

SERMON III.¹

“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.”

Isaiah 44:3

WE have heard of the two commands that make way for the promise, and ye have heard of the grounds on which they are pressed. When His professing people hear of their danger, and try not to seek after a remedy, but turn their back upon God, He cries, as it were, after them, and says, “Hear another word, and take not away an ill report of God and His ways.” But may we say, “What is that word?” Why, it is just to hold by the covenant. The covenant is given, not only to satisfy all your desires, but even to hold by until ye hear a better word come forth from the Lord.

But, say ye, “If ye knew my condition, ye could not bid me but fear.” It is true I know not your condition, but He that formed you from the womb says, “Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and Jeshurun whom I have chosen.” “Our iniquities are like to take hold upon us,” say ye, “but sink them into the covenant,” says He. “Lean down your burdens there,” says He; “and speak a word to Me, and if I answer not your condition, then take it up again, if ye be able, and go your way.” “Well,” say ye, “we are content to lean down our burden upon the covenant. Now what hast Thou to say unto us, Lord?” “Then,” says He, “I know ye want much, and I know the chief of all your wants. I know ye want My blessing. Then stay and take it, and ye shall prosper the better. I know that ye would have drink, although ye will not grant ye are thirsty. Can ye not say dry ground? Then come and set to your mouths here, and I will let out waters unto you. But know ye what I say?” says He. “Not very well,” say ye. “Then,” says He, “I will tell you in plain terms. ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon you; for I will pour

water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.” “But there are many,” ye may say, “that get that, who do not bear much fruit.” “But,” says He, “I will bless it and make it grow, and ye shall avow your profession before the world; you shall not hang down your heads when ye meet with a professor, but ye shall avouch your interest in God, while He allows His Spirit and good-will to do you good.”

I. The first point of doctrine. The Lord allows the pouring out of His Spirit, to answer and satisfy the soul that is almost made deaf with the challenges of conscience, and the threatenings of a broken law; and He will have His people to satisfy themselves with it as their portion.

For proof of this see Isaiah 41.18: “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.” And so (Joel 2.28) when He has forbidden them to fear He says, “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.” The Lord holds out the covenant to a trembling soul, or people. And He says, “Lean down your burden there, and hear what I have to say to you.” The man is content to stand and hear, but is not content to lean down his burden, lest he be not able to raise or lift it up again, till once he hear the covenant branched out to him. “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, and thou art mine.”

Now, the reasons why the Lord allows His Spirit for the satisfying of His people who are thus afraid, are:

1. Because the Spirit can answer all ye can object. There is nothing ye can want, but His Spirit makes way for it, and follows all your doubts and fears. And

2. The Spirit differences the godly from the wicked. For there are many who would rather have an outward delivery, than a delivery for their soul. And therefore the Lord takes this way to satisfy His own people.

USE. Then try what ye take up with, when ye are afraid and in trouble. And if ye be spiritual, ye will desire the Spirit; but if otherwise, ye will desire an outward delivery. I say, "Take hold of this promise to satisfy all your doubts and fears." But ye may say, "Ye know not what ye want." Ye must have this much, and that much. I answer, "If it be offered unto you to satisfy, and solve all your doubts and fears, take not another way of it, for God will not be mocked. If ye will take it, it will satisfy all your desires; for there is in Scripture to satisfy them all, be what they will." But ye may say, "I want faith." "Then welcome," say I. "He is the Spirit of faith." "But I want a promise." "Well, He is the Spirit of promise." "I want holiness." "Then He is the Spirit of holiness." "But I trow, I want all grace." "Well, then, He is called the Spirit of all grace and supplication, yea, and glory too." "But I have an ill-natured, passionate spirit." "Then He is called the Spirit of meekness." "But I have no understanding." "Then He is called the Spirit of understanding that searches all things, even the hidden things of God." "I am a fool, and destitute of counsel; and I know not what to choose." "He is the Spirit of counsel and direction." "But I cannot pray." "Then He is the Spirit of prayer and supplication." "I cannot love." "Then He is the Spirit of love: God is love." "I am dead and lifeless in all performances." "Then He is the Spirit of life." "I cannot unite with the people of God." "Then heard ye never of the Spirit of unity in the bond of peace." "I cannot mourn over my sins and wants." "Then He is the Spirit that makes one mourn as for an only son, or first-born."

Then what do ye want? He is the Spirit that worketh all

things in all cases in all His people. Therefore has He not good reason to offer His Spirit to answer all their doubts and fears? It is like Fortunatus's purse, to use the similitude; ye shall always find something in it. Sit down, then, and devise wants, and He has something to answer them all; therefore seek the Spirit above all things. Those who esteem not the Spirit above all things, know nothing of the Spirit of God. This Spirit teaches humility, and teaches to call God Father. But ye may say, that ye find it is elsewhere said, "Grieve not the Spirit;" "and that," say ye, "we do continually." Well, to satisfy you in that, He not only promises His Spirit, but He promises His blessing also with His Spirit. "Thy blessing is upon thy people." So John vi., when He blessed the five loaves, then they were enough to satisfy all the multitude. And at the word, "Take up the fragments," who could bear that which was blest? The Spirit and the blessing answer all doubts and fears.

II. The Spirit is called water. Then observe that God's Spirit is compared unto water. Now would ye know the reasons why God's Spirit is called or compared unto water. They are these,

1. Because water is of a cleansing nature. It cleanseth; and so doth the Spirit. "Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee." He makes them clean and holy, that is, by the Spirit of truth.

2. The second reason wherefore the Spirit is compared unto water, is, that as it cleanses, so it cools. It is of a cooling nature; and so is the Spirit of God. Know ye what it is to be scorched with a spark of hell, so to speak, and to have the hot displeasure of God burning in your bosom. Then this Spirit cools and quenches this. "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well springing up into everlasting life." It quenches terrible threatenings. Then whenever ye have terrible challenges for sin, take the Spirit and quench them.

3. The third reason wherefore it is called water, is, because as it cleanseth and cooleth, so it also makes fruitful, as water makes dry barren ground fruitful. So where the Spirit comes, and the blessing with it, then the soul grows in grace. Now the fruits of the Spirit are peace, love, &c. And if ye would know wherefore, He says, "I will pour floods upon the dry ground," it is just because God's Spirit is all in all; and I defy you to step this or that way, if ye have got the Spirit and the blessing with it, but it will still make you fruitful, grow, and increase.

4. A fourth reason why the Spirit is called water, or floods on the dry ground, is, because it carries down all before it, and carries captivity captive. It carries all opposition in the way down like a flood. "He comes skipping like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of Bether."

USE. Are ye unclean, and would be cleansed from sin; or would ye be cooled from the heat of God's wrath? Are ye fruitless, and would ye grow? Then come and lay hold of this promise. "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." By faith we hear that word, that He bids all come that would be cleansed. "But to whom is that promise made?" say you. Even unto those that are thirsty. "Then that cuts us off at the web's end," say ye; but I say, "Ye shall be knit or cemented to again."

III. The next point of the doctrine answers your objection. The Spirit here is promised to be poured forth upon the thirsty, and on the dry ground. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." Then we see the party that He pours out His Spirit upon. They are those that are thirsty, and the reasons why they are called thirsty, are:

1. Because a thirsty man is pained; he is pained at the heart with drought. Say ye, "That cuts me clean off." Now this

is the pained man, that is pained with fear of challenges, and the threatening of God's holy law. "That is not me," ye may say. Well then; the thing that one will not, another will, as we commonly say. Some will take hold of this word of promise, because they are pained at the heart for sin indeed.

2. It is a reason wherefore he is called thirsty, that he is not able to delay drinking. So in like manner those who are pained with the threatenings and challenges of a broken law, are not able to delay the taking hold of some promise answerable to their condition. "But," say ye, "that belongs not to me."

3. Bring water unto a thirsty man, and yet give him none of it to drink, and he is just like to faint, or die away for thirst. In like manner, a man pained at the heart with challenges, when a day of the promises comes, and he gets none ready to answer his case, then he becomes almost faint.

But some of you may say, "That is not my case; for I can hear all that, and be in no danger of fainting at all." But here we shall descend a little lower yet. And,

1st, A thirsty man cannot eat his meat well. Now if ye take this with regard to your natural food, ye will think it as hard and difficult as the rest; but I mean spiritually. So it is with the man that is pained at the heart with thirst for God. He cannot eat well; because he must have a drink of water. Now, if thou be one of these, what use makest thou of that which is laid to thy hand daily? Art thou saying, "I am not able to eat it. I must have somewhat to make it go down." Then here is water for him that is thirsty. Seek His Spirit, and that will put it down and make all your food digest in due season.

2ndly, A thirsty man is not able to speak well. "But this is

not applicable to me," say some of you; "for I can speak enough about anything in the world." But, let me ask you, "Were ye ever in such a case that ye could pray none?" then be what thou wilt, thou art a thirsty man.

3rdly, A man is not able to work well, but hangs down his head at his business. Well, art thou in this case that thou canst go about no duty, but thou still thinkest thou wantest something. That is the man that the promises of the water of His Spirit have respect unto; a man that is not able to speak well, eat well, nor work well. But after all, ye may say, "I cannot think that is the man He offers His Spirit unto." But when the people of God see a promise that requires a brave qualification, they think that none should take that, but those that have this qualification, as that promise, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And, "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." Ye think these are only to those that are pressed down with the sense of their sins, and those who are pained with such a great thirst. But indeed ye are mistaken. The Lord speaks unto them only; and why! Because it is only these who are most loath to meddle with it. He gives it out under their name, but everyone may take it under that name.

But ye will say, "That is a strange doctrine that ye preach, for who may lay claim to, or take the promise, but those who have these qualifications therein required?" But will ye tell me in a word, "What is the least qualification that ye may take a promise upon?" Indeed I dare not name one, that we may take a promise upon, under the pain of God's displeasure. I may not judge upon that; for, "Cursed is he that addeth any thing to God's word." For He will seek a less qualification than we would require. But I will tell you somewhat of it. If ye have any need of a promise, that is a

qualification good enough. For if ye see that the promise can do you any good, and that ye have need of it, that is a qualification to take the promise. "But how can these things be?" ye will say. Ye would think it strange for me to prove it from the word "thirsty." Yes, for the Lord neither says, those that have a great thirst, or a burning thirst; but He sets it down so universally, that all are bound or commanded that are thirsty under heaven, to take it; because we must not make the promise more narrow than He hath made it. "And let him that is athirst come and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." But ye will then say, "This is spoken to those that are thirsting after the world too." I allow so it is. "Come ye that spend your money on that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not." And folk that are thirsting after the world, are commanded to come, and He will pour out His Spirit upon them.

"But what," say ye, "if we be thirsting for nothing." Then ye are a piece of dry ground. And you have it in the text; "I will pour floods upon the dry ground." This is what I was saying, that it is to the thirsty that could not eat, speak, or work well; but if they will not be satisfied with that word, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty;" then He gives you another word to suit your condition; and wilt that satisfy you? "I will pour floods upon the dry ground." Which brings me unto

IV. A fourth point of doctrine is, The Lord will pour floods upon the dry ground. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing." What makes Him speak to the barren and dry ground? It is because all the world is dry ground. And are they not as dry ground that bear nothing? Are they not all dry, withered, and dead in trespasses and sins? And the reasons are:

1. Because there is no such ground in the world but it is dry

and barren until God gives it something. What is any in the world, but as dry barren ground? And therefore the wickedest in the world may come and take it freely.

2. The second reason wherefore it is offered unto dry ground, is, because God never put away any that came unto Him. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Wherever He comes in the word of His gospel, He excludes none but those who exclude themselves. And so the promises are holden out unto all. "For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." That is, an outward calling them that are afar off. God offers the promises freely to all that will take them. "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." God loves freely, and He does not regard whether they be wicked, or not wicked, if once they will come unto Him. Nothing in this case will hinder them from receiving the promises.

3. The third reason for which He calls it dry ground, is, that He may meet with the cases that His people are most often in. Therefore, anyone that is useless, fruitless, hopeless, and helpless; come; this is the word that He has bid you abide by, and take with you. But ye will say, "We are very barren." So is the world until God cultivate it. "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." But some of you may be saying, "I am worse than barren, for I bear nothing but briars and thorns, thistles, and so. And the Scripture says, such are 'rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.'" But yet let such come unto Him, He shall take you from under that curse. "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered." "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and

instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be unto the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” And whereas ye say ye are useless and fruitless; you see here that it shall be to the Lord “for a name, and for an everlasting covenant that shall not be cut off.”

Objection 1. If this be the case, then any man or woman in the world, in a natural state, may take a promise.

Answer. And what dare you say to the contrary? What were any that ever took a promise but runaways from God? All that are spending their money for that which is vanity, may come and take it if they will.

Objection 2. But we find many in a natural state taking, or laying claim to, the promises, that have no right to them.

Answer. I am very sure that these folk take none; for,

(1.) No person takes a promise, but those that have a right to it.² And prove it by this: they have no particular needs, to be answered by the promise, or to meet the promise with; and therefore they have no right to it.

(2.) They were never caused to take it. “Remember thy word, on which thou hast caused me to hope.” They were never *caused* to take a promise, and therefore they never took one.

(3.) Tell me when thou wast served heir to the promise; for one must know when he was served heir to the promise. And that the natural man does not; but the child of God knows when and where this took place.

(4.) The natural man never took it, because it was never sealed over unto him as to those which believe. “In whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit

of promise.” They think they have a right to it, because they can speak well of it, or about it; like a beggar, who can tell over the several parts of a charter very distinctly, but yet he has no right unto any article therein at all.

(5.) I prove that thou art a natural man, for thou never knewest the different parts or dimensions of the promise; thou never drewest rent, or increase of the promise. But the child of God can discourse of all the principal parts and appendages of the promises; and he draws the rent of the promise, when once he hath laid hold of it. And,

(6.) I prove that he has not taken hold of the promise, because it doth not cleanse and purify him from the filth and pollutions of the flesh and spirit, which it does indeed unto the spiritual man. “Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” It makes the spiritual man never rest till he attain unto a cleansing of the soul in some measure.

Now, finally, I say the natural man has not these things now noticed, and therefore he has never yet taken hold of the promise and if you get it you shall, sooner or later, know when and where you got it. “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.”

Footnotes:

1. An afternoon sermon.

2. By RIGHT here must be meant an actual interest in the promise by faith; for with respect to a right of access, all

gospel-hearers are on a level, that is, they are equally warranted to receive and apply the promises to themselves; since the promise of the gospel is directed (as it is suitable) to sinners of mankind without exception. (Acts 2.39. Prov. 8.4.)