

GOD'S GLORIOUS INVITATION

"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 and milk 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." Isaiah 55:1-3.

If you were traveling along a public highway, and were to hear a loud "Ho!" uttered behind you, three questions would naturally arise in your mind. First who speaks? Second, who is spoken to? Third, what is spoken about? Now, we are traveling to eternity, and we have just heard the solemn call of this text. So, let me direct your attention to these three questions.

1. Who speaks?

Since it is the great God of heaven and earth Who is speaking in this verse, let us listen with profound awe to what He is saying.

2. To whom is God speaking?

God is speaking to those who are at a distance from Him. How do we know this? We know it because of the use of the word, "Ho!" We never cry "Ho" to a person who is near us, but to those who are distant, and whose attention we wish to secure. He is speaking to people who have not yet found enough to meet their needs. Of course, there are many such people.

3. About what is God speaking?

God is speaking about salvation and is inviting all to come to Him and receive it. The figure by which it is expressed is that of water, one which is used frequently in the Scriptures, and that with a beautiful propriety. On one occasion Christ said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." It is to thirsty ones that our text is addressed.

In Babylon the Jews directed their splendid gifts of insight, imagination and tenacity to commerce. To the superficial observer, the Jews had made an excellent adjustment. But to the prophet, it was apparent that his countrymen were miserably unhappy. They could not leave well enough alone; they had to have something better. They could not be contented.

Isaiah certainly wrote to a thirsty age. Prosperity prevailed much of the time. The more prosperous the times, the less contented were the people. Covetousness and greed grow in prosperity like weeds in wet weather. Amos, Micah, and Isaiah spoke earnestly against luxury and oppression, and tried to get the people to live in conformity to the will of God. But there was no inward peace.

Men were drunk on wine and wealth. Their women were luxurious, lewd and lazy. The poor were made frantic by the display of wealth which they could not share. The luxury of others made them seem poorer by stirring wants which they could not satisfy. It was an age of intoxication, a debauch of materialism and false religion. The rich were riotously unhappy, and the poor were miserably so.

Not since the days when Christ was here in the flesh has there been an age of more marked thirst than our own. We have the prosperity and passion, the luxury and the restlessness, the possessions and the lack of peace that mark an age as critical. We are full of desires. Fast as are our facilities, our wants are faster still. Where can one find peace?

When people thirst as badly as they do in our age, something must happen. Their thirst must be met with reality or the most serious consequences will ensue. This age is literally desperate about some things. It wants profit, pleasure and material security. Mad rush characterizes our day. Pleasure rather than work has become the goal of the masses. Work is tolerated or endured only that it may lead to recreation. Work hours are shortened that those on play may be increased. Serenity and meditation are almost unknown. Crimes of every description simply mark the innate craze to have and to have quickly. Surrounded by problems, confusions and threats, and fearful of the imploding chaos, men strive for serenity, and their failure to find it helps produce ulcers, high blood pressure, heart attacks, strokes, allergies and many other conditions. Multitudes are attempting to control their tensions by gobbling aspirin, sleeping pills, peppills and tranquillizers. Many others seek refuge from intolerable stresses in narcotics, alcohol, divorce, the mad search for pleasure and the cynical philosophy of making friends and influencing people. Self-destruction increases annually because many feel that they cannot endure longer the realities of life. Only in the life which is from God through Christ can men find peace.

The famished multitudes are spending their energies upon things which do not supply their wants or meet their deepest needs. Multitudes do not know it, but they are thirsting for the water of life. They want something that will satisfy their souls. They long for pardon, for freedom from sin, for the peace that passeth understanding, and for the glad joy that hath no ending.

I. The Invitation.

The reason for man's acceptance of God's gracious invitation is based upon man's own felt sense of need. This figure of "thirst" is used to represent the actual felt need of the human heart for peace of soul as he faces the certain destiny of the future. Physical thirst is the most ceaseless torture to which the human body can be subjected. Every other pain is forgotten when thirst lays its grip upon the body. There is nothing that can satiate the thirst of the soul except the peace of God's pardon.

To whom is the invitation extended? If you will listen to the appeals of the prophet, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the messages of the apostles, you will find that they are unanimous in their appeals to the needy, the thirsty, the hungry, the poor, the diseased, the lame, the halt and the blind. The world does not invite folks like that. The world does not want the outcasts, the outlaws, the down-and-outs, or the people who are born on the wrong side of the tracks. The world has a price for everything it offers. God's bounties are free to all who will accept His invitation through the Lord Jesus Christ. God's bounties are for those upon whom the world turns its self-righteous back. This invitation should evoke an echo in every thinking mind, loving heart and longing soul. God offers infinite and superlative satisfaction for the taking.

God is not class-minded. That is why He has invited everyone. "Who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely." Young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, bond and free are all pressed by the urgency of inviting love to come.

What are we invited to do? Our text answers, "Come ye to the waters." We are invited to drink the water of life. There is nothing else that can satisfy a guilty conscience, the longing heart, or the yearning soul. The best that you can get here upon this earth carries a sting, ajjoker. It is not what it pretends to be. There is too much tinsel, or too much fool's gold about it. You may dance to the tune, if you wish, but you will have to pay the piper. The price is too high for the little joy that you get out of it. But when you come to the Lord there is the bread and water of life; there is the fullness of the abundance of God's grace. None of God's mercies carry in them any sort of a sting. They are not polished up to represent something which they are not. They are just exactly what they appear to be.

This invitation is earnest. Listen to the cry which comes from the God of heaven as He says, "Ho! Stop! Wait! Look! Listen!" His invitation is serious. Six hundred and forty-two times God has extended the invitation, "Come." His invitation is also general. God is not class-minded. All men are urged to come to the fountain flowing from the throne of God's grace. God's invitation is free. The things of God in Christ, such as salvation and eternal life, are without price. You cannot buy anything from God. His blessings are free for the asking and the taking. You do not pay for breathing; you do not pay for seeing the sunlight; nor can you ever pay for the pardon of your sins through Christ's blood. And the pardon of a sinner is not something which is done when he is dying, but it is done while he is living.

II. The Expostulation.

"Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Satan does not have any bargains. The way of sin is costly, more expensive than any and every other pursuit in life. Sin costs everything---character, reputation, time, health, money, love, home and influence. Finally, it costs the soul and heaven itself. Sin is extremely unsatisfying. There is nothing in sin that satisfied for any length of time. It is bitter, biting and blighting. It brings pain to the body, pangs to the heart and punishment to the soul. You may lose yourself for a while in its hectic preoccupations, but as soon as the moments of enchantment are over, there comes the bitter sting of remorse and terrible memories.

III. The Solicitation.

"Hearken diligently unto me." This is certainly an urgent appeal to those who are in imminent danger. You, who are unsaved, are on the road to destruction. You are heading for perdition. Here is the way out: "Incline your ear, and come unto me." There cannot be any doubt about God's concern for the salvation and the welfare of His creatures.

IV. The Compensation.

"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live." The result of coming to Christ and accepting Him is eternal life. Any lost person may have eternal life if he will accept this wondrous invitation of God, and step out on the mercies and promises of God as outlined in your text. Here is life simply for the taking. Here is life in its fullness on earth, as well as life throughout an endless eternity of reigning and rejoicing with the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this matchless life, which neither the world, nor the flesh, nor the devil can give, there is the forgiveness of your sins. In this offer is included the blotting out of every transgression, the removing of every iniquity, the washing away in Christ's blood of every blot from your soul and record. It is God's prerogative to forgive sin. And God alone forgives sin.

There is also the constant fellowship of the Holy Spirit. He will never lead you astray. He will comfort you, sustain you, support you, supply your needs, teach you, encourage you, inspire you, and lead you in the way of righteousness for God's sake. You need His friendship and fellowship. God offers Him to you in this invitation.

He also offers you future glory. In no other way, in no other place, under no condition, can you escape the torments of hell and enjoy the bliss of heaven.

The question then is this: "What will you do with this great invitation?" God writes it across the horizon of your lives. You cannot leave this place without making a decision for or against Him.