so much, you could act so ungratefully!” No, the divine life will not be quiet! Like the troubled sea, it will not rest! If it is really in a man, he will have no peace except when he is walking in conformity with God's will, and when he once gets out of the straight and narrow path of obedience and of communion, the divine life will be a continual source of pain to him. Like David in the penitential Psalms, he will groan and cry out because his heart feels the divine displeasure—till with many a sigh, and many a cry he comes back again to the cross where his Master waits to be gracious, still—receives once more pardon through the precious blood, and goes on his way restored to acceptance with God, and to conscious enjoyment of communion with Him.

Thus you see, beloved, the power of the inner life as it works within the soul. It is a living, active, energetic principle, like a spring within a man.

I shall earnestly ask all of you again, before leaving this point—are you conscious of the existence within yourself of such an active power as this? I pause to let every man give the reply honestly. “My spiritual life seems very dead,” says one. But do you mourn your deadness? Do you feel you cannot be happy while it is so dead? That mourning is one of the signs that you are alive! It is a poor sign, but still it is a true one. “Ah,” says one, “I am not what I want to be.” No, my dear friend, I am glad to hear you

say that, for if you were all you wanted to be, I should be afraid you had set up a very poor standard of what a Christian ought to be. "Alas!" cries another, "I am very conscious that my private prayers and my secret inner life, is not at all in the healthy state it should be." Then amend it, my dear brother! Earnestly seek to improve it, but at the same time be very thankful that you do not feel satisfied; bless God that you are not content, that you do not say, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. I tell you the living spring cannot be stopped in its *action*. If you have but a cistern full of water, it will be quiet enough, but if it is a *spring*, it is forever seething, bubbling, gushing. When I have watched certain springs, I have seen them apparently casting up little particles of sand and dirt, making and casting down little circular mounds of earth—and so the Inner life within the spirit often brings to light to our own minds our faults, and our imperfections, so that nothing appears to be so active as our corruptions! Then we anxiously ask, "Is it living water that is bubbling up, or is it only the sand of my sin that is so full of energy?" beloved, grace lives and aspires! It is a rising flame, a springing well, and not a waterfall flowing down! It is a great mercy when the master principle within our spirits is not a going down, but a springing up! Be thankful for upward tendencies, and say unto the Lord—

*"You of life the fountain are—
Freely let me take of Thee.
Spring up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity."*

IV. I shall now turn, in the fourth place, to another truth of God taught us by the text. This divine life is A CONTINUAL AND EVERLASTING THING—"It shall be in him a well of water, springing up into *everlasting life*."

Jesus was sitting upon Jacob's well, and He might well have brought to the woman's memory how many classes of people had gathered around that well, and had passed away forever. Men had gone; harvests had been reaped; cattle had drunk, and flocks had been watered. Generations of men and beasts innumerable had come and gone—but there was the old well unchanged. So all in the world may change and alter, but the life within the Christian is intrinsically identical; it is evermore the same. Because Jesus lives we live. Some tell us of a godliness which comes and goes—beware of it, it is of no use! I have heard some speak of a grace that may be in a man, and yet he may lose it! Brothers and sisters, lose it? It is not worth having—lose it at once, and so avoid disappointment! But there is a grace, and of that the text speaks, which cannot be expelled from a man, but springs up into everlasting life! Get it, my beloved! And if you get it, it shall hold you fast, and abide in you, not to some *degree* of life—but to life *everlasting!*

What is the reason why the inward principle in a Christian does not decay? Is it not because it is essentially immortal? This flesh would soon corrupt, but it is kept from corruption by the presence of the soul which acts as a refined salt to preserve the frame! Genuine grace is preserving, and is in itself incorruptible. The Christian's spring never dries up for this reason—he has struck the main fountain. I have heard of some wells which are drained dry by drought, or because some deeper well has taken away the supplies; the well which strikes the main fountain can never be dried under the severest drought. I am not afraid that anybody will reach a deeper life than the true Christian has found, for his life is hid with Christ in God. All his fresh springs are in God. He has struck into the eternal fountains of the divine life in Christ Jesus; none can go deeper; none can deprive him of the hidden sustenance of his soul. You who live upon excitement will be but deceitful brooks; you whose religion depends upon the elocution of the preacher, you whose piety depends on sacraments, you whose godliness rests in your own doings—you may very well become like the dry and stony beds of occasional torrents, but those who depend upon the work of Christ which He has finished, and upon the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, who shall abide with them forever—shall renew their strength like the eagle's! They shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint!

V. The last point is this. According to the text, this inward principle is PRE-EMINENTLY AND CONSTANTLY SATISFACTORY.

Read the whole verse—"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." That is to say, he who has Christ in him, the hope of glory, is perfectly satisfied. He could not have been content with the entire world beside—learning would only have revealed his ignorance; fame would only have made him more ambitious; wealth would have bowed him down with avarice, but Christ in his soul has

filled him—he is perfectly satisfied! His heart is satisfied; he needs no better person to love than Christ. Once he pined for a lover worthy of his immortal nature, but he has found the Son of God, and his soul goes out in rapturous affection towards Him. As for his intellect, the more that expands with ripening years and enlarged experience, the more satisfied he is with the truth which is in Christ Jesus. He once believed it, but he perceives its truth more clearly now! He accepted it before on the testimony of others—he receives it now on the testimony of the Holy Spirit within his own spirit! As year rolls after year, he becomes more in love with his Savior than ever he was. Other things lose their novelty, but Jesus has the dew of His youth. Strange is it, but I am sure it is so, the gospel never seems so fresh to a man as when he is just about to close his eyes on earth! It never beams with so new and glorious a light as when he has known it longest. The babe in Christ thinks that he has perceived the whole of the doctrines of the gospel, but the veteran soldier feels that he is at the doorsteps, and has scarcely entered upon the knowledge of Christ crucified.

Dear hearers, I shall leave you when I have put to you again the same question which I have before suggested, namely, “Have you a satisfying life within your soul? Have you a life which makes you feel that there is nothing more for you to desire except to know more of God, and more of Christ? Is your soul at peace?” Now suppose the result of these questions should be to make you reply, “I am persuaded I do not know anything about this.” I shall be much happier if you come to that conclusion, than if you should merely listen to my sermon and only think of the preacher. Forget *me*, but do, I pray you, reason with yourself, “This man has told us very simply, and in plain language, about a spiritual, supernatural, inward life—I do not understand it. Then is the man mistaken, or am I in deplorable ignorance? Which of the two is the fact?” I invite you to try that question by the standard of God’s word. If you find I am mistaken according to the tenor of this book, why it need give you no further anxiety! You may pity me for my fanaticism, but if you find that I am right, as I am sure you will, O then, do not hesitate to condemn yourself for ignorance, but rather confess it, and seek your chamber, and say, “Now, in the name of God, if there is this new life to be had, I will have it! If there is no entering heaven without it, I will not live without it! If I must be cast away if I possess it not, then I will find it—I will find it now.” Never did a man sincerely seek but what he found the Lord willing to give! Go to your chamber. Look at your past life; survey your mistakes and your sins, and confess them; and then lift up your eyes to the cross and say, “O Jesus, given for sinners, have mercy upon a guilty one—have mercy upon me!” He cannot refuse you! As I read in an old Puritan this week, he says, “Come to Jesus, sinner; and if you are lame, come lame; and if you say you have no feet, come on your stumps; come as you can, for He cannot reject you till He denies Himself; He must cease to be faithful before He can reject any sinner who comes humbly to rest upon Him.” Try Him today, you aged people! Seek Him and He will be found of you! You young people, turn not your backs upon Him! And you in middle life, O close in with Him this day, and may He give you the water of life! Did not He say to that woman, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water”? Ask and He will give! What? Not ask when it is to be had for the asking? Ah, Lord, we ask! Grant it now for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 8.

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