

## "WELLS OF SALVATION"

"And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isaiah 12:1-3.

God's Word is a spiritual book. Many things in it, which seem to be just plain facts of history, are deeply typical and have far-reaching spiritual meaning. In fact, we cannot understand and appreciate the Bible unless we keep in mind the typical character of much of its contents. Those who see geographical boundaries, historical incidents and grammatical constructions, without seeing at the same time the spiritual meaning of these things, miss the message of the Bible.

Take the wells of the Old Testament. Each one has a typical meaning. Wherever Abraham went he dug a well and gave it a name. This was because water is one of the essentials of life and wells are practically the only way to get water in that dry country. A man cannot live without water.

Because water is so essential to human life, the divine writers have made it typical of spiritual life. Christ used this figure in His conversation with the Samaritan woman when He said, "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." John 4:14.

Isaiah, the great Messianic prophet, used this figure in his psalm of praise and assurance. "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isaiah 12:2-3.

This evidently refers to the experience of the children of Israel at Rephidim. That scene is familiar to us. The Israelites were in the wilderness murmuring against Moses on account of the lack of water, and the Lawgiver, being at his wit's end as to what to do with his troublesome subjects, took his anxieties to God, and got for an answer the command to take with him the elders of Israel and his miracle-working rod, and to go to the rock, "and the Lord shall stand upon the rock before thee there, and the water shall flow forth." It was not the rock, nor the rod, nor Moses and the elders, but the presence of God that brought forth the refreshing stream.

That this incident was in Isaiah's mind when he wrote our text is very clear to anybody who will observe that it occurs in the middle of a song of praise, which corresponds to the song of the Israelites at the Red Sea after the destruction of Pharaoh's forces. It is part of a great prophecy in which he described God's future blessings and mercies under images constantly drawn from the Egyptian bondage and the Exodus in the desert.

Isaiah closed the eleventh chapter of his prophecy with a reference to the deliverance of the nation from the oppression of Egyptian bondage. Then, he opened his twelfth chapter with a burst of song because of that deliverance.

What does this sweet, joyful and exultant singer find in God? Thinking of God as a personality Isaiah emphasized the fact that He was a vital force in human life. Of Him Isaiah said three things.

First, "God is my salvation." How extraordinarily rich and comprehensive is this term! All that one needs is included in this beautiful and wonderful word. The Lord's fulness and man's needs are encircled in this rich word.

Second, "God is my strength." Here is the adequate resource for all of our needs. We have a right to associate strength with the One Who is almighty in power. We might also notice that Isaiah is saying more than "God is strength." He is saying, "God is my strength," and this possessive pronoun changes everything. The personal note reminds us of our union with the Father. It is God Who is our strength. And that is the primary and fundamental need of our lives. Life without strength lacks vital force. Have you not heard sick people say, "If only I could get back my strength!" There is life, but, alas, the needed strength is lacking, and there is no force. A mind may be finely constructed, but it is productless without executive strength. So it is in the spiritual realm, the fundamental requisite is strength.

To God we must look for the impartation of strength in order that the force of character may endow life with the necessary intensity, decision and aim. Without this strength of character, Christian life lacks vital force. Thus, we need for our weaknesses to be transformed through the possession of and dependence upon our resource, which is God our strength. Dr. Horatius Bonar, in realized weakness, expressed this in a verse of that beautiful hymn.

"I have no other help but Thine; nor do I need  
Another arm save Thine to lean upon;  
It is enough, my Lord, enough indeed;  
My strength is in Thy might, Thy might alone."

It is in God's might alone that we have true strength of love, will, motive, aim and achievement. To carry on in daily life we need God's strength. What dreariness, drudgery and disappointment there are in lives! Power is needed to walk with unfaltering step the long lane that never seems to have a turning; to rise up with determination and face and fight the battles of life. We also need the power to go up. As we travel along life's road, there are many hills of difficulty to overcome, and we need strength to climb.

Third, "God is my song." The life of a Christian is not only to be characterized by strength, but also by song. God is the happiest being in the universe because He is perfect and can and does do so much good to and for others. His happiness He can and does share with His own. Might must march to music, and fulness of strength will issue in fulness of song. The heavenly harmony does not blend music with melancholy. Life holds for us many a sorrow, but underneath and above is the unquenchable song. The Lord is my song. When the love of God is in the heart, the song of God will be on the lips. When God is the glory of our salvation and our strength, God will be the subject of our song.

#### I. The Wells Of Salvation.

The plural is used here because God is as many wells in the sense that He is inexhaustible. Salvation has its origin in the depths of God's own nature. It wells up out of His love and is not drawn forth by anything in us, but flows out freely from His own gracious, loving heart. His love ever streams out by an energy within, like the sun whose beams travel through dark distances, not because they are drawn by the earth, but because of their own inherent impulse.

Since God is the fountain of salvation, then the essence of salvation must be His communication of Himself to us. In order that the water of salvation may be made available to us, the wells of salvation must be in the field of our own experience. This is the reason God sent Christ, His only begotten Son, into the world and opened up to us the fountain of eternal life. After He came He said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." As He stood by the brink of Jacob's well, He spoke to the woman of Samaria and said, "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." John 4:10. Christ also said to her, "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." John 4:14.

Think of the extraordinary claims involved in these words. Christ plants Himself over against the entire human race and claims that He can satisfy every thirst of every soul through all the ages. Every craving of heart and mind, all longings for love and wisdom, purity and joy, strength and guidance, He claims to be able to satisfy. He is the only source, the perennial source and the inexhaustible source of salvation. He is the fountain that never runs dry though the ages pass. Wells, you know, are treated in contrast with cisterns, which only store the drainage of the ground. Wells are fed from springs and storehouses treasured in the heart of the earth. Salvation is not like a man-made cistern, which only holds a limited quantity and is apt to fail in the supreme hour of need. The blessings of the gospel may be compared to water on account of their refreshing properties, their purifying influence, their adaptation to all men and their necessity to life. These waters impart strength to the worker, courage to the timid, refreshment to the weary, satisfaction to the thirsty and joy to the mourner.

## II. The Drawing Out Of These Wells Of Salvation.

People have given many answers to the question, "If God be the fountain of salvation, how are we to get the water?" Pumps and devices of all sorts have been tried. There has been much weary working of arms at the pump handles and much jangling of buckets but nothing brought up. The words of the Samaritan woman are true when applied to all who try in any way to procure salvation through efforts of their own: "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." But there is no need for all this profitless work. The well of salvation is an artesian one that needs no machinery to raise the water, but only pitchers to receive it. To trust Christ is to draw the water of life from the well of salvation. Faith is the channel through which God's salvation comes to each thirsty soul.

People never appropriate this blessing until they are impelled by a sense of need. It was their sense of need that made the blind men cry out with such earnestness and perseverance, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us." The rejecters of Christ and salvation are those who have never felt their need of a Saviour. Men need to be taught that they are sinners and in great need of salvation.

## III. The Joy Of Those Who Draw From The Wells Of Salvation.

This text portrays an interesting picture. It is full of the atmosphere and spirit of Eastern life; the cheery talk and the ringing laughter around the village well, where lingered the shepherds and various other people from the village.

Salvation unfolds into joy. There is in it forgiveness and companionship with God and Christ. Christians are independent of externals, possessing that which no change can affect and of which nothing can deprive us. How different are the fleeting joys of earth when men resort to their broken cisterns that can hold no water!

On a small island off the coast of Arabia in the Persian Gulf, there is perhaps the largest well in the world. It is a deep basin sixty-six by one hundred and twenty feet. There has been much discussion as to the source of the water that constantly fills this great well. The water cannot come from the island nor from the sea around it. The only source seems to be the mountains in the distance. The water from the rain and snow falling on these mountains sinks into the ground and, finding a strata of sand deep in the earth, runs under the sea and comes up in this well on the island.

This is a splendid illustration of the wells of salvation, whose waters of life have their source in the hills from whence cometh our strength and, flowing through the strata of God's grace, burst to the surface of human life in Jesus Christ, the great well of all mercy and love and redemption.

The Lord and lover of your soul is calling to you now, as He did to the men of His generation, and saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." To you He says, "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
Behold, I freely give  
The living water, thirsty one;  
Stoop down, and drink, and live.

"I came to Jesus; and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched,  
My soul revived,  
And now I live in him!"