

Christ, the Water of Life

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Jesus, wearied with His journey from Jerusalem, was sitting at noon by the well of Jacob, near the city of Sychar in Samaria, while His disciples were in the city in search of food. As He sat there a woman of the city came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give Me to drink." "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever 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" (John 4:9-14).

Truly it is no wonder that the woman said to Jesus, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." As yet she did not realize the nature of the water, which Jesus promised. But afterwards when she found out just what He meant, she was still as willing to receive of it. What that water is, which Jesus gives is made very clear by His words on the last day of the feast of the Jews: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly [out of his very being] shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37, 38).

Here we have the promise of living water, the same as He promised to the woman of Samaria. Here, as there, the water is to be in the very being of the one receiving it. And here we are told that that water of life is the Spirit of God, which is given to every believer in Christ.

Let us now read another statement. The Spirit of God through the apostle Paul said: "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom. 8:8-11).

Here we have a parallel to the statement that the water that Christ gives will be in the believer a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It is life itself, because it is righteousness. The apostle has said that to be spiritually minded is life in peace. (Rom. 8:6). And we have also read that the Spirit is life because of righteousness. This, then,

is that birth of the Spirit, which makes one an entirely new man; it makes the sinner a righteous man, a keeper of the law of God.

“For we know that the law is spiritual” (Rom. 7:14). That is, the law is of the nature of the Spirit of God. This is further shown by the fact that those things that are in harmony with the law of God are the fruit of the Spirit. (See Gal. 5:22, 23). So the reception of the Spirit of God makes the sinner another person, with a different nature. It makes him living a different life. The Spirit is the Spirit of God, and its righteousness is the righteousness of God, and that is expressed in the Ten Commandments. The Spirit ministers this righteousness to the man, and lives in him. His character is then the character of God, because he is one with God, he has been made a new creature, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. He has “put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24).

This is the beginning of eternal life, for the life of the Spirit of God is eternal, and it is that life which the man now lives. This is the life of Jesus manifest in mortal flesh. (2 Cor. 4:11). It is of this that the beloved disciple speaks in his epistle, when he says that he who confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is born of God. (1 John 4:2). God dwells in that man as truly as His life was manifest in Jesus of Nazareth. Not because there is anything in the man himself comparable to Jesus of Nazareth, but because Jesus, who was the fullness of God dwells in him. “Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

This life is received by faith, and must be retained by faith. So long as a man keeps the faith, so long as he lives the life, for “the just shall live by faith.” He may go to the grave, but nothing can affect his eternal life. That is “hid with Christ in God.” As it was not possible that the grave should hold Jesus, so it is not possible that the grave should hold him. (See Acts 2:24). When he breathes his last He is just as sure of eternal life as he ever was. For Jesus said, “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” And again, “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.” The power of the life that is given to the man at conversion raises him from the dead, if he dies in faith.

But let us read further as to the nature of this life, which may be, drank in as water.

The Life and the Law

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“For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light” (Ps. 36:9). “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). These two texts, together with those in the preceding article, show very clearly that Christ is the life of all who receive Him. His life is the life of God. And we have seen that that life is righteousness; and that means that it is of the very nature of the law of God, for it is declared to be the righteousness of God.

A fountain is a place from which water flows freely and constantly. Therefore life may be received from God just as one would drink from a fountain to refresh himself. That this is the way that righteousness is to be obtained, the Scriptures plainly show. Let us trace the figure.

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:1-4).

Unmistakable reference is here made to the bringing of water from the rock in the wilderness, that the Israelites might drink. Let us turn to that. We find the record in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus. The people were in the desert, and there was no water. The Lord Himself had brought them there, but they did not think of that, but concluded that they were about to perish. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smote the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel” (Ex. 17:5,6).

Notice that this rock whence the water came, was in Horeb. Horeb and Sinai are the same, for whereas in Exodus the law is said to have been spoken from Sinai, in Deuteronomy it is said to have been spoken from Horeb; and in Mal. 4:4 we read, “Remember the law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.” So the water came from the same mountain from which the law was afterward spoken.

Moreover, the water was flowing at the very time that the law was spoken. For there was no water in that place except what came from the rock, and if it had ceased flowing as soon as the people had once quenched their thirst, they would soon have been as bad off as they were before. Now notice well whence the water came. Moses smote the rock, but he did not give the water to the people. Christ stood on the rock; and in Corinthians we read that the people drank from the Rock, which is Christ. The water came in a miraculous manner from Christ Himself. It was the same miracle that was afterwards performed in giving the multitudes bread, as we read in the last paper.

Of the manna we read that it was given that they might know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (See Deut. 8:3). So it must have been with the water. It was to teach the people trust in the Lord, not only for temporal blessings, but for spiritual life also. Now when we remember that Jesus says that He gives the water of life to all who believe in Him, and that this water is the Holy Spirit, which ministers the righteousness of the law of God, we must know that by giving the Israelites water in that miraculously manner, He meant to teach them that just as they drink that water to refresh their physical life, so they might by believing Him, drink of His righteousness. That this is so is indicated by the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

Sinai stands as the embodiment of law. But by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. This was indicated in the giving of the law. It was given amid thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake. It was death to so much as touch the mount. That indicated that no one could approach the holy law that was spoken there from, to obtain righteousness. "The law worketh wrath" (Rom. 4:15). It has only death to give to the sinner. Yet it was a fact that no one could have life except he had the righteousness of that same law. What hope, then, was there for the people? Why, this was the lesson that they were to learn from the circumstance, and which we are to learn from the record of it: Although righteousness cannot be obtained from the law, any more than the people could touch the mountain from which it was spoken, yet as they could stand afar off and drink of the water which was flowing from the mountain, so they could drink in the righteousness of the law by receiving Christ, the giver of the water. Happy would it have been for them if they had learned the lesson.

Thus we see that in the very giving of the law, the people were plainly taught that righteousness could not be gained from the law, but only through Christ. The law was ordained in the hands of a Mediator (Gal. 3:19), and Christ is the one Mediator between God and man. (1 Tim. 2:5). He is not Mediator in the sense that He shields us from the wrath of God, for God does not hate us. He loves sinners. But Christ is Mediator in the sense that through Him the righteousness of God is conveyed to us, so that we may be reconciled to Him. The water flowing from the rock as the law was spoken, was an indication that they could through Christ just as freely drink of the righteousness which the law demanded, and thus have eternal life.

Out of the heart are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23), and the law of God was in the heart of the Lord Jesus. (Ps. 40:8). Therefore the life, which comes from Him to us, is the righteousness of the law. Now see how things in the heavens were pictured out before the faces of the children of Israel, and before our faces, too, if we receive the Bible record as the living word of God.

The law of God is the foundation of the throne of God. (See Ps. 89:14). God dwells between the cherubim. (Ps. 80:1). In the sanctuary, which Moses built, there was an ark, upon the cover of which were two cherubim, and within which, underneath the cherubim was the law of God, the Ten Commandments. It was between these two cherubim, over the law, that the glory of God appeared, and from there He spoke to the

people. (See Ex. 25:10-22). Thus the ark was a symbol of the throne of God, showing that the law is literally the basis of it; for the earthly tabernacle was a pattern of things in the heavens. (Heb. 9:23, 24).

Now read Rev. 22:1. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." This river is a real, literal river, yet it is of it that we are to drink even now. For the call is, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). And Jesus says, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6). This river of water of life comes direct from the throne of God, and in that throne is the law. Of it we may drink freely. But as it comes from the throne of God, it is as it were charged with the righteousness of that law, so that as we drink it we drink in the righteousness of God. And as that water is our life, just as earthly water gives fresh life to our fainting bodies, therefore our lives are righteousness.

It was to impress this lesson upon the minds of the children of Israel in the desert that the things took place in connection with Sinai. And it was to impress the same lesson upon our minds that the record of those occurrences was written. The mountain was the embodiment of law; the law had nothing but terror for them; but the water was flowing from the same mountain; it however came from Christ, from whom the law also came. All this was to teach us that the law which was spoken from Sinai is the standard of righteousness, but that while it is death to us when we come to it ourselves alone, it is life to us when we drink of it as Christ ministers it to us. And thus may we know that His commandment is life eternal, and that whosoever will may drink freely of the fountain of life, and thereby be filled with righteousness.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 'Behold I freely give
 The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
 Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
 And now I live in Him."