

The River of Life

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Bible Text: Ezekiel 47:1-12
Preached on: Sunday, September 25, 2022

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Dear congregation, it doesn't take too wide or deep of a look around us, both in the church and in the world, to realize that things by and large look grim. There's dullness, division, and deadness where once there was vibrancy, vitality and vigor. Now the Lord makes clear that none of us should despise the day of small things but neither are we to forget the expectation that scripture gives us concerning what the Lord has done and can do and promise that he will do in his grace and through the gospel, not just in the lives of individuals but in churches and throughout our world. The Bible has much to say about awakening and revival which can sweep over whole churches and nations, and even the whole world. Revival, congregation, is when there is a sovereign outpouring, as one has said, of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of sinners in a greater measure than is normally the case. Revival is the sovereign outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of sinners in a greater measure than is normally the case. Sinners are converted in greater numbers than unusual and God's people grow in a greater measure than usual, and both the saved and the unsaved are solemnized by the truth of God's word, by the power that is evident in the preaching of the gospel and fruit is born in the lives of God's people. And it is that which is pictured before us this evening in this 47th chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel, a glorious picture of God's reviving work through his Holy Spirit over the nations in a clear and hope giving way, in a way that we ought to take heed to no matter who we are this night, and that we would plead the promises and the visions of God's word as we hope to see.

Looking to the Lord this night, our text is really the first 12 verses which were read of Ezekiel 47. Allow me to read at this time verses 1 and 2.

1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. 2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

Thus far the words of our text.

Looking to the Lord, our theme this evening is "The Mighty River of Life." We'll see, first of all, the mysterious source; secondly, the massive scope; and thirdly, the desirable results. The mighty river of life: the mysterious source, the massive scope, and the desirable results.

Congregation, Ezekiel is one of the prophets that lived in dark days, days of exile. He himself was in exile in Babylon because of the people's idolatry within the land. It was almost as if the Lord had said, "If you want to worship idols, you will do so not in my land, but in the land of idolaters in Babylon." So the Lord carried the people away into exile, and Ezekiel was among them. And Ezekiel, children, had been a priest. He was of the priestly guild, and he had been a priest and functioned as a priest, but what do you do as a priest when you are brought into exile away from Jerusalem, away from the temple, away from the ordinances of God? Well, God called him in a special way to be a prophet, to speak from out of the sanctuary of God which abides, from the throne room of God which abides and lives forever. The prophecy of Ezekiel is, on the one hand, a stringent condemnation of man from whose side there is no hope, no recovery or no renewal possible, but at the same time Ezekiel's prophecy is an exaltation of all that God has purposed in himself to do for his own name's sake, a glorious work which we cannot even fathom or imagine.

Well, congregation, some of these oracles of Ezekiel are well known. Ten chapters back in Ezekiel 37 you can read about that vision of the valley of dry bones where Ezekiel is given to picture God's almighty, life-giving power, raising the dead, and picturing the work of the Spirit as he does there in his Ezekiel 37, reviving the dead bones of this army that is there in the wilderness, dry, very dead. And here, 10 chapters later, Ezekiel gives another vision which speaks of that same power in God and in the Spirit of God to bring to life that which is dead, but this time it is not with dry bones in a valley, but it is the picture of a river, a mighty river.

Young people, children, I wonder if you've ever stood next to a mighty river, large river, maybe the Mississippi River, or if you've traveled abroad, the Rhine River in Europe or the Nile River, I'm sure you've heard of that at least. Rivers are important for every society, especially in ancient times but still today, they not only provide water and because of water food, but rivers also make for transportation. And so, to an ancient world, a river would have been a special thing, a river brought food and water and commerce, and even all of us can understand that a river revives, doesn't it? The water of a river when it's clean and it comes through, you can wash in it. It washes what is dirty. It brings irrigation to that which is dry. It refreshes weary, parched souls. To picture the reviving power of grace, a river is certainly a very apt picture.

But as we look at this prophecy of Ezekiel, we notice something in the first place and that concerns the source of this river. Now, young people and children, where do rivers usually originate? Where do they usually have their start? Usually when you trace rivers to their headwaters, so to speak, you find it in mountainous area where maybe snow or rain comes down and there this river starts to form and maybe a number of streams come together and they come down the mountains. In Israel, those of you who have been to

Israel, there's this mighty Mount Hermon there in the north and it's a snow-capped mountain which is unique in this part of the world to have a mountain that's snow-capped all year round. But the snow from that mountain melts, especially during the spring, summer and fall months as we know them, and that because of the porous limestone region here, the water goes into the earth and then comes up, bubbles up at the headwater of the Jordan. So this Jordan River that goes and forms into the Sea of Galilee and then down through the Jordan River and ends up in the Dead Sea, it actually has its beginning there in Mount Hermon and the snow that melts and goes into the earth and then comes up and you can see the water bubbling up right there at the northern, most northern part. Caesarea Philippi, if you've been there, it's a remarkable scene.

That's where that river has its origin and shape but this river in our text, do you know where it starts, children? It doesn't start in a particular mountain as a result of snowfall or rain. This mighty river of our text, it begins in the sanctuary, in the temple which Ezekiel has been picturing over the previous six chapters, seven chapters. He's pictured this house of God that is going to be rebuilt. He had been in the previous temple which was destroyed, but God was going to make a new temple, a spiritual temple. And all these chapters are picturing the gospel age when God through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ would have a new dwelling place. In Jesus Christ, he would dwell with his people and he'd be with them and among them. That's why the Lord Jesus Christ said in John 2, "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days. This he spake of his own body." It would be through Christ that God would commune with his people.

And so it's a spiritual temple that is being pictured here and this river on which we are focused, it bubbles up do you know where, children? It bubbles up right by the throne of God, right by the place where God has his residence. It begins in the house of God, in this spiritual temple in the gospel represented here as this edifice of the temple, and specifically, if we look at verse 1, we find something even more amazing and it is that this river has its origin on the south side of the altar. On the south side of the altar, you can see that at the end of verse 1, "the waters came down from under the right side of the house at the south side of the altar." What Ezekiel is picturing here in symbolical language is that you see this glorious temple and as you take a closer look, there you see something bubbling up, something surprising, something you wouldn't expect from a temple, but it's bubbling up there underneath that house and it's bubbling up at the south side of the altar.

Well, what does this picture? This means that this mighty river of life has its origin and has its basis in blood, in sacrifice. God, reverently speaking, can be and can give this life-giving water for the healing of the nations only in the way of blood, in the way of sacrifice, in the way of the altar on which the sacrifice was slain. But there where the sacrifice is slain, the pleasure of God bubbles up, as it were, signifying that life may now go forth throughout this world. Well, is it any wonder that the Lord Jesus Christ already before his crucifixion he spoke of these things when, for example in John 7:39, he says, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said," and he's probably thinking here of Ezekiel 47, "as the scripture hath said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This he spake of the Spirit which

they that believe on him should receive for the Holy Spirit was not yet given because that Christ was not yet glorified." So in other words, the Lord Jesus Christ on the great day of the feast in John 7, he speaks about himself as this water of life. And through the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, this river of life would go out to the nations far and wide but it would be on the basis of Christ, one offering for sin forever, on the basis of the sacrifice that he would accomplish, on the basis of the shedding of blood, on the basis of Calvary which is the altar of God.

The Apostle John was witness of these things where he saw when the spear was thrust into the side of Christ, he saw two things come forth and he testifies of it that he saw blood and water. Blood, meaning that payment had been made, the satisfaction had been procured, that Christ had made his life to be an offering for sin. It was on the basis of that blood that there would also be water, life-giving water both from Christ. You see, congregation, the gift of new life is procured by Christ. It's based on Christ. There is no new life, there's no work of the Spirit in our hearts and lives except on the basis of what Christ has procured.

One of the most wonderful moments in the lives of the disciples would have been when on the day of resurrection the Lord Jesus Christ came into the upper room. Children, you know that he moved through the walls. He didn't have to go through the doors. There he was. He stood in their midst. He had just bled and died, and he still had the wounds, the marks of his death in his hands, his feet and his side. He showed them his hands and his feet and it was on that very occasion that he breathed on them and what did he say? He said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." In other words, here is the sacrifice, here is the one who shed his blood for full atonement of all sin. And because he was sacrificed there can be a river of life flowing from the throne of God.

And congregation, this, our first point, gives us so much hope and expectation in a world so devoid of life, so hopelessly lost from man's side, polluting every river imaginable. Can you and I make for this? If all the churches of the world come together, do you think we can produce a river of life for the healing of the nations.? No. From us there is only unclean, troubled, muddied waters at best. Our lives are a desert left to ourselves. God said in his word, "From me is thy fruit found." Not from self, not from anything in us, but this is the wonder of it all, it's from the throne of God, and that means that it has sovereignty all about it.

These things are not an accident. These things are not happenstance, that it just so kind of turned out that way. No, the throne of God that is the great hope of the church of all times and places, that God is on his throne, that he rules and reigns and all that happens in this world is under his control. We see through a glass darkly. We see so much ruin, so much that looks like confusion. We throw up our hands, "How can this be?" The Lord reigneth. Let the nations tremble. He is seated upon his throne. He rules righteously. The nations are but a drop in the bucket. Nothing happens by chance. God, God reigns. And most gloriously is that reign evident in the Son of his love, whom the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he did not spare. It is in Calvary that righteousness and peace have kissed each

other. Truth and mercy are met together and embrace each other. God's reign is manifest in the gracious purposes for the world, for sinners, all in Christ.

Well, congregation, as we leave our first point, the great question of our text is this: where are you looking for hope? Where are you looking for expectation? Is it to yourself? Is it to ministers? Is it to the church in general? Let us look to the throne of God. Let's let us look to the cross of Calvary. Let us see the power that lies in the blood of Christ. This confounds us, doesn't it? When we're honest so often we do look to man, we look to princes, we look to kings, we look to rulers, to presidents, to political parties and all these things. And yes, we have a civic duty. Let no one doubt that. And yet, is that our hope? God forbid. Our hope is in God, in the gospel, in Christ. In Christ alone, our hope can be found.

So, my dear friend, whoever you are, my unconverted friend here today, for you too personally look away for self. Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is from a sovereign God through Jesus Christ on the basis of the cross. There is life. There is hope. There is expectation. The mysterious origin, the throne, the throne of grace. But congregation, Ezekiel goes on and this river, secondly, has an impressive scope because Ezekiel tells us about this river and you need to trace this all out. He says three things about this impressive scope. The first is that the water of this river heads east. Look up verse 2 with me, "Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits." And so on eastward, eastward, eastward.

Now again, if you've been in Jerusalem as even today, it's remarkable because even today if you go westward from Jerusalem it's relatively fertile. It's a beautiful area, the lowlands, the Shephelah is beautiful. You head towards the Mediterranean Sea. It's the hill country. It's fertile. It's beautiful. And then you reach Jerusalem and then once you're over the Mount of Olives, which is right there by Jerusalem, it's desert. As far as the eye can see, it's just dry, dusty desert. It's beautiful in a way, but nothing grows there. Most of the time it's just dry. Dead. You'll see some Bedouins there. That's about it. Dry. Wilderness. And then if you eventually, if you just keep on going, you'll reach the Dead Sea. And so the picture is this, is that this river bubbling up from under the throne of God, it heads not to where it's green and fertile. It doesn't go there where there's already life, human life, if you will, some life, some goodness, some green. No, it goes to where there is none. It goes to the most desolate, forlorn and deserted places. It goes to the driest places. Isn't this exactly how the Lord loves to work? The Lord Jesus Christ put it like this, "They that are whole need not a physician but they that are sick. I've not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." And so this mighty river of life when it takes aim at something, it aims for the driest, for the deadest, for the dullest, for the most deserted place. The Lord, the Lord's eye is upon you, sinner. In you there's no life whatsoever. Maybe you're here today and this is your complaint: dry, dead, no matter what you try you can't squeeze out one drop of true vitality out of your own soul, needy, forlorn. Maybe you've even given up hope that you could ever be converted. So dead. So dry.

Well, congregation, look at the river. Where is it going? Where is it aimed at? There's a magnetism, as it were, of this river. It goes to sin. It goes to the foul. It goes to that which is dry, that which is dead but, secondly, congregation, there's another thing very remarkable about this river. You can read of this in verses 3 through 5. There's a man with a line, we would say a measuring stick, and he goes every thousand cubits and a thousand cubits is a quarter of a mile. So he goes a quarter of a mile and he puts in his measuring stick and the river is ankle deep. Then he goes another quarter mile and the river's deeper, it's knee deep. It goes another quarter mile and it's waist deep. It goes another quarter mile, so this is a mile from its source, and it's a river that you can't stand in anymore, you need to swim. A river to swim in. Congregation, this is an unusual river. This is not how geographic rivers work. You don't start with a little trickle and then it grows bigger and bigger, unless you, of course, have tributaries that come together. But if you have a little trickle, it doesn't grow bigger and wider and so on by itself, but not so the river of grace. Though it begins with a small stream, it grows. It grows wider, deeper, with every passing quarter mile, so to speak. And what does this tell us? This means that God's thinking is not in line with man's thinking. It is supernatural. It is extraordinary.

It is exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost, when on the day of Pentecost the Spirit was poured forth and it fell upon the 120 there and who, by the way, were right there in Jerusalem, right there in the upper room, right there by the sanctuary that was standing there, and it was, of course, all spiritual significance. But as you go on from Acts 2, it becomes deeper. It becomes wider. It becomes fuller. What begins as a trickle grows and grows and grows, and by the time you're through the book of Acts 28, there are churches throughout the whole Mediterranean world and through the labors of the apostles like Peter and John and James and Paul there's coming greater and greater depth to the Christian church. The purposes of God are not as man thinks them out. They are extraordinary. They're supernatural. The end of chapter 2 of Acts there are 3,000 converts. Pretty soon there's 5,000. It grows more and more. This is how the Lord works. You see, congregation, the Lord has designs on the whole entire world and it is his design that the knowledge of God would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. That is God's design. Fuller. Deeper.

Sometimes people have a view of Christianity where there is this tiny trickle of grace that will affect a person here, a person there, and over the spectrum and life there's just a handful, as it were, that are affected by this trickle of grace and the rest are relegated to nothing more than inhabitants who will fill the abyss or hell. Indeed, congregation, there is the reality of hell and hell will be full. It's a solemn thing. Yet congregation, we read the word of God carefully and we see that God's purposes are grand and great. By the end of time, he will have a people which no man can number from every tribe, tongue and nation around the throne. The glory of the king is in the number of his servants, and the Lord will have his people and to him will be all the glory, the praise and honor. And he wills that the gospel of Jesus Christ go the world over. Not just a trickle here or there. We're thankful for whatever the Lord will do.

When we take his words seriously, we see that his design is grand and glorious. God who called the things that are not as though they were, who spoke this world into being through a few words, "Let there be light. Let there be this. Let this appear. Let that appear." He's not changed. He's great. He's powerful. He's mighty. And the river of life is a mighty river of life.

Well, congregation, when we think about this impressive scope, it isn't just that it heads towards the desert, it isn't just that it grows deeper and wider but, thirdly, and here's a lesson, congregation, for all of us. Ezekiel is called to go through these waters, to wade into these waters and to find that these waters indeed first come up to his ankle, then to his knees, then to his waist, and then he needs to swim. And when you read this it says, "He brought me through the waters. He brought me through the waters. He brought me through the waters." The Lord is leading Ezekiel into the waters and he's bringing him more and more out of his comfortability to the point where he must no longer stand with his feet on solid ground, but he must swim. There's no other way. He must swim.

Children, do you remember being taught by your parents or maybe a swimming instructor how to swim? Maybe you were scared? When we start to swim, we love the shallow end, at least most of us. We don't dare go out into the deep end so easily, so quickly and you'd be advised to do that with trainers, with help. You know, it's one thing to dabble your toes and your feet into Christian doctrine and truth, it's another thing to have them go over your head. It's another thing to have experiential religion take hold of you so that you are being borne up by it. You're not holding it, it's holding you.

Spurgeon has a wonderful sermon on just this line, "waters to swim in," and he says this, he says, "Swimming is an excellent picture of faith. In the act of swimming it is needful that a man should float in the water. He must give himself up entirely to the water to trust it. And when he ceases to be active and becomes passive, brings no good works, no efforts, no merits to recommend himself to Jesus thereby but casts his soul upon the eternal merit and finished work of the great substitute, then and only then is he beginning to swim, to rest."

Again, back to this image of you learning to swim, young people or children, when you are just flailing along and you're tiring yourself out, you'll pretty soon sink, but it's when you lie on your back and you just go like this and you rest upon the waters and the waters are holding you up you realize that you're floating. And yes, other times you must exert activity, and Spurgeon goes on to say that, that there is a place for activity in the Christian religion and in the Christian faith. It's speaking here about swimming. When you're swimming, especially when you're swimming long distance or in difficulty in waves, it can be very difficult. It can tire you out. It can weary you. Maybe there's someone here today who's swimming, is finding his head, her head to go down. You wonder how you can sustain what you're going through. My friend, don't you know this passage? "When thou passes through the waters I will be with thee. They shall not overflow thee." They may seem to and at times it may seem like you're losing your ability to breathe. The Lord upholds his child in his love, in his grace, in his compassion and he does so all for the sake of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who had no place for standing,

over whose soul the waters went and he cried. There's no place for him that you might be enabled to swim.

But congregation, here's the point: in Christian truth there is this calling to be immersed, to not just dabble but to immerse yourself in it, to grow in it, to make use of that which God has given you and affording you. The scriptures above all to read, the book that God has given you which is able to make you wise unto salvation, and this book indeed is a book in which you can go ankle deep. You can go knee deep. Someone has said that the Bible is an ocean in which the lambs can wade in a little way and be cleansed but the great divines, they can swim in this as well. I wonder if you're one of these people that doesn't go deep into the word of God, deep into good books that can truly help you understand the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of the atonement, all these things. I wonder if you're using preaching that the Lord gives you in order to swim in the truth of God.

Like many of us, if we're honest, we dabble a little on the edges of things so often. A few verses here. A couple lines here maybe a meditation here or there. And of course all these things are good, better than nothing, but waters to swim in. Waters to swim in, congregation. Very shortly, and we rejoice so much with you in God's gift of a minister, a seasoned minister of God to be among you, but I wonder will you use him? Will you use him to be able to swim in the truth of God? Oh, that the Lord would give that and in the day of days this would not be a greater burden for condemnation for you that the Lord would say to you, "I sent you a minister but you did not use him, not sufficiently, not rightly." You did not come to church hungry, thirsty for all that the Lord had to give you.

My friend, it's waters to swim in and, congregation, there are times when the Lord speaks to you as he did to Simon Peter. When he had spent the whole night fishing in the waters and caught nothing, and there he was weary and worn, tired, and the Lord stood on the shore and said to him, "Peter, I'm coming into your boat and you must launch out in the deep for a catch." And of course, Peter, who was a fisherman, who knew fishing, who knew the Lake of Galilee like the back of his hand, who knew the rhythms, the seasons of fishing and all the rest of this, he looked at this with all his natural born wisdom, and he thought, "This this can't be," and he set it to the Lord, "We have toiled all the night and caught nothing. Nevertheless," what a blessed nevertheless in his life, all of grace that the Lord put into his logic that, "Nevertheless at thy word I will let down my net."

Congregation, the Lord would have his people launch out into the deep to do things that don't make any human sense whatsoever. Of course, in consultation with your elders, with those who know these things, and yet the Lord is calling his people to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. To grow, or in the language of our text, waters to swim in. Is there a child of God here who was called into the deep, perhaps through some affliction, through some toil, through some deep, dark providence and the waters went over your soul and you wondered what was the Lord doing? Where was the Lord calling you? It was much more comfortable before where you could stand half on dry land and, yes, one foot in the water. The Lord forced you into the deep providential affliction. But as time went on you didn't see it right away, maybe you didn't see it much

at all. There's some of God's children here that know when God called them out into the deep and there was no standing, there was no solid ground for their feet and all they could do was rest on the waves and seek with the Lord's help and strength to make it one more stroke, one more wave, that in the end, as they look back, they realize that they were swimming in what divine love had apportioned to them and behind this frowning providence there was the smiling face of what the Lord had in view for them in order for them to find more in Christ, more in God, more in his Spirit. They didn't have the control that they formerly had. They felt entirely out of control. And yet in it all, they learned to taste more of the love of God enveloping their soul, enveloping their poor life, bringing them to say, "Who hath known the mind of God or who hath been his counselor?"

Well, congregation, waters to swim in. Waters to swim in. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." You see, there's a wideness in God's purposes. There's a depth in the love of God that none can plumb the depths of. But it's waters to swim in. What an impressive scope. Oh, the purposes of God past finding out. But then we see, thirdly and lastly here and briefly, the desirable effects of this mighty water of life. And there are four effects that if you continue reading verses 7 through 12, you will have this. First of all, there's the effect of fruit. I said already where rivers are, there's typically there's much verdancy and fruitfulness.

And as Ezekiel goes on, he comes to see on the bank of the river there are very many trees on the one side and on the other. Verse 12 mentions trees for food whose leaf does not fade neither so the fruit thereof be consumed. It shall bring forth new fruit according to his months. Every month there's a new fruit. There will be plenty. There will be abundance of fruit. You see, congregation, wherever this river of life flows, there will be the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law. From me is thy fruit found. It is from the Spirit. Thy Spirit, O Lord, makes life to abound. It cannot be otherwise.

But secondly, there is healing. Verse 8, "Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert," we saw that already, it goes toward the east to the desert, the Judean desert, "and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed." And not only will the waters be healed but the land itself will be healed because there will be trees, as we just saw with leaves for the healing of the nation. There will be healing everywhere.

Congregation many people need healing, spiritual healing, inward healing. The soul is sick. The heart is faint. Oh, when I look out over our world, so many are in need of gospel healing. Who here has a life that is dry, dull and empty and devoid of every grace? Well, my friend, you need this river and the river flows to that which is dead, that which is dull. You need healing, this is the river you need. Look for it here. Look for it in Christ. Take your sin-sick soul, your weary, fatigued, dry, dead soul, this river is what you need. It will cleanse. It will fructify. It will heal. Christ, the healer of the nations.

But besides fruit and healing, there's also life. Verse 9, "And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live."

You see, congregation, when the Lord comes into your life with the gospel and he comes with this spirit which makes life to abound, then life manifests itself, the life through regeneration, the life through Christ, the life in Christ so much so that Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the sSn of God who loved me and gave himself for me." And Christ says, "I have come that you might have life, that you might have it more abundantly."

But don't look for this life in self. Don't try to marshal it from within. Don't try to concoct it from religion, or from the works of the law, or from rituals, whatever it may be. It's in Christ, the Prince of life, he who is the resurrection and the life. And in the gospel he comes so close, near unto you, nigh unto you is the word, even in your mouth and in your heart the word of faith which we preach. Fruit, healing, life, converts. Where do we see that? Verse 10, "And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim." These are two places on either side of the Dead Sea. So the picture here is that the whole Dead Sea where nothing grows, the Dead Sea is useful for many things, for lotions and all the rest of this, but nothing grows in the Dead Sea, but when this river that comes out of the throne of God and comes eastward and comes through the wilderness, when it comes to the Dead Sea, it changes everything. What hope for you, my unconverted friend, whose life is nothing but a Dead Sea. No life, nothing at all. This river of life, this mighty river of life is what you need. It can cleanse. It can heal. It can wash. It can enliven.

And fishers shall stand all over this Dead Sea. There are no fish in the Dead Sea but because of this river, the fish will be so many, according to their kind as the fish of the Great Sea, that's the Mediterranean Sea, exceeding many. Ezekiel sees it in the Spirit that's how God shall work. Is it any wonder that the Lord Jesus Christ when he came to this world, and when he called his disciples, he said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." And where? In Galilee of the Gentiles, in the worst places of the world, the dark places of this world, they that sat in darkness have seen a great light. That's the gospel way. That's the river's way.

And oh, what catches these apostles made, especially on the day of Pentecost and beyond. There they went to regions where there had been no truth, no life, no gospel, and sinners were saved. There they came, the one after the other, demon-possessed, idolaters, those under the sway of every religion and every might, all sorts of magic. There came the gospel and reverently speaking, you would say that the apostles, they put out their nets and their nets were full of fish from regions where before there had just been death, destruction.

Well, congregation, don't you agree we need this reviving river of the Spirit today? We need days like this. We need a heaven-sent reviving and awakening once more where we're solemnized, where things are real, where the preaching of the gospel is not just a nice song that we hear, like people going to the concert and then leaving this place and wasn't that nice. No, it grips us, it affects us, it draws us in and we're made to swim in the

rivers of God and we're changed and we're washed and we're cleansed and we're made into fishers of men.

This is what the world needs at this time. The darkest day imaginable where the lights are going out like never before in our day, we need this river of life. And I wonder, are we praying, are we pleading with God to fulfill Ezekiel 47 in our day, in our life, in your life, in your congregation, that this river bubbling up from the throne of God, from the cross of Jesus Christ, breathe life to our sin-sick, our dead souls. Oh, for days of reviving once again. But do we plead it? Are you on your knees pleading this promise, taking hold of the Lord in prayer, saying, "Lord, this is thine own word that was written, as it were, in the blood of thy Son. Fulfill it." And is there expectation from the Lord to do this? Or are things at such a low ebb that we're like that captain in the days of the Syrian army that said, "Even if the Lord were to open the windows of heaven, it couldn't be in our day." And Elisha said to him, "It will most certainly happen, and you will see of it with your own eyes, but you will be trodden under foot." Oh, that the Lord would give us expectation, holy prayerful expectation. Thou art coming to a king. Large petitions with thee bring. For his grace and power are such. This mighty river of life is such, none can ever ask too much. My unconverted friend, you too, you can never ask too much from the Lord but plead his own word. Look to the Son. He who has the Son has life. He who has not the Son shall not see life.

Congregation, in 1857 in New York City, imagine this, a century and a half ago, six people began meeting for prayer on Fulton Street in New York City. And the first time they met was rather discouraging but a week later there were more, and within a month there were many more, and a revival started to spread not just through New York City, but through all the cities of the northeast and beyond across this whole United States of America, so much so that by the following year there were approximately 50,000 conversions in New York City alone, and 20,000 conversions across the northeastern United States, and God only knows what the true number is, but people turning from darkness to light. Our world has seen this. Our nation has seen this. The great revivals that swept our land, ministers like George Whitefield, when he did not hear of a conversion in two weeks under his ministry he would hit the ground and he would pray to God, "God, what is wrong? What is wrong? What is wrong? What have we done? What have we done wrong to grieve the Holy Spirit of God?"

Oh, congregation, if we could see things from the light of eternity wouldn't our lives be different? But there is a warning. I skipped over it but in verse 11 there's something fearful that we must hear as well. Verse 11, "the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt." There is this powerful working of God in the gospel in such a way that the most dead sinner can come to life under the preaching of the gospel. And yet it has happened and it does happen that where that river flows there are those who will not repent, "who will not come to me that ye might have life," Christ says. Do you know what one of those places was? One of those marshes, miry places? You can read of in Matthew 13:58. The city of Nazareth where the Lord Jesus Christ himself had grown up, we read that the Lord Jesus Christ could do no mighty work there because of their unbelief. In other words, Nazareth, Nazareth, Capernaum, all

these cities in which so many mighty works had been done, so many remained a marsh, a miry place. Why? Because of unbelief. To Jerusalem the Lord Jesus Christ had said, "How oft would I have gathered you?" He speaks as the living water himself and yet, "ye would not."

Well, congregation, I bear record to you that in the day of days, none of you here will be able to accuse the Lord of doing you any wrong. But why then, why won't you come that you might have life? Is there anything wrong in this river? There isn't. It's exactly what you need. Oh, come and be healed and find life. Perhaps you're here today and you say, "But my life is nothing but a marsh, nothing but the Dead Sea. There is not a sprig of life in my soul." My friend, the blood has flowed from Calvary. This river finds its origin in the throne of God. There's no excuse. It's all in him. It's all of grace. Oh, to grace, how great a debtor. Daily I'm constrained to be. It's all of grace but don't trifle with mercy. Don't trifle with mercy. Come and find life in Christ. Let him that is athirst come and put your gaping dry mouth into the water of life freely and you will find life and healing. All glory to God. Amen.

Gracious God, our hearts renew. Make our spirits right and true. Cast us not away from thee. May thy Spirit dwell in us, renew us by that Holy Spirit of God. Grant life unto our souls, we pray. Shine still the brightness of thy presence over us. Bless this congregation. May the mighty river of life flow from this pulpit until thy coming again, Lord Jesus. May many fishers of men be called from this flock. May the unconverted find life in thee. May Christ reign supreme as long as this world lasts, and all this we ask in the pardon of every sin in Jesus' name alone. Amen.