

COME, YE THIRSTY ONES!

“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” (Isaiah 55:1).

ARE YOU THIRSTY? If so, your thirst is your invitation. This is a promise to the Lord’s people. Dead sinners never thirst! Dead sinners never respond. You can preach the gospel to a dead sinner and it amounts to no more than pouring water on a duck’s back, unless Almighty God quickens that sinner and makes him alive to the Gospel. We waste time pulling, begging and pleading with alien dead sinners. God Himself must intervene and make the first move—quicken, arouse and deal with the spiritually dead sinner, if that sinner is to ever benefit from this invitation, ***“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!”*** As it is my manner of preaching, let me ask and answer several questions.

I. Do you understand the condition of natural man? Let me enumerate about 10 things. 1. *The sinner is totally dead in the spiritual realm.* What does a dead man need? Does he need a mere invitation? No, he needs the life-giving power of God. 2. *He has no eyes to see the glory of God.* It is a high act of stupidity to try to get a man with no eyes to see a picture on the wall—in the same way, it is spiritually silly and stupid to think you can get an alien, dead sinner to see anything spiritual. 3. *The sinner has no ears to hear the voice of God.* The only voice he can hear is a physical or natural one. But when God quickens you and gives you the spiritual ear, you will begin to hear spiritual truth. 4. *A sinner has no heart to perceive the things of God.* If he were to read the Bible for a million years, he would only gain natural knowledge of historical facts but no ability to conceive of anything spiritually.

5. *That sinner has no thirst for the living waters of the Gospel.* ***“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!”*** That is a limited invitation. There is no general invitation in the Bible—every promise is limited and specified for a certain class of people. This invitation is limited to the thirsty—nobody but the thirsty are invited. 6. *He has no desire to know Christ.* Jesus, in the days of His flesh, preached the Gospel and sent out His apostles to preach the Gospel. Still the men at large had no desire to come to Him or to know Him. 7. *The natural man has no need to come to Christ.* Why should he come to Christ? He has ability to make money, to work in this world and to do a lot of things. Being a natural man he is only looking for things to satisfy his flesh. He sees no need to come to Christ.

8. Then I would point out to you *that he has no fear of God before his eyes.* You can preach to the natural unregenerate man about the horrors of Hell, the awfulness of the Great Judgment Day and a never-ending eternity, but it does not affect him any more than preaching to a hog or a cow. 9. *Natural men have no protection from Satanic powers and deception.* Only the providence of God keeps them from going to the depths. The “strong man, Satan” keeps them in his service and under his control. 10. *That sinner by nature dwells in a dry and a barren land,* and he loves to have it so. Oh, what an awful picture of the spiritual condition and total inability of the natural man!

“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” (John 7:37). If God has given you a thirst for Christ, there is the invitation! But it is a solemn fact that when our Lord performed miracles or fed the hungry, He had great crowds, but when He turned to preach the truth to them, to call the hungry and thirsty to the Gospel feast, they all forsook Him and fled away! Read John chapter six.

II. What is a Gospel Invitation? In Matthew 11:28-30 He tells you that His Gospel invitation is fourfold.

1. *It is bread for the hungry.* Are you hungry? “No, sir!” Well, you are not invited.
2. *It is water for the thirsty.* Are you thirsty for Christ? “No, not now!” You are not invited.
3. *This invitation is salvation for the lost.* Are you lost? “I don’t know what you mean!” Then you are not invited.

4. *It is rest to the weary.* Are you tired and sick of the weariness of life, tired of listening to these old apostate preachers, tired of spending your time and money in that which satisfies not? Then Jesus said—not, Go and hunt yourself another church—but **“Come to me!”** Come to a Person! Isn’t that wonderful?

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). How wonderful is the Gospel invitation! But in the New Testament I do not find where they made a proposition to anybody. I do not find where they invited everybody. I do not find where they took the Bible and got somebody “saved,” as we see it today. You may say that you believe they did practice these things, but you have no Scriptures to support it. I do find that they preached, and their glorious message was their invitation. Under God’s Spirit as they preached, men were stabbed with conviction and they got lost and cried out under the power of the Holy Ghost, wanting to know the way to be saved. Yes, they cried, **“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”** (Acts 2:37). When sinners really wanted to know the way to Zion, when they wanted to know what to do to be saved, then they were told—but not before! Nowhere in the Bible did God’s servants tell anybody what to do to get saved until they found a sinner who was interested in hearing the Good News.

III. Then I ask, **Who is it that Invites Sinners?** **“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.”** Compare John 7:37, **“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”** In John chapter seven we can easily see some of the characteristics of the One who invites sinners.

1. Jesus *the Prophet of Jehovah* invites you. He is the One who has been given the authority of Heaven to speak the very words of God.

2. It is *Jesus Christ the Mighty God incarnate* who invites you. That ought to be interesting to a poor sinner. If you should receive an invitation from the President to come and visit him in the White House, with all expenses paid, I believe you would be on your way to Washington! But this invitation is from a greater than the President, even from the Great High Priest of Heaven, from Jesus the Mighty King. Listen.

3. It is *Jesus Christ the One Mediator between God and men* who invites you. Here is an invitation from the Lord Himself, inviting hungry, needy sinners to come freely to the Gospel feast! Have you ever done a study on how far apart the sinner is from God, and then remembered that there is only One Almighty Mediator provided to bridge the gap! Notice 1 Timothy 2:5-6, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Yes, this one Mediator’s work is going to be testified in due time. He was given from the foundation of the world to redeem all of God’s dear people. Then in time He was born and came into the world. When He was of age, John baptized Him with water in Jordan and the Father baptized Him with the Holy Ghost. Then God spoke from Heaven, saying, “Here is my mediator; here is my Son; hear ye Him!” And it is that Mediator sent from Heaven’s courts who invites sinners!

IV. **Who is Invited to Come?** Let us look at this again more definitely. Is everybody invited? No. I hear it preached on all sides that all men are invited, but I find no Bible foundation for that. I do, however, find an invitation that ought to take you in, my listener. Listen: I hear of this “universal gospel,” but I know nothing about it. I hear much about a “universal invitation,” but I know nothing about it. Ladies and gentlemen, who are invited? The Scriptures are clear, and I want to show you the truth.

1. *The thirsty* are invited. “Every one that thirsteth.” That ought to be clear. Are you thirsty? Be honest—are you thirsty? Then you are invited to come to the waters. Your thirst is your invitation. I have no right to indiscriminately invite you—but if you are thirsty, then the God who created that thirst invites you to come to Him. Oh, the thirsty ones are invited!

2. *The child of God* is invited. The blessings of grace belong properly to God’s children.

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3. Those *who have been born again*, who have been made alive to your need—you are invited by the God who gave you that new life. Then why don't you come? Don't wait on or trust a feeling. Your thirst is real and greater than any fleshly emotions. So come to the Giver of this water! Have you been born of the Spirit? You perhaps do not know this for certain, but you cannot doubt that you are thirsty. That thirst is a birth certificate into the kingdom of God!

4. ***“Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”*** (Revelation 22:17). I hear this verse emphasized, and it is the truth. But did you ever stop to realize that the will of the natural man is bound by the shackles of sin? And dead sinners do not thirst, do not desire, do not will to come to Christ, and will never respond to God's invitation. But that one who has been born again, made alive, he is the sinner who is invited. Then Revelation 22:17 tells you who is invited. Notice: ***“Let him that heareth say, Come!”*** If God has given you ears to hear the truth, you are invited. He that is *athirst* and he that *will*, let him come. What would be the use of inviting those who have no desire to come, or those who have no ability? What good would it do for me to offer you a million dollars, and tell you that the money is in France and all you have to do is to swim the Atlantic Ocean and claim your prize? You perhaps would have some mental desire to do so, but you are not capacitated to swim that ocean. Although the price is right and the money is free, you have no power to reach it. But in the Gospel invitation God imparts both the desire and the ability to receive it. ***“It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”*** (Philippians 2:13).

When I was in Mars Hill College, one of our professors had us read the story in Greek mythology of the man whose head was severed from his body, yet he picked up his head, according to that story, and carried that head for a mile. The professor asked, “Caldwell, do you believe that?” Well, I was always giving some trouble in class, so he listened as I replied. I said, “I just have one problem, professor.” “What's that, Caldwell?” “If he could get up and make the first step, I then would have no problem believing he could go the whole mile!” The preachers of today are declaring, “Now, sinner, just make the first move, if you just walk down this aisle, God will meet you and save you and take you the rest of the way!” How stupid, how silly is it! Even as the man with the head cut off, he has no ability to go down the road, no desire to take food or drink, because he has total inability to function in the realms of life.

V. What Makes a Man Both Willing and Thirsty? Notice it says “whosoever will” and “him that thirsts.” What is it that makes a man *willing* and *thirsty*, and brings him to the point of such need? What has happened to that man?

Such a sinner has been quickened, made alive, born again, given a spiritual nature. The one who thirsts is the one who has been born again by the Spirit of God; nobody else is thirsty. I remember about 50 years ago when I began preaching, you would see people get under Holy Ghost conviction, get so thirsty for God. People began to pray and cry to God under the great burden of their need of Christ. Churches were filled, with people hanging out the windows, coming in great numbers to seek the Lord and mourn their way to the Saviour. You never saw such days! Where are they today? No conviction of sin, nobody thirsting! Has the Holy Spirit been removed in His work of conviction of sin? The field of the church has been filled up with tares, and the houses are filled with dogs and the barns filled with goats, while the pulpits are occupied by the seed of the serpent. God is no longer working among the churches as He did in the days of old. But you can be sure that when God works, when He quickens a sinner, He creates a great thirst in his soul, gives him eyes to see the glory of God, gives him ears to hear the voice of God, and He gives him a heart to perceive that he is lost, that he is without God and without hope and far away from the Redeemer. Then the great problem that arises in his soul is, “How could God save an old sinner like me?” Then cries come from burdened hearts, there is an awakening and a moving in the land, with people wanting to know the way to Zion. Like the old jailor in Acts chapter 16, they cry, ***“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*** Something had happened to that man. Notice the people in Acts chapter two where Peter preached and 3,000 cried out, ***“What shall we do?”*** Lost, without God, without hope, it was good that Peter had the message for them. Yes, they

were thirsty and in need and God met their need. But where is that kind of conviction in our days? Where is that thirst in the souls of men? But only the thirsty drink, and God only pours out His water upon the thirsty. What good would it do for God to pour out His Holy Ghost upon alien, dead sinners before they are made alive? He never does that. Isaiah 44:2-4, ***“Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For 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: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.”*** God said, “I have made thee; I have formed thee, and I will pour water upon thee and thou shalt spring up!” All of this is His promise to those that are thirsty.

VI. When are We to Come? When God quickens you and makes you alive, then there are two words in the New Testament that tell you when to come.

1. One word is ***“NOW.”*** ***“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”*** (2 Corinthians 6:2).

2. The other word is ***“TODAY.”*** We read in Hebrews 3:7-8, ***“The Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.”*** To those who hear His voice, God has given them ears. To those who see their lost condition and need, God has opened their eyes. How are you going to know these things unless God gives you a heart to perceive? If you can hear His voice, that is the time to not harden your hearts, but come to Him. And our seventh question is:

VII. What will be the Results of your coming to Christ and drinking of the waters that shall never run dry?

We read in John chapter 7 again, verses 38 and 39, ***“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).”*** Notice this is to him who believes ***“as the scripture hath said”***—not just any kind of way or any shallow belief, but a sound scriptural way! In this passage we can see five things about the rivers that are going to flow forth. This indicates that man who has come to the well of Shiloh, and his well overflows and becomes a river. In John 4:14 He likens salvation to a *well* of water within a man; but here in John 7 He shows the filling of the Spirit to be *rivers*. Notice, first, *Rivers flow*; you don’t have to pump them or drive them! 2. And rivers often *overflow*, so you must respect them. 3. Then notice that rivers *have the mastery of things*. You can stop up a well but you cannot stop up a river! The early Christians were put in jail and quieted for a time, but after a while the waters got to flowing out and reaching others, as the river of the Spirit flows and has the mastery. 4. Rivers will *cleanse and purify*. Put a dead animal in a well and the water will be contaminated for a long time to come, but suppose you throw that dead dog or cat in a river—the waters will carry it along until it is broken on the rocks, cast ashore or dissolved, soon freeing the river of all the contamination. And the mighty river just keeps on flowing along. 5. Another thing about rivers is that *they increase in size as they flow*; other smaller streams come to join them and on they go until nothing can stand before them. 6. They go on until *they are emptied in the mighty ocean of eternity*. And 7. *Rivers are a blessing wherever they flow*. The little animals and the birds can come and drink from either side of the river, but you will never see them drinking from a well. To get the water out of the well requires hard work and a rope or a pump, while rivers flow freely and life flourishes on both sides. The animals drink, the little flowers grow along the river, and refreshing is supplied everywhere the river flows.

Are you a *river*, my friend, or only a *well*? Abraham, we read, was a well digger. Isaac was a well un-stopper. The Philistines came along and stopped up the wells, but Isaac cleaned them out and opened them up again. You know, a lot of the Lord’s people are no bigger than a well, and they often get stopped up or contaminated. If you are going to have water, you have to clean the well and pump it

up to the surface, and often waste a lot of time priming the old pump just to get a little flow of water. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord moved upon and transformed some of our little wells into mighty rivers! How does a well become a river? It just starts overflowing and keeps on flowing! Then the well will be purified and become a blessing wherever it goes. Oh, that we could be rivers flowing forth to a dry and thirsty land! Oh, that people could see the transformation!

And the invitation is very simple: *come and drink without money and without price!* Yes, it cost Heaven something to give you this water, but it is free to you. Oh, why do men not come and drink? Why don't they respond and come to the Heavenly table which is spread with the good things of the Gospel? They neither hunger nor thirst for these spiritual blessings, until God moves upon their spirits and quickens them. In their nature they can only continue as alien, dead sinners. **B. B. Caldwell**
(1899-1976)

- *Date originally preached is unknown, but probably around 1970. Transcribed from tape and slightly abridged by Wylie Fulton. Hear some of Caldwell's sermons in MP3 format via the Internet at: www.sermonaudio.com/barnard*

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