

COME AND WELCOME

NO. 279

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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
Revelation 22:17.*

THE cry of the Christian religion is the simple word, “Come.” The Jewish law said, “Go and take heed unto your steps as to the path in which you shall walk. Go and break the commandments and you shall perish. Go and keep them and you shall live.” The law was a dispensation of the whip, which drove men before it. The Gospel is just of the opposite kind. It is the Shepherd’s dispensation. He goes before His sheep and He bids them follow Him, saying unto them, “Come.” The Law repels. The Gospel attracts. The law shows the distance between God and man. The Gospel bridges that distance and brings the sinner across that great fixed gulf which Moses could never bridge.

The fact is—as you will all have to learn, if you know anything of gracious experience—that from the first moment of your spiritual life until you are ushered into Glory, the cry of Christ to you will be, “Come, come unto Me.” He will always be ahead of you, bidding you follow Him as the soldier follows his leader. He will always go before you to pave your way and to prepare your path and He will bid you come after him all through life. And in the solemn hour of death, when you shall lie panting upon your bed, His sweet words with which He shall usher you into the heavenly world shall be—“Come, come unto Me. Stretch your wings and fly straight to this world of joy where I am dwelling. Come and be with Me where I am.”

No, further than this, this is not only Christ’s cry to you. But if you are a Believer, this is your cry to Christ—“Come! Come!” You will be longing for His second advent. You will be saying, “Come quickly, even so come, Lord Jesus.” And you will be always panting for nearer and closer communion with Him. As His voice to you is “Come,” even so will be your prayer to Him, “Come, Lord and abide in my house. Come and consecrate me more fully to Your service. Come and without a rival reign, come, occupy alone the throne of my heart.”

“Come,” then, is the very motto of the Gospel. I hope to expand that word, this morning, to beat out the golden grain into gold leaf and may God the Holy Spirit speak this day with His minister and may some who have never come to Jesus before, now come to Him for the first time. Let us go at once to our text—“Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Now, there are four things very plain from our text, namely, that first, there is a “water of life.” That secondly, the invitation is very wide—“Whoever will.” That thirdly, the path is clear, for it says, “Whoever will, let him come.” And then again, that, fourthly, the only rule that is prescribed is—let him take it “freely.” That is the only price demanded and the only condition, which indeed is not a condition, but a deathblow to all conditions. “Let him come and take the water of life freely.”

I. First, then, remember I am about to preach a very simple sermon this morning, dealing with simple souls. I am longing to see sinners brought to Christ. My heart yearns after the multitude of men who see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. God has saved many in this place. May He be pleased this morning to bring some wanderer to the Father’s house, through the merit of the Son’s Cross by the Spirit’s influence. Well, then, THERE IS A “WATER OF LIFE.” Man is utterly ruined and undone. He is lost in a wild waste wilderness. The skin bottle of his righteousness is all dried up and there is not so much as a drop of water in it. The heavens refuse him rain and the earth can yield him no moisture.

Must he perish? He looks aloft, beneath, around and he discovers no means of escape. Must he die? Must thirst devour him? Must he fall upon the desert and leave his bones to bleach under the hot sun? No. For the text declares there is a fountain of life. Ordained in old eternity by God in solemn Covenant, this fountain, this Divine well, takes its spring from the deep foundations of God’s decrees. It gushes up from the depth which couches beneath. It comes from that place

which the eagle's eye has not seen and which the lion's whelp has not passed over. The deep foundations of Godly government, the depth of His own essential goodness and of His Divine nature—these are the mysterious springs from which gush forth that fountain of the “water of life” which shall do good to a man.

The Son has dug this well and bored through massive rocks which prevented this living water from springing upward. Using His Cross as the grand instrument He has pierced through rocks, He has Himself descended to the lowest depth and He has broken a passage by which the love and Grace of God, the living water which can save the soul, may well up and overflow to quench the thirst of dying men. The Son has bid this fountain freely flow, has removed the stone which laid upon the mouth thereof and now, having ascended upon high, He stands there to see that the fountain shall never stop its life-giving course, that its floods shall never be dry, that its depths shall never be exhausted. This sacred fountain, established according to God's good will and pleasure in the Covenant, opened by Christ when He died upon the Cross, flows this day to give life and health and joy and peace to poor sinners dead in sin and ruined by the Fall. There is a “water of life.”

Let us pause awhile and look at its floods as they come gushing upwards, overflowing on every side and assuaging men's thirst. Let us look with joyous eye. It is called the “water of life,” and richly does it deserve its name. God's favor is life and in His presence there is pleasure forever more. This water is God's favor and consequently life. By this water of life is intended God's Free Grace, God's love for men, so, that if you come and drink, you shall find this to be life, indeed, to your soul. In drinking of God's Grace you inherit God's love, you are reconciled to God, God stands in a fatherly relation to you—He loves you and His great infinite heart yearns towards you.

Again—it is living water not simply because it is love and that is life, but it saves from impending death. The sinner knows that he must die because he is filthy. He has committed sins so tremendous that God must punish him. God must cease to be just if He does not punish the sins of man. Man, when conscious that he has been very guilty, stands shivering in the presence of his Maker, feeling in his soul that his doom is signed and sealed and that he must certainly be cast away from all hope and life and joy. Come here, then, you sin-doomed ones! This water can wash away your sins and when your sins are washed away, then shall you live. For the innocent must not be punished. Here is water that can make you whiter than driven snow. Though you are black with sin as Kedar's smoky tents, here is water that can purge you and wash you to the whiteness of perfection and make you fair as the curtains of king Solomon.

These waters well deserve the name of life, since pardon is a condition of life. Unpardoned we die, we perish, we sink into the depths of Hell. Pardoned we live, we rise, we ascend to the very heights of Heaven. See here, then, this ever-gushing fountain will give to all who take thereof life from the dead, by the pardon of their sins. “But,” says the poor convicted soul, “This is not all I want, for if all the sins I have ever committed were blotted out, in ten minutes I should commit many more. If I were now completely pardoned, it would not be many seconds before I should destroy my soul and sink helplessly again.”

Yes! But see here this is *living water*, it can quench your thirst of sin. Entering into your soul it shall overcome and cover with its floods your propensities to evil. It shall cover them first—it shall afterwards drown them—and at last it shall utterly carry them away, sucking them into its whirlpool-depths where they shall never be found any more, forever. Oh Sinners! This fountain of Gospel Grace can so wash your hearts that you shall no longer love sin. Yes, so perfectly can this water refine the soul that it shall one day make you as spotless as the angels who stand before the Throne of God and you, too, like they, shall obey the behests of God, hearkening to His commands and rejoice to be His servants. This is life, indeed, for here is a favor, here is pardon, here is sanctity, the renewing of the soul by the washing of water, through the Word.

“But,” says one, “I have a longing within me which I cannot satisfy. I feel sure that if I am pardoned yet there are some things which I want—which nothing I have ever heard of, or have ever seen or handled can satisfy. I have within me an aching void which the world can never fill.” “There was a time,” says one, “when I was satisfied with the theater, with the amusements. The pleasures of men of the world were very satisfactory to me. But lo, I have pressed this olive till it yields no more the generous oil. It is but the thick excrement thereof that now I can obtain. My joys have faded. The beauty of my fat valley has become as a faded flower. No longer can I rejoice in the music of this world.”

Ah, Soul, glad am I that your cistern has become dry, for till men are dissatisfied with this world they never look out for the next. Till the god of this world has utterly deceived them they will not look to Him who is the only living and true

God. But hearken! You that are wretched and miserable, here is living water that can quench your thirst. Come here and drink and you shall be satisfied. For he that is a Believer in Christ finds enough for him in Christ now, and enough forever. The Believer is not the man who has to pace his room, saying, "I find no amusements and no delight." He is not the man whose days are weary and whose nights are long. He finds in religion such a spring of joy, such a fountain of consolation that he is content and happy.

Put him in a dungeon and he will find good company. Place him in a barren wilderness, still he could eat the bread of Heaven. Drive him away from friendship, he will find the "Friend that sticks closer than a brother." Blast all his gourds and he will find shadow beneath the Rock of Ages. Sap the foundation of his earthly hopes, but since the foundation of his God stands sure, his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord. There is such a fullness in religion, that I can honestly testify from experience—

*"I would not change my best estate,
For all that earth calls good or great."*

I never knew what happiness was till I knew Christ. I thought I did. I warmed my hands before the fire of sin, but it was a painted fire. But oh, when once I tasted the Savior's love and had been washed in Jesus' blood, that was Heaven begun below—

*"'Tis Heaven on earth and Heaven above,
To see His face, to taste His love."*

Oh, if you did but know the joys of religion, if you did but know the sweetness of love to Christ, surely you could not stand aloof. If you could but catch a glimpse of the Believer when he is dancing for joy, you would renounce your wildest mirth, your greatest joy, to become the meanest child in the family of God. Thus it is the living water, it is the water of life—because it satisfies our thirst and gives us the reality of life which we can never find in anything beneath the sky.

And here let me add very briefly, he who once drinks of this water of life, drinks that which will quench his thirst forever. You shall never thirst again, except it is that you shall long for deeper draughts of this living fountain.

In that sweet manner shall you thirst. It shall not be a thirst of pain, it shall be a thirst of loving joy—a happy thirst—you will find it a sweet thing to be thirsting after more of Christ's love. Become a Christian and you shall be satisfied for life, you shall then be able to say—"Return unto your rest, O my son, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." You shall find an ever-living tree upon which you shall build your nest and no axe shall ever fell it. No winds shall ever shake your quiet resting place, but you shall rest forever on the dear bosom of the Savior where you shall find eternal rest, eternal joy and peace. Oh, come and take of Him and drink of the water of life freely.

And, moreover, he who drinks of this living water shall never die. His body shall see corruption for a little while, but his soul, mounting aloft, shall dwell with Jesus. Yes! And his very body when it has passed through the purifying process, shall rise again more glorious than when it was sown in weakness. It shall rise in glory, in honor, in power, in majesty—and united with the soul—it shall everlastingly inherit the joys which Christ has prepared for them that love Him. This is the living water. I see the fountain flowing now, freely flowing, sparkling with all these excellent properties. Who would not long to come and drink thereof?

II. In the second place we observe from the text that the invitation is very wide—"WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." How wide is this invitation! There are some ministers who are afraid to invite sinners, then why are they ministers? They are afraid to perform the most important part of the sacred office. There was a time, I must confess, when I somewhat faltered when about to give a free invitation. My doctrinal sentiments did at that time somewhat hamper me. I boldly avow that I am unchanged as to the doctrines I have preached. I preach Calvinism as high, as stern and as sound as ever. But I do feel and always did feel an anxiety to invite sinners to Christ. And I do feel also, that not only is such a course consistent with the soundest doctrines, but that the other course is, after all the unsound one and has no title whatever to plead Scripture on its behalf.

There has grown up in many Baptist Churches an idea that none are to be called to Christ but what they call "sensible" sinners. I sometimes rebut that by remarking that I call stupid sinners to Christ as well as sensible sinners and that stupid sinners make by far the greatest proportion of the ungodly. But I glory in the avowal that I preach Christ even to insensible sinners—that I would say even to the dry bones of the valley, as Ezekiel did, "You dry bones live!" Doing it as an act of faith. Not faith in the power of those that hear to obey the command, but faith in the power of God who gives the command to give strength also to those addressed, that they may be constrained to obey it. But now listen to my

text—for here, at least—there is no limitation. But sensible or insensible, all that the text says is, “Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.”

The one question I have to ask this morning is, are you willing? If so, Christ bids you take the water of life. Are you willing? If so, be pardoned, be sanctified, be made whole. For if you are willing Christ is willing, too, and you are freely invited to come and welcome to the fountain of life and grace.

Now mark—the question has to do with the will. “Oh,” says one, “I am so foolish I cannot understand the plan of salvation, therefore I may not come and drink.” But my question has nothing to do with your understanding, it has to do with your *will*. You may be as big a fool as you will, but if you are willing to come to Christ you are freely invited. If you could not read a single letter in the alphabet, or spell out a word in the book, yet may your lips—ignorant lips though they are—now drink of this water of life. It has nothing to do with your understanding. It does not say, “Whoever understands let him come,” but “whoever will,” and I do not doubt but what there are many souls who when they first come to Christ have very little understanding of the way of salvation and very little knowledge of the way in which He saves.

But they come to Christ—the Holy Spirit makes them willing to come and so they are saved. Oh you who have been for many a year wearing the pauper’s garb, you who come here from the workhouse, you that are ignorant, you that are despised among men—are you *willing* to be saved? Can you say from your heart, “Lord, You know I would have my sins forgiven”? Then come and welcome. Jesus bids you come. Let not your ignorance keep you away. He appeals not to your understanding, but to your will. “Oh,” says one, “I can understand the plan of salvation, but I cannot repent as I would. Sir, my heart is so hard, I cannot bring the tear to my eye, I cannot feel my sins as I would desire—

*“My heart how dreadful hard it is,
How heavy here it lies.
Heavy and cold within my breast,
Just like a rock of ice.”*

Yes, but this text has nothing to do with your *heart*. It is with your *will*. Are you *willing*? Then be your heart hard as the nether millstone if you are willing to be saved I am bid to invite you. “Whoever will,” not, “whoever *feels*” but, “whoever *will*, let him come and take the water of life freely.”

“Yes,” says one, “I can honestly say I am willing, but my heart will not soften. I wish that God’s Grace would change me. I can say I wish that Christ would soften my heart. I do desire that He would put the living fire within my cold breast and make me repent and make me love Him and make me believe in Him. I am willing.” Well, then, the text is for you, “Whoever will, let him come.” If you are willing you are freely invited to Christ. “No,” says one, “but I am such a great sinner. I have been a drunkard. I have been a lascivious man. I have gone far astray from the paths of rectitude. I would not have all my sins known to my fellow creatures. How can God accept such a wretch as I am, such a foul creature as I have been?”

Mark you, Man! There is no reference made here to your past life. It simply says, “whoever will,” Are you willing? Are you willing to be saved? Can you say, “Now, Lord, I am willing to be saved, give me a new heart. I am willing to give up my sins. I am willing to be a Christian. I am willing to believe and willing to obey, but, oh, for this no strength have I, Lord, I have the will—give me the power.” Then you are freely invited to come, if you are but willing. There is no barrier between you and Christ except your stubborn will. If your will is subdued and if you are saying “Yes, Lord, I am willing,” then you are freely invited. Oh, reject not the invitation, but come, and welcome, Sinner, come.”

But says one, “I cannot come, I cannot believe. I cannot do as I would.” Well, but it does not say, “Whoever can, let him come,” but “whoever will, let him come.” Are you willing? You know there is many a man that has more will than power, but God estimates us not by our power—but by our will. You see a man on horseback, he is in haste to fetch a doctor for some dying man. The horse is a miserable jade and will not go as rapidly as the man would like—but you cannot scold him because you see him whipping and spurring and thus proving that he would go if he could and so the master takes the man’s will for the deed. So is it with you, your poor heart will not go, it is a sorry, disabled jade, but it would go if it could. So Jesus invites you, not according to what you can, but according to what you will. “Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” All the stipulation is—are you willing—truly willing? If so, you are freely welcome. You are earnestly invited to take of the water of life and that freely, too.

Surely as this goes round the hall, there will be many found who did answer to it and who will say, from all their hearts, “I am willing—I am willing.” Come, let the question go personally round. Let me not talk to you in the mass, but let the arrow reach the individual. Grey head, give your reply and let yon fair-haired boy answer, also. Are you willing now to be saved—are you willing to forsake sin—willing to take Christ to be your Master from this day forth and forever? Are you willing to be washed in His blood? Willing to be clothed in His righteousness? Are you willing to be made happy—willing to escape from Hell and willing to enter Heaven? Strange that it should be necessary to ask such questions, but still it is. Are you willing? Then remember that whatever may be against you—whatever may have defiled you—however black, however filthy, however worthless you may be, you are invited this day to take of the fountain of the water of life freely, for you are willing and it is said, “Whoever will, let him come.”

“Ah,” says one, “God knows I am willing, but still I do not think I am worthy.” No, I know you are not, but what is that to do with it? It is not “whoever is worthy,” but “whoever will, let him come.” “Well,” says one, “I believe that whoever will, may come, but not me, for I am the vilest sinner out of Hell.” But mark you, Sinner, it says, “whoever.” What a big word that is! Whoever! There is no standard height here. It is of any height and any size. Little sinners, big sinners, black sinners, fair sinners, sinners double dyed, old sinners, aggravated sinners, sinners who have committed every crime in the whole catalogue—whoever. Does this exempt even *one*? Who can be excluded from this “whoever”? It matters not who you may be, nor what you may have been, if you are willing to be saved. Free as the air you breath is the love and Grace of God. “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Thus have I tried to show you how broad the invitation is.

III. And now I am about to show you, in the third place, how clear the path is. “WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY.” That word “let” is a very curious word, because it signifies two opposite things. “Let” is an old-fashioned word which sometimes signifies “hinder.” “He that lets shall be taken away”—that is, “He that hinders.” But here, in our text, it means the removing of all hindrance. “Let him come”—Methinks I hear Jehovah speaking this. Here is the fountain of love and mercy. But you are too unworthy, you are too vile. Hear Jehovah—He cries, “Let him come, he is willing. Stand back! Doubts and fears, away with you, let him come—make a straight road. Let him come if he is but willing.” Then the devil himself comes forward and striding across the way, he says to the poor trembling soul, “I will spill your blood. You shall never have mercy. I defy you. You shall never believe in Christ and never be saved.”

But Christ says, “Let him come.” And Satan, strong though he is, quails beneath Jehovah’s voice and Jesus drives him away. And the path stands clear this morning—nor can sin, nor death, nor Hell block up the way, when Jehovah Jesus says—“Let him come.”

Methinks I see several ministers standing in the way. They are of such high doctrine that they dare not invite a sinner and they therefore clog the Gospel with so many conditions. They will have it that the sinner must feel a certain quantity of experience before he is invited to come and so they put their sermons up and say, “You are not invited, you are a dead sinner, you must not come. You are not invited. You are a hardened rebel.” “Stand back,” says Christ, “everyone of you, though you are My servants—let him come, he is willing—stand not in his way.” It is a sad thing that Christ’s ministers should become the devil’s aides and abettors and yet sometimes they are, for when they are telling a sinner how much he must *feel* and how much he must *know* before he comes to Christ, they are virtually rolling big stones in the path and saying to the willing sinner, “You may not come.”

In the name of Almighty God, everything stand back this morning that keeps the willing sinner from Christ. Away with you, away with you! Christ sprinkles His blood upon the way and cries to you, “Vanish, begone! Leave the road clear. Let him come. Stand not in his path. Make straight before him his way, level the mountains and fill up the valleys. Make straight through the wilderness a highway for him to come, to drink of this water of life freely. ‘Let him come.’ ” Oh, is not that a precious word of command? It has all the might of Omnipotence in it. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, and He says, “Let him come” and come he will and must, if God makes him willing to come. “Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

And now, Sinner, remember God says, “Come.” Is there anything in your way? Remember, He adds, “*Let* him come.” He bids everything stand out of your way. Standing one day in the courthouse, some witness was required, I forget his name, it may have been Brown. For instance, in one moment the name was announced, “Brown, Samuel Brown.”

By-and-by twenty others take up the cry, “Samuel Brown, Samuel Brown.” There was seen a man pushing his way through, “Make room,” he said, “make room, His Honor calls me,” and though there were many in his path, they gave way, because his being called was a sufficient command to them—not to hinder him—but to let him come.

And now, Soul, if you are a willing sinner—though your name is not mentioned—if you are a willing sinner, you are as truly called as though you were called by name! Therefore, push through your fears. Make elbow room and come. They that would stop you are craven cowards. He has said, “Let him come,” and they cannot keep you back. Jehovah has said, “Let him come,” and it is yours now to say, “I will come. There is nothing that shall hinder me, I will push through everything and—

*‘I will to the gracious King,
Whose scepter mercy gives,’*

I will go to the fountain and take of the water of life freely.”

IV. And now this brings me to the last head, the condition which is the death of all conditions—LET US TAKE IT FREELY. Methinks I see one here who is saying, “I would be saved and I will do what I can to be worthy of it.” The fountain is free and he comes with his halfpenny in his hand, and that a bad one, and he says, “Here, Sir, give me a cup of this living water to drink. I am well worthy of it for see the price is in my hand.” Why, man, if you could bring the wealth of Potosi, or all the diamonds of Golconda and all the pearls of Ormuz, you could not buy this most costly thing! Put up your money, you could not have it for gold or silver. The man brings his merit, but Heaven is not to be sold to merit-mongers. Or perhaps you say, “I will go to Church regularly, I will give to the poor, I will attend my meeting house, I will take a sitting, I will be baptized, I will do this and the other, and then, no doubt I shall have the water of life.”

Back! Miserable herd! Bring not your rags and rubbish to God! He wants them not. Stand back! You insult the Almighty when you tender anything as payment. Back with you! He invites not such as you to come. He says, *come freely*. He wants nothing to recommend you. He needs no recommendation. You need no good works. Do not bring any. You need no good *feelings*. If you are *willing*, come. He wants no good feelings of you. You have no belief and no repentance, yet nevertheless you are willing—

*“True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us near.
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”*

Do not try to get them yourself—come to Him and He will give them to you. Come just as you are. It is “freely, without money and without price.”

The drinking fountains at the corners of our streets are valuable institutions. But I cannot imagine anyone being so foolish as when he comes to the drinking fountains, fumbling for his purse and saying, “I cannot drink because I have not five pounds in my pocket.” Why, however poor the man is, there is the fountain, and poor as he is, he may drink of it. It is put there for the public. Thirsty souls, as they go by, whether they are dressed in fustian or in broadcloth, don’t look for any warrant for drinking. They come and drink of it freely. Here it is. The liberality of some good friend has put it there and they take it and ask no questions whatever.

Perhaps the only persons that ever need to go thirsty through the street, where there is a drinking fountain, are the fine ladies and gentlemen who are in their carriages. They are very thirsty and cannot think of being so vulgar as to get out to drink. It would demean them, they think, to drink at a common drinking fountain, so they go with parched lips. Oh, how many there are that are rich—rich in their own good works—that cannot come to Christ. “I will not be saved,” they say, “in the same way as a harlot or a swearer. What? Go to Heaven the same way as a chimney sweep? Is there no pathway to glory, but the path which a Magdalene may take? I will not be saved that way.” Then you fine gentry may remain without. You are not bid to come, for you are not willing. But remember—

*“None are excluded hence,
But those who do themselves exclude.
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.”*

“Whoever will, let him come.” Let him bring nothing to recommend him. Let him not imagine he can give any payment to God or any ransom for his soul. For the one condition that excludes all conditions is, “Let him come and take the water of life freely.” There is a man of God here, who has drunk of the river of the water of life many times. But he says, “I want to know more of Christ, I want to have nearer fellowship with Him. I want to enter more closely into the mystery of His sacrifice. I want to understand more and more of the fellowship of His sufferings and to be made conformable unto His death.” Well, Believer, drink freely. You have filled your bowl of faith once and you drunk the draught often, fill it again, drink again and keep on drinking. Put your mouth to the fountain if you will, drink right on. As good Rutherford says in one of his letters, “I have been sinking my bucket down into the well full often, but now my thirst after Christ has become so insatiable, that I long to put the well itself to my lips, and drain it all and drink right on.”

Well, take it freely and as much as you can. You have come now into the field of Boaz, you may pick up every ear that you can find. No, more than that—you may carry away the sheaves if you like and more than that—you may claim the whole field to be yours if you will. The eating and drinking at Christ’s table is like that of Ahasuerus, only in an opposite way. It is said of that table, none did compel. It is said of this, none does withhold—none can restrain. If there is a big vessel full of this holy water, drink it all up and if there is one that holds twelve barrels, drink it—yes, drink it all and you shall find that even then there is as much as ever. In Christ there is enough for all, enough for each, enough forever more. And none shall ever have need to say that there was not enough in Christ for him. Drink freely. So you see that there are two meanings—drink without price and drink without stint.

Then, again—we have an old proverb that there are certain guests who come to our houses who are more free than they are welcome. They make free themselves and go further than we can bid them welcome. But with regard to those who come to the fountain of living waters, you may make as free as you will and you are welcome. Make as free as you can, take this water as you will, Christ will not grudge you. He that stands by the fountain will never mourn because you drink too much. He will never be dissatisfied because such a sin-black fellow as you has dared to wash himself in the living stream.

No, but the blacker you are the more will He rejoice that you have been washed. The more thirsty you are the more will His soul be gladdened to have you drink even to the full and be satisfied. He is not enriched by withholding—rather He is enriched in joy by *giving*. It is as much a pleasure to Christ to save you as it will be for you to be saved. He is just as glad to see the poor, the lame, the halt and the blind sit at His table as ever they can be to sit there. He is just as pleased to carry men to Heaven as they themselves can be when they drink of the river of joy at the fountainhead of eternity, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

And now I do not know what to say further. My text is such a precious one that I cannot enter into the fullness of its freeness and sweetness. Remember, my dear Friends, if you are willing to be saved, God requires nothing of you except that you will yield yourselves up to Christ. If you are willing to be saved none can prevent. There is no obstacle. You are not going like the daughters of Hobab to a well from which you will be driven by the coarseness and rudeness of shepherds. You are come where Jesus stands—stands with open arms, stands with open mouth, crying to you this day, “If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink, and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

And now will you refuse the invitation? See that you refuse not Him that speaks! Will you go this day and abuse the free mercy of God? Shall this very mercy lead you into more sin? Will you be wicked enough to say that because God’s Grace is free, therefore you will continue in sin year after year? Oh do not! Grieve not the Spirit of God. Today is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. If you turn not, He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow and made it ready. You have been warned, your conscience has often pricked you. Now, this day, you are sweetly invited. But the time of warnings and invitations will not last forever. They will soon be over and when your funeral bell is tolling, you shall be in that lake of fire, that land of misery and pain, where not a drop of water shall ever cool your burning tongue.

As you would escape from the flames of Hell, as you would be delivered from the eternal torments which God will certainly hurl upon you like hailstones, I beseech you now consider your ways and if now you are willing you are invited and none can keep you back from His mercy. “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Shall I preach in vain? Will you all go away and not take the water of life? Come, Soul—is there not one at least that God shall give me this day

for my hire—not one? May I not take one of you by the hand, some poor sinning erring Brother? Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us go together and drink. O may the Holy Spirit incline you!

Take it, my Brothers and Sisters. See on that bloody tree Jesus hangs—behold He pays His life a ransom for your sins and mine. Believe on Him, trust Him, commit your soul to Him and be saved. Will you not say in your soul—

*“Just as I am without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me
And that You bid me come to You,
O Lamb of God I come, I come”?*

And as my Master is true and faithful, He cannot cast away one soul that comes, for, “him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” O Spirit, now draw reluctant hearts and now give timid souls courage to believe, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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