

“I will Pour Water upon Him that is Thirsty” (says the Fountain of Living Waters)

By

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Golden Text:

“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring” (Isa. 44:3).

He satisfies the Hungry Soul

A sincere longing for God prompts the outpouring of His Spirit “upon the dry ground” of an otherwise empty, meaningless human existence. The Psalmist praises God:

“Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!

“For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness” (Ps. 107:8-9).

God has made available to us His Word and Spirit so we can be like Him (Jn. 10:34-35, 36; 3:6). It’s not an event; it’s a lifelong process (Eph. 4:13; 2 Pet. 3:18). We must continually desire and long for God; we must hungrily seek Him and “abide” in Him to produce fruit – the fruit of the Spirit. Christ tells us:

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.

“If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

“If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

“Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples” (John 15:4-8).

Unless we abide in Christ, the True Vine, a number of stark consequences stare us in the face: we will be fruitless in absolute terms, unable to do anything; we will die off as a withered branch only fit for the devouring fire; our prayer requests will go unheeded; we will have denied God the glory due Him through us – had we been fruitful. Lastly, we will not qualify as His disciples.

Simply put, unless we abide in Him, we will fail as His disciples and die spiritually. Christ is the believer's sustenance. We can't survive without Him! He's our life (Col. 3:3-4).

So it's absolutely essential that we continually seek Him. But we must be continually thirsty first for us to be refilled continually! This is best conveyed by the image of the exhausted deer that pants for the water brooks in Ps. 42:

"As the hart [deer] panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (vv. 1-2).

This is the cry of a soul in desperate need of God: "when shall I come and appear before God?"

When we genuinely and intently seek God, we don't go back empty; we see His glory and are satisfied. As King David sought refuge from Absalom's insurrection in the wilderness of Judah (2 Sam. 15:23, 28; 16:2), the austere conditions could not but remind him of a more serious wasteland – the spiritual wilderness of the soul that is separated from God who alone is its satisfaction. In his thirst for God, David cried out:

"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

"To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary.

"Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee" (Ps. 63:1-3).

The purpose is to see His power and glory in His sanctuary. And His "lovingkindness is better than life". Physical life is only temporary – like a flower that blossoms in the morning but withers and fades away in the evening (1 Pet. 1:24). But with God is "the fountain of life", and the righteous drink from the river of His pleasures:

"How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.

"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures.

"For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:7-9).

The search for God is a search for life and blessings that are eternal. The prophet Jeremiah wrote:

"O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake Thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

“Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for Thou art my praise” (Jer. 17:13).

The “hope of Israel” is Yahweh, “the fountain of living waters.” He is to be desired more than physical food. Job declared amid his suffering:

“But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

“My foot hath held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined.

“Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:10-12).

In Ps. 119:72, the Psalmist extols: “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.”

The Word of God is Life itself. The Lord Jesus says in John 6:63: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

Logically then man shall not live by physical bread alone “but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD” (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). God proved this truth in the preservation of Israel for forty years in the wilderness during which their clothes did not even fray, neither did their foot swell (Deut. 8:4). The LORD kept them and provided all their needs by the miracle of His Word (see Ps. 78:53-54; 106:21-22) – the Word that created all things!

Jesus (meaning ‘Salvation’ or Yeshua) is our sustenance in this world of spiritual hunger and privation. The world at large is a spiritual wilderness. Hence the Good Shepherd makes us to “lie down in green pastures” and leads us to the still waters, refreshing our souls (Ps. 23:1-2; John 10:11-12, 27-28).

More than the manna the children of Israel ate and are dead, Christ Jesus is the true Bread from heaven which gives eternal life to men (John 6:48-50): “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (v. 51).

Unless we desire death – eternal separation from God – we must be consumed with a relentless desire for the Lord. So, how may the hungry soul be satisfied? King David shows the way: Praise must continually be on our lips, and we must meditate on Him day and night:

“Thus will I bless Thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in Thy name.

“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips:

“When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches.

“Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.

“My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me” (vv. 4-8).

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45)! In order to be an instrument of praise to God, therefore, we must imbibe Him (Jer. 15:16). Hence the command to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).

‘Draw near to Me and I will Draw near to you; I will Open My Fountain upon You’

The mouth that is routinely opened in praise and prayer is routinely replenished. The LORD says in Ps. 81:10: “I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.”

Unfortunately, the majority of God’s people would not heed His voice. So He gave them over to the lust of their own hearts, “and they walked in their own counsels” (vv. 11-12; see also Ez. 20:25, 39; Hos. 8:11-12; Rom. 1:24-28; 2 Thess. 2:10-12).

When we deliberately shut ourselves off from God, He also shuts Himself off from us. That is why as the Embodiment of true Wisdom He urges us:

“Turn you at My reproof: behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you.

“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded;

“But ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof:

“I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

“When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

“Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me:

“For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

“They would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof.

“Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices” (Prov. 1:23-31).

Left to ourselves, the choices we make are choices of ruin and death. We do not know the way of peace (Rom. 3:9-17; Prov. 14:12). The remedy is to “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” (Jam. 4:8). “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Deut. 4:29).

It's an intense, unrelenting search for God. Although He may hide Himself from the incorrigible transgressor, He will be found by the repentant sinner who forsakes his evil ways and calls upon His Name (Isa. 45:15-16; 55:6-7).

Standing in the Areopagus in Athens, the apostle Paul urged his audience of pagan philosophers to seek the Lord "if haply [perhaps] they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your poets have said, For we are also His offspring" (Acts 17:27:28).

The only thing that keeps us away from God is an unrepentant heart. A broken spirit and a contrite heart He does not despise (Ps. 51:17; Isa. 57:15). Every genuine return to God is and should be precipitated by a remorseful and converted heart. Thus the prophet Jeremiah prophesied of the Jews' return to Zion after their 70-year captivity in Babylon:

"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God.

"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten" (Jer. 50:4-5).

Today, the voice of the Holy Spirit still pierces our hearts: 'Today if you hear His voice harden not your heart' (Heb. 3:7-13). At the sound of His voice calling us to repentance and righteousness, we are to rend our hearts and not our garments (Joel 2:1-13). Only then will we join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant!

The Lord, abundant in mercy, is set to rain a rain of righteousness and grace upon all those who prepare their hearts for Him. The prophet Hosea exhorts us: "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you" (Hos. 10:12 NKJV).

For a long time, many in God's church have been lying fallow – unproductive in their Christian lives. Now is the time to break up the fallow ground and sow to righteousness in expectation of a bountiful rain of righteousness from the LORD! (See Luke 1:17).

"Fallow ground" conveys the idea of spiritual lethargy and inaction when we are required to be instruments of righteousness. Remember, righteousness is not merely the absence of sin but doing what is right in the sight of God. Jesus praised the Father: "And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29).

We read in 1 Peter 3:10-12 (quoting from Psalm 34:12-16):

"He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit.

“Let Him turn away from evil and do good; let Him seek peace and pursue it.
 “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

It's time to break up the fallow ground and sow for ourselves righteousness. Otherwise, we will end up as “the unprofitable servant” who hid his talent in the ground and was consequently cast into “outer darkness” (Matt. 25:24-30). Like the church in Laodicea, many Christians are in a ‘neutral mode’, “neither cold nor hot”. The consequence is that Christ will spit them out of His mouth (Rev. 3:15-16).

God totally rejects unfruitful believers (Lk. 13:6-9; Isa. 5:1-7). It's time we killed the Laodicean spirit and worked and sowed in favour of righteousness. We will reap in mercy! That's the LORD's promise. His mercy will accompany our sowing and harvest!

We are in the time of grace, a time of divine favour (2 Cor. 6:1-2). We have no excuse not to be fruitful. The right condition has already been created by God. Thus the scripture urges us, “Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field” (Zech. 10:1).

Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain (that is spring rain in March/April at the beginning of God's sacred calendar), and He will abundantly supply to everyone who asks! The promise is to pour out His Spirit upon “all flesh”:

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

“And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit.

“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call” (Joel 2:28-32).

The promise is to ‘pour out’ but no longer is it a promise. “The promise of the Father” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4) has since been fulfilled. It was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost fell on the Church, and the disciples became the first fruits of the great outpouring of God's Spirit in the New Testament dispensation:

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

“And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

In explaining the phenomenon of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Church, the apostle Peter, utilizing the Spirit’s gift of the word of knowledge (see 1 Cor. 12:8), said the Spirit had fallen on the Church in fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy meant for “the last days” (Acts 2:14-16).

So we are in the days of “the latter rain” of God’s Spirit! In advance of this time of the latter rain, Christ chose the last “great day of the feast” of Tabernacles to invite all who thirst to drink freely of His “rivers of living water”:

“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 shall flow rivers of living water.

“(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” (John 7:37-39).

Earlier He had told the woman of Samaria who refused to give Him water to drink:

“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 [of yours] shall thirst again:

“But whosoever drinketh 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.

“The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw” (John 4:10-15).

The water of God’s Spirit is free and in varied abundance as “rivers of living water” and as pure as spring water welling up into everlasting life! But we must still ask to drink freely: “ask ye rain of the LORD in the time of the latter rain”! The Giver of Living Water calls out to all wearied souls:

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine [joy] and milk [nourishment] without money and without price.

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

“Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isa. 55:1-3; see 2 Sam. 7:12-16 cf. 1 Kings 15:1-5)

Nothing satisfies in this life. The woman of Samaria had been married five times to five different men. Still not satisfied, she was now living with a sixth man as his lover (John 4:16-19). Neither did the water she drew from Jacob’s well satisfy her. Hence her earnest request to Christ: “Sir, give me this [living] water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.”

The woman was eventually satisfied when the Lord preached to her about the true worship of God in spirit and in truth, not just in Jerusalem or on any ‘sacred mountain’ (vv. 19-24). Just when the disciples returned with food from Sychar, the woman “left her waterpot [for she had found better water, “living water”], and went into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (vv. 27-29).

The well of living water overflowed her into the city of the Samaritans of Sychar, and they sought more from where it came from:

“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

“So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days.

“And many more believed because of His own word;

“And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (vv. 39-42).

Meanwhile, Christ pointed out to the disciples that true food was to do God’s will (or Word which proceeds from His mouth); this is what satisfies the soul (vv. 31-38). The food bought from Sychar fell far short or the residents wouldn’t have come rushing for His!

To the wearied, burdened souls of this world (Matt. 11:28), the pertinent question still rings out: Why spend good money on what is not food or does not satisfy?

“If any man thirst,” says the Fountain of life, “let him come unto Me, and drink” (John 7:37).

But why, of all the seven yearly festivals of Israel, did the Lord choose the feast of Tabernacles to announce His open invitation to the thirsty?

The Water out of the Rock is still Flowing ... for the Sustenance of the Soul

The feast of Tabernacles commemorated the stay of the Israelites in the wilderness en route to Canaan. Because they were in transit, they couldn't settle into permanent buildings but lived in temporary dwellings such as tents or booths (Lev. 23:39-43). The great truth the feast of Tabernacles communicates is that despite the fragile nomadic life the Israelites lived in the desert, God protected and provided for them (Deut. 2:7). Out of the rock He provided them water to quench their thirst.

We read in Exodus 17:

"And the people thirsted there [in Rephidim] for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

"And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

"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 smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

"Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb [that is, "dry", "parched"]; 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.

"And he called the name of the place *Massah* [i.e. "trial", "temptation", "testing"], and *Meribah* [contention], because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?" (Ex. 17:3-7).

As New Testament believers, we are also in transit in this spiritual wilderness called the world en route to the Kingdom of heaven (1 Pet. 2:11; Php. 2:15; John 17:16). Since we haven't yet reached our destination, we must dwell in the temporary tent of our fragile human bodies (2 Cor. 5:1-4; 2 Pet. 1:13-14) and, like Israel, be sustained on the way by the very Rock that gave them water to drink. The apostle Paul reminds us:

"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).

The Rock out of which the Israelites drank was Christ, in that Moses was explicitly instructed: "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" (Ex. 17:6).

Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages, is the Saviour of both the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God. He is the Angel Yahweh who led Israel through the wilderness and descended on mount Sinai in fire to proclaim His holy law, “the lively oracles” (Ex. 23:20-23; 19:16-20; 24:9-12, 16-18; Isa. 63:9; Acts 7:37-38).

It is He, the spiritual Rock, that has assured us that “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38).

On the cross of Calvary, the Rock of Life was struck and His side was pierced, “and forthwith came there out blood and water” (John 19:33-34). It illustrated the outpouring of His life (blood) and Spirit (water) to all believers in Him. Fifty days later, as a corollary of His accomplished redemption, He poured out His Spirit in great abundance upon the Church (Acts 2:1-4; Matt. 3:11; Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6).

But let’s beware lest the temptation of “Massah” and “Meribah” befall us. That’s why the apostle Paul, in his commentary on “the spiritual Rock”, warns us:

“But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

“Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

“Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted [Christ], and were destroyed of serpents.

“Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:5-11).

The admonition is long for Christ, the Living Water, not the evil desires of the flesh which kill (Rom. 8:13)! It’s an admonition to be keenly noted, for ‘Meribah’ appears twice in scripture.

The “Meribah” of Kadesh refers to the event forty years after the “Massah” and “Meribah” of Rephidim when the children of Israel again contended with Moses for water and the LORD commanded him to speak to the rock for water to gush forth. Instead of speaking to the rock, however, Moses struck it, thereby offending God. For this act of indiscretion, the LORD said to Moses and Aaron that they would not bring the people into the Promised land (Num. 20:1-13, 24; 27:12-14; Deut. 3:24-26; 32:49-52).

From the text, it’s apparent that Moses’ sin was twofold: Not only was God’s holiness affronted by his flagrant refusal to speak to the Rock, but also one discerns a hint of self-

glory in Moses' voice as he snapped at the Israelites: "Hear now, ye rebels: must we [i.e. Aaron and I] bring you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10).

In his great anger, Moses, the exceptionally "humble" and "faithful" man (Num. 12:3, 7), momentarily seemed to have forgotten that he was merely an instrument of God, and that he could never take His place.

Nevertheless, the stubborn nature of the children of Israel, in the face of God's abundant mercies (Ps. 106:7), was largely to blame. With reference to this specific incident, Ps. 106:32-33 tells us: "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked His Spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."

"Meribah" reminds us of the human tendency to be drawn by the desires of the flesh as though the Rock of Living Water (Ps. 114:7-8) does not satisfy. This is the regrettable situation of all people in the flesh who refuse to draw near to God. Instead of the Spirit (Water) which gives life, they lust after the flesh which gratifies the body but kills!

Psalm 78 laments the carnal lusts Israel continued to have after God had miraculously given them water out of the Rock in the desert, where there was no water:

"He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink in abundance like the depths.

"He also brought streams out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.

"But they sinned even more against Him By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.

"And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy [lust].

"Yes, they spoke against God: They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?

"Behold, He struck the rock, So that the waters gushed out, and the streams flowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?" (vv. 15-20 NKJV).

The real problem with Israel was lack of faith which in turn stemmed from the fact that "their heart was not right with God." Thus the Psalmist continues his narration:

"Therefore the LORD heard this and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, And anger also came up against Israel,

"Because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation [see Heb. 4:2].

"Yet He had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven,

"Had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven.

"Men ate angels' food; He sent them food to the full.

"He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens; and by His power He brought in the south wind.

"He also rained meat on them like the dust, feathered fowl like the sand of the seas;

“And He let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings.
 “So they ate and were well filled, for He gave them their own [carnal] desire.
 “They were not deprived of their craving; but while their food was still in their mouths,
 “The wrath of God came against them, and slew the stoutest of them, and struck down the choice men of Israel [Read Num. 11].
 “In spite of this they still sinned, and did not believe in His wondrous works.
 “Therefore their days He consumed in futility, and their years in fear.
 “When He slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and sought earnestly for God.
 “Then they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer.
 “Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, and they lied to Him with their tongue;
 “For their heart was not steadfast with Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant”
 (vv. 21-37 NKJV).

And there was yet a third factor: the congregation was corrupted by the “mixed multitude” that followed Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 12:38). We read in Num. 11:4-6:

“Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: ‘Who will give us meat to eat?’
 “‘We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;
 “‘but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!’” (NKJV).

Hear the Israelites speak as if they had lived like royals and feasted like kings in Egypt, the land of their enslavement! Evil communication, indeed, corrupts good manners (1 Cor. 15:33). The “mixed multitude” from non-Israelite nations, who were possibly not slaves in Egypt, so corrupted the assembly that they forgot almost entirely the hard life they had lived in Egypt as slaves before the LORD delivered them by His great power. Worse still, they craved Egypt in total disregard for all the wonderful things God had done for them, as if that house of bondage had something better to offer them. They bemoaned: “Now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”

The lesson: Beware of false brethren (Gal. 2:4; Jude 1:4). “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6-11). So “be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:11-18; Neh. 13:3).

The object of our call is salvation (living water) in Christ but how often we are distracted by the ‘lust for meat’, that is worldly things which, unlike water, are of little value to our survival! The “cares of this life” should not be our priority; it’s the Kingdom that should be

(Matt. 6:33; Luke 21:34-36). Yet it's not beyond the Father's ability to provide all our earthly needs according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus (Php. 4:19; Rom. 8:32).

But when He hasn't yet provided all our needs and wants, because it is not the right time to do so, we must be careful not to use that as a basis to disbelieve Him. If He cares and provides for "the fowls of the air" and "the lilies of the field", why not you? (Matt. 6:25-32; Luke 12:6-7).

What God wants us to prioritize is to be thankful for the Life He has given us through His Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 5:10-12) and to seek more of it! How do we go about this?

Direct your Affections Heavenward!

We need to set our minds on the things of the Spirit, not the things of the flesh:

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:5-8).

Those who fail to please God through disobedience to His spiritual law and other spiritual truths 'manage' to incur His wrath (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2:8; Isa. 66:24). With the hindsight of Israel's experience in the wilderness, we are warned in Ps. 95:

"...To day if ye will hear His voice,

"Harden not your heart, as in the provocation [Meribah], and as in the day of temptation [Massah] in the wilderness:

"When your fathers tempted [i.e. tested] Me, proved [tried] Me, and saw My work.

"Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways:

"Unto whom I swear in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest" (vv. 7-11).

The warning is repeated in Hebrews as uttered by the Spirit of God in the Old Testament time through the Psalmist (Heb. 3:7-11). And it's an oath: Those who "mind the things of the flesh" or world, which are "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John 2:15-17), shall not enter His rest. They provoke God!

The remedy, once again, is to set our minds not on earthly things of the flesh, but on heavenly things of the Spirit. Better still, we must put to death all the deeds of the flesh such as fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil desires, and covetousness which is idolatry (Col. 3:1-2, 5; Php. 3:20). In this, we must be willing to be led by the Spirit and live by its tenets. At the same time, Christian fellowship is crucial. One goal of the community of believers is to foster strength to overcome "the deceitfulness of sin" which hardens the heart (Heb. 3:13; 10:25).

It's imperative that we long and hunger for God now before Heaven stops its rain of truth and grace. A time is coming when those who persist in following the flesh will long and search for God someday but won't find Him. Spiritual drought will hit all the world:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for [physical] water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

"And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

"In that day shall the fair virgins and young men [now given to carnal pleasures] faint for thirst" (Amos 8:11-13).

The soul starved of the spiritual nourishment of the Word and Spirit is doomed to faint and die of thirst! So search and cling to God while He is to be found; while He is still ready and willing to send down rain. (Read John 12:35-36).

"All day long", the LORD complained, "I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient people". Yet He was found by people of non-Israelite stock who, because He had no formal covenant with them, ordinarily should not have sought for Him. What was different was their attitude. They sought Him diligently with faith (Isa. 65:1-2/Rom. 10:20-21; Heb. 11:6; see also Rom. 2:26; 10:12-13).

The prophet Jeremiah rebukes his people:

"Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in His season: He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

"Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jer. 5:24-25).

What a sad situation! In this time of abundant grace and truth in Christ (John 1:14, 16), Christians who willfully disobey God insult "the Spirit of grace". The penalty is severe and irrevocable (Heb. 10:26-31). God takes offence particularly because His truth, grace and power made available would seem to have been a wasted effort, just like how the rain that waters the earth that produces thorns and briers, instead of useful herbs, practically goes waste. In both scenarios, the end result is the destruction of the recipients of the bounties of heaven (Heb. 6:4-8). It's a double warning to the believer (in this dispensation of grace) not to receive the grace of God in vain, for earth, after all, often represents man in the scriptures (2 Cor. 6:1-2; Jer. 22:29).

The Lord has already given us His word: When we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us (Jam. 4:8). He will in no wise cast us away (John 6:37). Indeed, He stands at the door of our hearts knocking to be let in (Rev. 3:20). We let Him in through a life of obedience, fasting-prayer and meditation on His word.

We are to pray without ceasing just as we are to meditate on His Word at all times (1 Thess. 5:17; Ex. 13:9; Deut. 11:18-20; Josh. 1:8; Prov. 6:20-23). The apostle Paul instructed Timothy, his protégé:

“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all (1 Tim. 4:13-15).

In the Epistle of Jude, we are told to build ourselves up in our most holy faith, “praying in the Holy Ghost” (v. 20; also Eph. 6:18). To pray in the Holy Ghost is, first, to pray with all zeal, totally focused on God, as Jesus did when He was about to choose the Twelve and in Gethsemane (Luke 6:12; see also 22:44; Heb. 5:7). Another example was the ‘energetic’ prayer of Paul and Silas in the jail in Philippi (Acts 16:25-26). Second, it’s to pray with the agency and help of the Spirit, “for we know not what we should pray for us we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom.8:26-27).

It cannot be gainsaid that the zeal with which we pray stirs the Spirit to intercede for us. Although Hanna prayed in a barely audible voice, the Spirit of God, moved by her “sorrowful spirit” and zeal, took up her case and she was answered (1 Sam. 1:10-20).

As a Church, the early Christians exemplified a life of constant desire for God. Before Pentecost and the descent of the Spirit, they had been indoors for approximately ten days, seeking the face of the Lord in prayer and supplication (Acts 2:42-47; cf. Lk. 2:37).

The whole point then is, be ready while the fountain of grace flows:

“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” (Zech. 13:1).

We are to drink hungrily from this fountain, not from the carnal wine of debauchery: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). One writer rephrased it, “quaff deep of God’s Spirit.”

How? By “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart” (v. 19).

The joy of the LORD is our strength (Neh. 8:10), for God inhabits the praises of His people (Ps. 22:3; 2 Chron. 5:13-14). And what He inhabits, He fills! (see Luke 1:64, 67). “[So] Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. ²Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains

of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; ³For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” (Isa. 54:1-3).

Blessed are those who are Hunger, for they shall be Filled

Those who hunger for God are blessed, because God “shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth” (Ps. 72:6; cf. 147:8). Blessed and blessed are you if you are a parched land!

In the *Sermon on the Mount*, the Lord Jesus tells us: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).

God relieves spiritual hunger. He satisfies those who genuinely hunger for Him and replenishes them as long as they hunger and thirst for Him!

At the dedication of the child Samuel to the LORD at Shiloh, his mother, Hanna, praised the LORD:

“They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble” (1 Sam. 2:5).

It pays to wait on the LORD (Isa. 40:31). He alone satisfies. “They that were full have hired out themselves for bread” because their supply of goodies dried up. But the Fountain of Living Waters ever flows! Now, the question is, will we continually long for Him and seek Him?

The prophet beckons:

“Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.

“After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.

“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth” (Hosea 6:1-3).

The phrase of interest is “if we follow on to know [i.e. personally and experientially know] the LORD.” The *NKJV* renders it “Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD”, and the *NIV* “let us press on to acknowledge Him.” In other words, let us yearn for Him; let us long to know Him more and more; let us seek Him out! “And He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

A life full of God is a well-watered life; it is a blessed life:

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

“But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Ps. 1:1-3).

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines “meditate” as “to think deeply, usually in silence, especially for religious reasons or to make your mind calm” (Sixth edition 2000).

Meditating on God's Word therefore involves pondering the Word to gain greater knowledge and understanding of it; it involves appropriating and applying the word. Two Greek words define the move from receiving God's Word as the written Word (sacred text) to the applied (spoken) Word. They are “**Logos**” and “**Rhema**”, both broadly mean ‘word’ in English. But there is a difference to appreciate.

Logos “denotes ‘the expression of thought’ – not the mere name of an object – as embodying a conception or idea, a saying or statement by God or Christ.” It also describes “the Personal Word, a title of the Son of God [the WORD Who became flesh]; this identification is substantiated by the statements of doctrine in John 1:1-18” (*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* 1996 p. 683).

Rhema, on the other hand, “denotes ‘that which is spoken, what is uttered in speech or writing, in the singular, ‘a word’. The significance of rhema (as distinct from logos) is exemplified in the injunction to take ‘the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God’, Eph. 6:17; here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture” (ibid.).

So, day and night, let's meditate on the Word; speak it and apply it. The Word of God is “living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12) but until we appropriate and apply it by faith it will be of no profit to us. This was where ancient Israel failed. The living and powerful word of God did not profit them because of their lack of faith. Lacking faith, they did not bother at all to apply the word: “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb. 4:2).

At Nazareth Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, “did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Matt. 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-5). Thus the only way to make the Word of God alive for us is to believe and apply (speak or obey) it. As Pastor Larry Huch observes in his book *The Torah Blessing*, “rhema is the truth of God's Word made alive for you and me. So many promises of God never come alive for us, His children, because we don't fully know and understand them” (p.20).

So we must “know the truth” in order to become free (John 8:22). The Greek word “*ginosko*” “signifies ‘to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand’, or ‘to understand completely’” (Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, p. 346).

God’s Word is meant to be applied; He did not send His word without purpose, but sent it to produce tangible blessings in our lives – yet only when we believe and understand it. (See Isa. 55:10-12). We must make *logos rhema*! This was exactly what the Thessalonian believers did on receiving the Word of God preached to them by the apostle Paul and his co-workers:

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess. 2:13).

The Word of God is always ‘yes’ to the one who believes and apply it, never ‘yes’ and ‘no’:

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me [Paul] and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea.

“For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor. 1:18-20)

The truth of the Word (logos) spoken and applied (rhema) is truth – experientially so! “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him” (Ps. 34:8).

As ‘hungry’ believers who desire to be filled, we need to spend quality time with God in the study and memorization of His Word. When the gospel reached the Jews of Berea, “they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:10-11). Job treasured the Word so much that he considered it MORE THAN his necessary (NIV “daily”) food (Job 23:12).

Of this same Word, which is eternal, living and powerful, the Psalmist eulogized: “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (Ps. 119:72).

The only place fit for the treasured Word of God is the place where treasures are kept – the treasure chest of the heart: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Ps. 119:11).

Those who do not sin against God please Him; it’s to such ones that He reveals His secrets: “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant” (Ps. 25:14). “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing,” says the prophet Amos, “but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7; cf. Dan. 2:27-28).

Notice! The mysteries (hidden truths) of the Kingdom have been given to only those who genuinely thirst for God and draw near Him in sincerity, entertaining no pretence whatsoever! To these, God's truths are never obscured in parables nor in dark sayings; they are plainly taught by God as Moses, the faithful man of God, was (Ps. 78:2; Num. 12:7-8; John 6:45). The spiritual obscurantism is lifted, and the Lord adds to their understanding and knowledge of His will as they daily seek Him more and more (Col. 1:9-10).

When Christ spoke to the multitudes about 'the parable of the sower', "the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables [Grk 'a placing besides']? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:10-11). He proceeded:

"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath [because he lightly esteems it].

"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing [the glory, power and favour of God] see not; and hearing they hear not [because their heart is not in it], neither do they understand.

"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (vv. 12-15).

Because the heart has lost all interest in spiritual truth, all the senses have grown indifferent to divine revelation in its various manifestations. The result is that the conversion of the individual is hindered which in turn precludes God from healing him. The LORD heals the land when His people humble themselves and pray, and seek His face, "and turn from their wicked ways" (2 Chron. 7:14).

What is needed, then, is a heart on fire for God – the heart which "desires the pure milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2). So Christ continues, praising His spiritually hungry disciples: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men [of old] have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. Hear [i.e. understand] ye therefore the parable of the sower" (Matt. 13:16-18; cf. Luke 11:28).

The cure for the kind of spiritual languor described in Matthew 13 is the admonition Christ gives to the lukewarm church of Laodicea which, though materially rich, was spiritually "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked": "As many as I love", He said, "I rebuke and chasten: be ZEALOUS therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:16-19).

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines 'zealous' as "showing great energy and enthusiasm for something". In other words, develop interest or passion; "be earnest" (as in the NIV), meaning be "very serious and sincere" (ibid.).

The consequences of an unresponsive attitude to Divine truth and revelation can be very dire. All spiritual illumination is lost! It happened to apostate Israel and the majority of the Jews of Jesus' day. Their minds were clouded when Moses (the Pentateuch) was read, neither did they know the hour of their visitation in the Person of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:14-16; Luke 19:42-44).

But the more bizarre situation is when otherwise beneficial energy is channeled not into improving one's spiritual standing but into plunging oneself further into spiritual darkness. Here, the indifference to spiritual truth is so strong that the divine light becomes the object of crude jests and scorn: "Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you" (Acts 13:41 NKJV; cf. Mark 6:1-5).

The reaction of the unbelieving Pharisees to the healing of the man born blind illustrates this unfortunate situation. Instead of being convinced by the miracle Christ had performed on the man, the Pharisees sought to discredit Him the more by calling Him a sinner, yet they marveled at the miracle done (John 9:15-16, 24-30). Thankfully, the formerly blind man was not as dull; he possessed spiritual insight: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners", he countered the Pharisees' branding of Jesus as a sinner, "but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing" (vv. 31-33).

It turned out the Pharisees who seeing saw not were the truly blind: "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind [in a positive spiritual sense of needing divine guidance], ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see [we are ourselves spiritual; we know too!]; therefore your sin remaineth" (v. 41).

The false prophets of Isaiah's day, who, in an inverted spiritual sense of greater spirituality, thought themselves more enlightened than the true prophet of God, ridiculed his message: "Whom will he [Isaiah] teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts?" (Isa. 28:9 NKJV).

Not willing to accept the revealed truths of God, God spoke to them with "stammering lips and another tongue" (v. 11), and His word "was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line [Heb. "sav lasav sav lasav / kav lakav kav lakav"]; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (v. 13).

But for those who genuinely seek Him, the Spirit guides into “all truth” (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit given to us by God searches the deep things of God for our spiritual illumination (1 Cor. 2:10-11), for “we have received, not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man” (1 Cor. 2:12-15).

The spiritually mature believer led by God's Spirit, which he ever thirsts for, judges and weighs all things for their spiritual import. He takes nothing for granted. His life reflects the perfect nature of God, for he bears “the fruit of the Spirit”.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

“Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

The believer who abides in Christ – i.e. draws his spiritual nourishment from Him through obedience, meditation, prayer and faith – bears “much fruit”. Without Him we can do nothing (John 15:4-5, 16).

In addition to “the fruit of the Spirit” whereby we attain the righteous character of God, “much fruit” includes the gifts of the Spirit, also nine in number:

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

“And there are differences of administrations [ministries], but the same Lord.

“And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

“To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

“To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to DRINK INTO ONE SPIRIT” (1 Cor. 12:4-13).

Without any discrimination whatsoever, all true believers have been made to “drink into one Spirit!” Such a Spirit-filled person turns into a ‘fountain of living waters’ himself:

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.
 “And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.
 “For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.
 “And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:5-8).

Didn’t the Master promise: “He that believes on Me out of his belly shall flow rivers [i.e. spiritual gifts, talents and ministries] of living water”?

Filled and empowered by the Spirit (Acts 6:3, 5), Philip preached, healed the sick and cast out demons at that one evangelistic meeting in the city of Samaria! Surely, “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all [His Spirit-filled people]” (1 Cor. 12:4-6 NKJV).

Hence “He [Christ] Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13 NKJV).

If we will have our fill of Christ, the Spiritual Rock, and quench every spiritual thirst on our journey to spiritual perfection, we must continue to drink of His Spirit spouting springs of water (for the sustenance and nourishment of the Church) through His river-branches – His anointed ministers occupying various offices in the Church. These branches that flow from Christ are, in a sense, also tributaries that flow back into Christ so that “in all things He might have the preeminence”, filling “all in all” (Col. 1:18-19; Eph. 1:22-23): “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27).

The Psalmist paints a poetic picture of this great spiritual truth:

“And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the Highest Himself shall establish her.
 “The LORD shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah.
 “As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all My springs are in thee” (Ps. 87:5-7).

What is spiritually true of the Church is physically true of Zion (compare Ps. 125:1-2). The *Concise Bible Atlas* reports: “The ancient water sources of the Holy City included springs,

cisterns, and pools...The springs near the city provided sufficient water supply for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. [In addition,] “There were many pools in Jerusalem during the biblical period. The Old Testament mentions ‘the upper pool’ (2 Kings 18:17), ‘the lower pool’ (Isa. 22:9), ‘the old pool’ (Isa. 22:11), ‘the King’s pool’ (Neh. 2:14), and ‘the pool of Shelah’ (Neh. 3:15) (Article: “Water Sources of Jerusalem” p. 175).

Yes, all the springs of the King-Messiah are found in Zion, His chaste virgin (Eph. 5:27)! No child of Zion (who earnestly seeks Him) will ever thirst again:

“For the LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation.

“This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

“This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

“I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.

“I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy” (Ps. 132:13-16).

Indeed, there is a river (of God’s Spirit) whose streams (flowing through the arteries and veins of the Body of Christ) make glad the city of God (Ps. 46:4). This refers to “joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17)!

The King of Zion is He who has promised that “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it” (Isa. 41:17-20).

A spiritually “dry land” like Paul, who previously persecuted the Church, was greatly used by the Lord when, following his conversion and initial baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17-18; 22:12-16), he single-mindedly sought to deepen his knowledge of Him. The apostle says, shortly after his conversion, he “conferred not with flesh and blood” but went to Arabia and, for three years (implied in the “many days” of Acts 9:23), cared for none of his earthly possessions – his family and religious pedigree and achievements – save “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection” (Gal. 1:15-18; Php. 3:3-10).

The result was stupendous! The apostle Paul received an abundance of grace and divine revelations of the mysteries of the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 12:1-9; Eph. 3:1-11). At one time, while in the Spirit, he was “caught up to the third heaven” – the very presence of God – and “into paradise” where he “heard inexpressible words, which is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:1-4, 5, 7 NKJV. Compare Acts 8:39 and Rev. 4:2).

The apostle Paul himself shared this testimony in his gratitude to God:

“...I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me [when I sought Him] was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all [the rest of the apostles]: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor. 15:9-10; cf. 2 Cor. 12:12).

The word of the LORD is true: ‘If you seek Me, you will find Me.’ When the prophet Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the royal guard in the days of King Zedekiah, the word of the LORD came to him: “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty [i.e. unsearchable, hidden] things which thou knowest not” (Jer. 33:1-3; see also 32:1-3).

Apart from the apostle Paul, another great example of the “rivers of living water” Christ makes of the members of His spiritual body who diligently seek and call upon Him is John the Revelator. When it comes to the riches of the mysteries of God, he is probably unbeatable in the annals of the saints of God. Frequently “in the Spirit” (Rev. 1:10; 4:1-2; 21:10), he heard the unheard, saw the unseen and witness things of splendor and terror no living man up to his day and since then has witnessed before.

The result is the Book of Revelation which is a revelation from God, to Jesus Christ, to the apostle John of “the things which are [now], and the things which shall be hereafter” (Rev. 1:1; 1:19; 4:1). By the sheer abundant grace of God, John shared in the secrets of the Father and the Son about the end of the age and the glorious Kingdom promised the faithful.

Both the lives of the apostle Paul and John, and indeed those of all true saints, prove that our fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ is spiritual (1 John 1:3). For this reason, continual spiritual renewal is of the essence. Bro. Paul stresses this truth in two succinct commands in Thessalonians chapter 5: “Pray without ceasing. Quench not the Holy Spirit” (vv. 17, 19). This will bring about the renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which He [God] shed [poured] on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 3:5-6).

Though full of the power of the Holy Ghost (Luke 4:1, 14; Jn. 3:34), Jesus, during His earthly ministry, would often retreat to the solitude of a mountain to pray for continual spiritual strength and renewal. He usually did this after a day spent in performing miracles and wonders such as when He fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fishes (Matt. 14:23). On other occasions, He would pray for spiritual renewal beforehand with the result that power would go out of Him to heal the sick and those tormented with unclean spirits (Luke 6:12, 17-19; cf. Luke 8:46).

The gift (Spirit) of God given to us needs to be ‘stirred up’ through constant prayers and fasting (see 2 Tim. 1:6; 2:1, 3). If we do this, the grace of God will abound in us, and we will “come behind in no gift” of the Spirit as we await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:5-7).

Let's keep in mind that to live after the flesh is death, but to live after the Spirit is life and peace (Rom. 12:11). Derived from the primary Greek verb **'zeō'** which means to "be hot" (i.e. 'boil' of liquids; or 'glow' of solids), "fervent" connotes the idea of having to "seethe, bubble, boil, from the sound of boiling water" (*Strong's Complete Word Study Concordance* AMG).

Being 'fervent in spirit' is nothing mild at all. It's the Spirit stoked up and burning! It's being occupied in the things of God – as was Apollos, a contemporary of Paul (Acts 18:24-28; cf. Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 3:5-6). It's having ZEAL!

To do the opposite is to grieve "the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." That is when the things of the flesh (which are ultimately traceable to Satan) dominate (Eph. 4:25-32).

The LORD has given us His word that He will never remove His Spirit from us nor His word of life out of our mouth (Hag. 2:5; Isa. 59:21). But what if we are lackadaisical or merely pay lip-service when we hear the word? (Read Isa. 29:13-14).

This is the trap and peril of religious routine to avoid as a people to whom the word and Spirit of God have come. Sometimes people seem to pay attention to the word but only in a superficial way, for example, because of the rhetorical skills of the speaker. Such was the attitude of the 'congregation' that regularly came to hear the word of God from Ezekiel, and the Lord noticed it:

"As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, 'Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.'

"So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.

"Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.

"And when this comes to pass – surely it will come – then they will know that a prophet has been among them" (Ezek. 33:30-33 NKJV).

The blessing is in the doing: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). Ordinarily, listening to the word of God should spur one's faith, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

So we must open our hearts to receive the Word as a people who are truly hungry and thirsty for God. Otherwise, the word we hear will not profit us. If we, through hypocrisy or outright rebellion, reject the Word of God, a time will come when we will seek to quench our spiritual hunger somehow or other but not from "the Fountain of Living Waters," Who

alone satisfies. Having wandered out of the way of understanding (which comes from obeying God's word, Ps. 111:10), we will take 'refuge' in "the congregation of the dead" (Prov. 21:16), trusting in false hopes. The LORD chided apostate Judah:

"My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

So, let's not trust in vain hopes. Let's heed the voice of the Spirit: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

Longing for God is life; that is the true elixir of life:

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live,
 "loving the LORD your God, obeying His voice, and cleaving to Him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (Deut. 30:19-20 RSV).

When the Lord reigns over all the earth, "living waters" shall flow from Jerusalem, His seat of government:

"And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former [Eastern] sea, and half of them toward the hinder [Western] sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.
 "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one" (Zech. 14:8-9). Halleluiah!

May "the God of all grace" (1 Pet. 5:10) give us the grace to desire and seek Him day and night so that we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10; Ps. 37: 4) Amen!