

The Fountain Opened

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“The Fountain Opened.”

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.”—*Zechariah* xiii, 1.

THE Lord knoweth them that are His. He knows their troubles, the way which they take, and by which they are led; and in His love and faithfulness He hath made provision suited to them, and the conditions in which they are successively placed, and their wants in these. He hath in the Word given clear and sufficient revelation of what He has been pleased to design for His people, and so orders it in His providence that they are brought into circumstances that serve to develop the treasures of His grace, as made known in His Word, and thus deliver His people from their fears and misgivings, and establish their hearts in the purity, kindness, and eternity of His love, making it out to them that He is theirs, and they are His: “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.” There are in these words four things claiming our attention:—

I. The circumstances which are supposed in the words of the text.

II. The fountain that is opened.

III. The purpose for which it is opened.

IV. For whom this fountain is opened.

I. We are called to consider the circumstances which are supposed in the words of the text. These we may gather from the preceding chapter. And here we remark,
Firstly,

That the people there spoken of are a people that

meet with *opposition*. They who have no enemies are not the true people of God. They who experience no attacks from enemies are not in the lively exercise of grace. What is the history of the ancient people of Israel? It is a history of attacks made upon them by one enemy after another, and the defence they offered, or the deliverance wrought on their behalf. They were in this the type of the true people of God in all ages. Secondly,

We remark, they are a people who are in *trouble*. We can conceive of one exposed to enemies, often and violently assaulted by them, and yet who never had his composure disturbed, or who has passed through the opposition without great disquiet. It is not so with the children of God, with regard to the opposition they meet with, or the darts thrown after them by those by whom they are pursued. The enemy thrusts sore at them, that they may fall. They sometimes fall, are wounded, and broken, so that the shout of victory is raised, "He is cast down: he shall never be able to rise." Much of the experience of the people of God in the present state is characterised by trouble. At the first outset, the Lord deals gently; and I trust a goodly number of those now present find in their experience a key to the sentiment, that when they advance in their Christian life, their troubles abound, they have sorrows now of which they could once form no idea, and with which few can sympathise; but they go to Him, in Whom the fatherless findeth mercy.

Thirdly:

We remark, they are *filled with fears*. One assaulted by adversity may be in trouble, and perplexity, and feel it a great relief when the waves are rebuked to silence, and yet on the whole there may be little or no apprehension of danger, but there may be a full and sustained confidence that victory is sure. But sometimes, there is added to trouble, deep, lively, and apparently overwhelming fear, that the issue will be the reverse. "I shall one day perish," says David, "by the hand of Saul." I shall one day fall by the hand of the great antitype of Saul. This corruption will assuredly prove my ruin. I began a conflict with it years ago, and had hopes the

Fourthly:

The warrant on which this encouragement hangs. It is not in your hearts. You get there a light the devil has kindled to lead you to the pit. It is not in any corner of grace within your souls. Where is it? It lies within the boards of this Bible. There it lies. The devil tries to exclude it, and the bottomless pit seems to be opened in our day, and there is a rising cloud of error, old errors, new errors, all sorts of errors. Oh! seek to escape them, seek to get through them, and plead the warrant as you find it here, and may the Holy Spirit constrain thee in sincerity to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Amen.

Lord would make short work of it; and my besetting sin—the spring of bitterness to my soul, and provocation in the eyes of His glory, grieving away His Spirit, that which has wrought darkness, desolation, and trouble to my soul,—I had expected it to be drowned in the sea; but there it is: there it lives: there it works, and strange to say, there it prevails. Is it possible there can be salvation in such a case? Will the Lord bear so long with me? Will the Lord stoop to me? Is His arm so strong as to resist such opposition? Oh! tell me if it be possible, there can be salvation in such a case? We cannot tell how many and how long-continued their fears may be, but it is common for them to be agitated with such fears. Let me guard the experience of the people of God, His holy grace, and His holy salvation, against attacks by Antinomian hypocrites and formalists. Corruptions may prevail against the soul: but here lies the distinction: though corruption worked and prevailed as long as Methusaleh lived, still, in the case of the people of God, the corruption, instead of becoming more tolerable, becomes more grievous, their detestation of it becomes more deep and strong; they must have their corruptions slain, and they seek special vengeance to be taken on the sin that has done special mischief to them.

We turn now to the gracious visit paid to these people. The Lord visits them in the midst of trouble. How does He visit them? "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born." Oh, what a visit would this be to this congregation! How rich would it be! Beloved brethren, tell which is most desirable—grace or supplications. Both are needful and desirable; the one cannot be without the other. There is no grace, till the Spirit of grace comes; and when the Spirit of grace comes, the cry ascends. It is in the time of trouble that this visit is paid, when they are brought exceedingly low, and are filled with sorrow and sadness. Nothing is more needful to deliver us from hardness of heart under the law, and under the

gospel, or from the dark and desolate condition in which we are, than such a visit as this.

What effect is produced by this visit? Those who receive it mourn and weep in bitterness. Why mourn? Because "they look on Him Whom they have pierced." They look to the law, it condemns them. They listen to conscience, it condemns them. They look to their sins, they condemn them. They look to their duties, they condemn them. They look to their professions, it condemns them. They look to their sacraments, they condemn them. They look to their experience, it condemns them. Condemnation comes from every point. "Every mouth is stopped." But there is one *object*, the *sight of which* opens the sluices and streams of their hearts. Who is that? If I introduced Him to you, are you ready to turn your eyes to Him? Ye wanderers! stay, and listen: let every eye turn to Him. The Son of God in human nature, crucified, dead, buried, raised, at the right hand of the Father. Oh, for apprehensions of Him! Oh, for the eyes of faith to look at Him! It would be an interesting meeting, if this congregation had their eyes turned to Christ, their hearts rivetted to Him, their thoughts occupied with Him. One might say to the preacher, Oh, be silent, and not disturb the solemnity of this hour. O Spirit of the Father, be pleased to descend into many hearts. Oh, come, and turn this house into a Bochim!

"Whom they have pierced." Who was it that pierced Him? Oh, that everyone in this congregation were brought to say, I have pierced Him. Brethren in the ministry and eldership, to cast in their testimony, and say, we have pierced Him. Brethren in the deaconship, to say, we have pierced Him. Old communicants for the last time, to say, we have pierced Him. Young communicants, to say, we have pierced him. Oh, that we were brought to speak thus, that there were a general confession, we have pierced Him. What did you see in Him, for which to pierce Him? No, Blessed Jesus! it is our sin. One of crimson dye; attended in the case of many with very grievous aggravations. Surely He has not dealt with any people as with us, and yet we have pierced Him. How? With instruments more painful

It is for the most depraved. It may be some of you find it not so difficult to deal with guilt as with *depravity*. The thing that staggers you is the fountain of uncleanness within. Oh, my dear friends, there is not such a thing as an application to God for mercy being rejected. Though your sins exceed that of Manasseh, though your depravity exceeds that of the vilest of sinners, we are warranted to say to you, there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.

IN CONCLUSION.

Firstly:

Learn our need of being cleansed. We need it. "As many as are under the law are under the curse." In this condition, you are servants of sin and of Satan, and need cleansing.

Secondly:

There is *suitable provision for our need*. Some people who are soft silken Christians, like nothing that will search, try, trouble, their souls. Oh, we fear it will be for a lamentation, that there is so little trouble among professors. It is, thus that people take a sure way to exclude their souls from this provision. Look at the provision excellently suited to our case. This provision is Christ as Mediator. If that will not suit you, I have nothing more to give you.

Thirdly:

See the *encouragement* we have to come to this fountain. Do not draw encouragement from your goodness, your softness of heart, your light, your preparation for Communion Sabbaths. God may breathe on these and turn them into putrefaction. Come into the depths to draw encouragement. Draw it from your sin, your depravity, your deadness, your darkness, from all which otherwise would be discouragements to turn to Christ. But how are you to get to the fountain? That is the thing. You say, I have no experience. Your experience is not the fountain. You say, I have no desire. Your desire is not the fountain. You say, I cannot pray. Your prayers are not the fountain. You may say, I am a guilty, hypocritical, vile wretch, ripening fast for hell. But that is not the fountain. Jesus Christ is the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.

was virtue from it at the period of the Second Reformation, when preclacy, dark and dreary, was cast down. There was virtue from it to the people of Cambuslang, Kilsyth, etc. And was there no virtue to this Congregation many years ago?

Brethren! is this virtue stopped? Or have you no need of it? Are you not now more needy than then? Then you were guilty, now, you are more guilty. Then, you were dead, now, you are twice dead. Then, you were polluted, now you are more polluted. Then, you were ready to perish, now, you are on the brink of destruction. Oh! lift up your voice to Him, cry to Him, and say, "Open up this fountain for the people of this congregation, for much, much, we need it."

This virtue will continue to the end. It will purge away the guilt of Great Britain, the most guilty of all nations. The sin of the descendants of Abraham will be pardoned. Then will the abominations of the heathen be purged, and they shall be turned to the Lord. The infidelity of the Jews will be purged away. All the lies of the false prophets will be purged away. China, shall be opened to this fountain, and she shall stretch out her hands to God. And that Scripture shall be fulfilled: "And the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

IV. For Whom This Fountain Is Opened. "The house of David," the royal house. "The inhabitants of Jerusalem," their subjects. That is, for all sorts and conditions of men. If the vilest beggar on the dunghill were within reach of our voice, we would say, be it known to you there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. It is for the most guilty, for "the house of David," who rejected Him Who was the "root and offspring of David."

It is for the "inhabitants of Jerusalem," who cried "away with Him, away with Him." Do not say, their guilt is not to be compared with ours. Where art thou, O man, woman, child? Art thou anywhere between the "royal house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." On a throne or on a dunghill? If thou art anywhere, if thou art amongst living men, thou must be somewhere between these extremes.

than the nails, the thorns, the spear. It is by our sin, original and actual; sins in secret, and openly; sins in heart, and sins in life; sins against the law, and sins against the Gospel; sins not seen by man, but by Him Who seeth in secret! Looking upon Him they mourn in bitterness, and yet it is a sweet bitterness. They are very low, yet they are exalted. They rend the heart, yet it is to the heart a most precious balm. It leads the soul to loathe itself, and yet it is connected with the soul's salvation.

II. *The Fountain opened.* The reference here is not so much to the opening of the fountain legally, or actually, as to the opening of it effectually unto the soul's actual cleansing and deliverance in that day. In general, the fountain is the death of Christ: that is the fountain opened. Seek for apprehensions of Him; that by faith you may rise to apprehensions of His Person. He is a Divine Person; this is the foundation of the Christian religion, the corner stone of Divine truth, of all held sacred, of all that is spiritual, saving, and experimental. He was in possession of the Divine nature, in all the fulness, of its being, in all the glory of its attributes, and all the perfection of its blessedness. Then you have His human nature, formed of the substance of the Virgin Mary, perfectly pure, assumed into union with the Divine nature. This is one Person in two natures. Then He was clothed with all graces. Think of this Person, placed under the law; doing the work of a Surety; assuming obligations to the law, and engaging fully to discharge every one of these. Think of His coming to complete His work. Approach the termination of His course, when He was ripe for sacrifice, and behold the final opening of the fountain. Think of the sword of Divine justice rending asunder this wonderful sacrifice. Come near by faith; clothed with humility, draw near. The Father with the sword in His hand approaches His Son, and says, "Awake O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow: smite the Shepherd." Think of the solemn hour when the fountain was actually opened. There were perfumes of the most precious, rich refreshing odour in the Person of the God-Man. The sword

of justice rent asunder this Plant of Renown, and forthwith there ascended into the upper sanctuary a savour, with which the Father was well pleased. Fruit comes from this sacrifice for the healing of the nations. There are clouds of sweetest incense, that rise from this sacrifice, in which the Father is well pleased; and there are balms for sin polluted, sin condemned, and sin-sick souls.

III. *The Purpose for which It is Opened.* "For sin and for uncleanness." "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." John xix, 34. The sin was provided for in the blood; and the uncleanness was provided for in the water. By sin, we mean the transgression of God's law, and the consequences incurred by it; separation from God, from His presence, His favour, His blessing. Think of sin under this aspect. The people of God are much exercised in first principles. In these they commonly find the firmest standing for their feet, the richest food for their souls, the most copious streams of light to their heart. Have you come to learn sin in this elementary way? Have you ever discovered your ignorance of it? This lesson stands essentially connected with knowledge of it. The man knows nothing of sin yet, spiritually and savingly, who is not brought to mourn over his ignorance of it. All need the teaching of the Spirit of God, to learn this lesson. Then you will see the penalty attached to transgression, and having apprehensions of the justice of God, you will confess the penalty to be a just one. You will find it to be a weight you cannot bear, therefore you cannot remain under the burden of guilt. Many rest in confession of great sins, but there they stop. As to the justice of the penalty, they do not know what that is. It would be better for such that a millstone were hung about their neck, and they condemned to walk with that weight, than to have the millstone of guilt carrying about with them.

Guilt was brought into the world from connection with Adam. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? Oh! surely if you are not besotted with sin, and your consciences seared as with a hot iron, you must confess you have an

man will be destroyed for ever. Some think changes will do for them, afflictions, adversities, and they betake themselves to the notion that death will accomplish some great change. But, O sinners! death is as powerless to purify as life is. The king of terrors will not bring you out of sin into Christ. There is virtue only in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.

There is virtue for the reconstruction of the body, after the likeness of His own glorious body. All comes from Christ's death, which is to communicate the very power that is to pierce the silence of the tomb, to collect the bones of His saints; that power that is to gather together and build up the members, and that is to vivify the mass, and bring about the union between the soul in the presence of God, and the body in the grave, both being united unto Christ. There is virtue to carry them through to the solemn scene of the judgment day. There is virtue to introduce them into the inheritance.

This is a "fountain." A fountain has in itself a supply of what flows from it, and is received out of it. It is full of life and activity for throwing up the supply drawn from it: it hath this always in operation, and that effectually: and it hath streams issuing from it. A fit and comely emblem of the glory of Christ, "dead and alive again." In Him is an infinite fulness of virtue, an inexhaustible store of life and activity, pure activity, all activity. His people weary sometimes, through strength of corruption, and infirmity of the flesh, but He is full of activity.

There is an operation corresponding to this activity. It was given out in the patriarchal age; under the Mosaic dispensation; under the prophetic dispensation; in the times of the Macabees; in the dispensation introductory to the coming of Christ, under John the Baptist. Virtue flowed from it in the death of Christ to the thief on the Cross; to those converted on the day of Pentecost; to Saul converted into Paul; to the licentious Corinthians; to the warlike Macedonians; to the stern Romans. There was virtue in it, in the dark ages, to the inhabitants of Piedmont, at the period previous to the Reformation. There was virtue in it for the inhabitants of Germany, France, Switzerland, England, Scotland, Ireland. There

Father's glory. In Him are the seven Spirits of God. In this wonderful Person there is a fountain of cleansing water, even the "Spirit without measure." There was blood to expiate sin, and water, or the power of the Spirit, to apply that blood for the removal of sin and uncleanness.

But there is also the bestowal of the opposite grace. There is no such thing as a corruption being removed, without a grace being implanted in the soul. There is no midway. It is a fiction of the devil to invent a purgatory between heaven and hell. When did you get rid of darkness, but by the communication of true light? When is unbelief hushed, but when faith is allowed to speak? When is enmity to God subdued, but when love to God is shed abroad in your heart? When are you freed from hardness and impenitence, but when you are melted into true penitence? When is your towering pride brought to the dust, but when genuine humility is implanted? When is your folly taken away, but when you are led by the wisdom of God? When is your malice and illwill to men removed, but when you are brought out of the breath of hell, to breathe the atmosphere of heaven? In Christ, there is virtue for bringing up the soul that is degraded to the very image of the devil, to the holy image of the Blessed God. Do you want a good affection, a sound motive, a single eye, a composed frame of mind this day?—Do you want lively affections set on fire, not with false fire, but with fire from the altar of God? Do you want the living exercise of faith to embrace Christ crucified? Come to this fountain, there is virtue in it. Do you want love? Love to the Father, to the Spirit, to brethren in Christ? There is virtue in this fountain for it. Do you want a wise conversation in the world, an upright walk, to let your light shine before men? There is virtue in this fountain for it all, and also for secret, family, public duties. There is virtue in this fountain for the perfecting of these.

Are there any in deep and darksome caves? It was mercy that brought you there. Oh that Jehovah's voice would enter these deeps and whisper, "Fear not, I am thy salvation." Victory will come by and bye. The old

amount of guilt to answer for. Oh, that you were truly brought this day to feel that the wages of sin is death, and that escape you must have.

The condition in which every one of you stands, is more dangerous far than that of those in Sodom. Oh, awake from the deep sleep of security, of carnal confidence, of hypocritical profession, of Satanic agency. Arise, and escape for your lives. Whither? To the fountain opened. Christ paid the penalty, bare the wrath of God, satisfied the justice of God, and now there is forgiveness with God.

The wrath of God is due to you for sin. No man will flee from the guilt sin involves, or can say he is secure from the wrath of God, or can enter into real peace of conscience, far less into the enjoyment of Him Who is light; no man can enter into real absolute security, unless he is in possession of perfect righteousness. Here is a test to separate between those who are merely animal and selfish in their religion, and those who are partakers of peace in reality. The former are satisfied with deliverance from danger. The law presses its demands, but by and by, the law being despised, becomes less frequent in its visits, less loud in its demands. And woe to the man, that by such a process as this, will have the law turn away, till it meets him at the judgment, and accompanies him as his accuser and tormentor to the prison house of hell. It is a holy law, a good law, a just law. The law says, "Pay me that thou owest." "Pay to me the curse." Oh, flee to Him Who was made a curse. This is the wise way, the safe way, the true way, the honourable way, to get quit of the curse of God. We desire two things for every sinner here; that he may be *made to feel* the curse of the law, and to feel that he can *never be satisfied till* he is relieved from it by Him Who became a curse. The law says "Pay me that thou owest,"—a perfect, pure, holy, righteous nature, and perfect righteousness, in your life, thoughts, motives, words and deeds. Not a sinful thought, look, motive, word or deed. There is a demand for you! Look at its length, breadth, height, and depth. I know my dear people in the Lord will say it is good, just, and holy; they would not abate one iota of it, not a hairsbreadth

will it come down in their estimation. Keep in thy glorious elevation, O Law! God would be dishonoured if the law were to fail.

What will you get in the fountain opened for sin? There is virtue in Christ to justify the ungodly, to make righteous the unrighteous; to make accepted in the sight of God, those who were hell-deserving: to give a title to eternal life, to those who were heirs of eternal death. There is not an individual here, however low in condemnation, but there is virtue in Christ to justify him. So low in unrighteousness, but there is virtue in Christ to make him righteous. So bankrupt, but his account may be cancelled, and acceptance as righteous take place. There is not one, though trembling on the brink of hell, but there is virtue in Christ to raise him up to heaven. "For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." "Surely shall ye say unto Me, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Who will be first to say this? Some will say, We are too far gone. You ought to be first taken up. Those most condemned, those nearest the flames, those just sinking into hell, are those to be plucked out of the fire.

In Christ, there is a title to eternal life. Most people that hear the gospel slip easily into the hope of heaven; they have their own idea of happiness; but all such shall perish; there can be no question made of that. There are others, who have either too much light, or too much power in natural conscience, to allow them to settle down in the delusive hope of obtaining eternal life; they are not in a position to cherish that hope; but they expect, ere death meets them, that a change will take place in their condition and conduct. But there ought to be no peace, no cherishing a hope of eternal life, but what springs from a righteous foundation. When the soul is awakened to a sense of its state, and is made acquainted with its burden of guilt, he hears the law, and must see to its demands being acceded to; and he gets all that the law demands in Christ. Thus being in Christ, he gets the title to eternal life. The Lord was pleased to design eternal life. We must trace it to His love.

And He is pleased that it should flow through the righteousness of His dear Son. Those who do not find that they need this inheritance even now, have no evidence that they are really taught of God. The people of God seek after this inheritance. They must arise and seek after it. They try all others; but it will not do. But in the Person of Christ they find His God and their God; His Father and their Father. He, the Elder Brother, has found in the Father a sufficient portion, and you younger brethren need not despair of finding a portion there too.

The fountain is open for "uncleanness." By this we understand that which makes us unfit, even though the sentence were taken away, for the presence of God, unfit for His service, or for the enjoyment of Him. There is virtue in this fountain to take away all uncleanness, in every condition, in every aspect it assumes, in every way it works. It is no light matter to dispose of uncleanness. I do not speak of your putting away your uncleanness. You may have tried to bid it away, but instead of its being bidden away, it breaks forth more fiercely. You may try to pray it away, but the ground you thought was to be occupied by prayer, turns out to be a den of devils. You try to read it away, Scripture after Scripture is read, but your uncleanness waxes worse and worse. You try to hear it away, and you have sermon after sermon, but every sermon is just a new strata to your uncleanness. The people of God try what sacraments will do. They are solemnly engaged at the table of the Lord, and by the profession they make. Surely they will not return like the dog to his vomit. But oh! what will you say? Even the people of God come to His table, and find Him not, or backslide after meeting with Him; teaching us that sacraments have no efficacy in cleansing the soul.

But mark the fountain opened by the Lord Christ. You find in Him that which is suited to cleanse you; that which is going on at the present day, *cleansing*; that which is fitted through grace, actually to accomplish the cleansing of His people. There was in Him the Spirit of God without measure. In Him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells. He is the brightness of His