

# The Open Fountain

by C.H. Spurgeon

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*C.H. Spurgeon passionately proclaims that through Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice, a divine and inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness and purification is opened for all sinners, inviting them to receive cleansing from sin and uncleanness.*

**Scripture:** Zechariah 13:1, Romans 11:26, Galatians 3:28, John 19:34, Isaiah 53, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Psalm 51

**Topics:** "Atonement", "Forgiveness", "Salvation"

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## Description

In 'The Open Fountain,' C.H. Spurgeon vividly illustrates the profound gospel truth that Jesus Christ's sacrificial death has opened an inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness and cleansing for all sinners. He passionately calls listeners to recognize their sinfulness, repent, and embrace the freely offered mercy that purifies both guilt and nature. Spurgeon emphasizes the accessibility and sufficiency of this divine provision, urging believers and seekers alike to respond to the gospel with faith and urgency.

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## Transcript

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."—Zechariah 13:1.

WE DO NOT GRUDGE to the seed of Israel after the flesh the first application of this very precious promise. There will be a day when those who have so long refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah shall discern the marks of his mission, and shall mourn that they have pierced him. When the tribes of Israel shall lament their sin with holy earnestness, there shall be no mourning to exceed it, they shall weep even as in the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo, when the wellbeloved Josiah was slain. Discovering that their nation rejected the Son of God, when they crucified Jesus of Nazareth their deeply religious spirit shall be filled with the utmost bitterness of repentance, and each man and each woman shall cry for pardon to the Lord of mercy. Then, close upon the heels of the weeping shall come the full and complete forgiveness; the transgression of the tribes shall be put away in one day; they shall perceive that the very side which they pierced has yielded a fountain to cleanse them from their sin; joyfully shall they behold on Calvary the brazen serpent lifted up for their healing, the Paschal Lamb slain for their redemption, the sin-offering sacrificed in their stead. What a blessed day will that be when "all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." O that you and I might live to see that happy era when all the Jewish race shall behold their Messiahs; for then shall the fullness of the Gentiles be gathered in. Our history is wrapped up with theirs.

“Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?”

“Wake, harp of Zion, wake again,

Upon thine ancient hill,

On Jordan’s long deserted plain,

By Kedron’s lowly rill.

The hymn shall yet in Zion swell

That sounds Messiah’s praise,

And thy loved name, Immanuel!

As once in ancient days.

For Israel yet shall own her King,

For her salvation waits,

And hill and dale shall sweetly sing

With praise in all her gates.”

Having said thus much, however, we shall now take our text as belonging to ourselves in common with Israel, for in the gospel no promise is now set about with a hedge, and reserved for any race peculiarly; there is now “neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” This promise is our joy at this hour. O that I might be able so to speak of it that many anxious hearts might now see its meaning and appropriate its blessedness!

## I. A FOUNTAIN.

What is this fountain which is said to be opened, and when and how was it opened? It is a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of, for sin and for uncleanness. We observe, therefore, that the blessing here spoken of deals with the greatest evils to which mankind is subject—sin and uncleanness. We have all fallen; we have all proved our fall by our sinful practice. Sin has separated us from God and brought upon us the divine wrath; uncleanness, which is a tendency still to sin, a defilement of our nature, prevents our returning to our heavenly Father, and entering into renewed fellowship with him. This great evil in its double form is, according to the text, distinctly recognized by God; it is not winked at, it is not treated as a trifle that may remain, and yet man may be beloved of God and be happy; no, but the evil being there, preparation is made for its removal. The text says, not that the filthiness is concealed, that the transgression is excused, but that there is a fountain opened for the effectual removal of sin and uncleanness. In the gospel God never trifles with human sin. We proclaim full, free, immediate forgiveness to the very chief of sinners, but it is not in a way which makes men think that sin is trivial in God’s esteem, for there is coupled with the declaration of pardon a description of the way in which God by the sacrifice of his Son renders it possible for him to be merciful without being unjust. In the substitution of Christ Jesus we see justice and mercy peacefully embracing, and conferring double honor upon each other. I repeat

the word, the uncleanness is not concealed, the sin is not winked at, but there is a fountain prepared for the purging away of the defilement, and it is opened to the house of David, for the great and mighty, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the poor, common people of every class. Hear this, ye who feel yourselves sinners, God has provided means for delivering you from your sins.

The text recalls to your notice the double nature of the evil of sin, and the character of the provision which meets the double evil. The fountain is opened for sin, that refers, no doubt, to the guilt of sin, to sin as offending God and deserving punishment. There is a fountain opened in the atonement, by which the offense rendered to God's honor and dignity is put away. What if we have sinned, yet the Lord has punished that sin in the person of his own Son, he has thus fulfilled his threatening, and proven the truth of his word. In Jesus Christ, therefore, the guilt of those for whom he was a substitute is put away consistently with the righteousness of the great Lawgiver. God is just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. But this would not be enough; there is a second mischief, namely, that our nature has become unclean and consequently estranged from God. Through our natural corruption and the effect of our past sin, we are diseased morally and spiritually, our mind is in itself biassed towards evil and averse from good. God does not pardon sin and leave the sinner as he was in other respects, but wherever forgiveness of the guilt is bestowed a renewal of the nature is wrought; the fountain opened for pardon is also opened for purification. The washing which takes away the offense before heaven removes also the love of offending. Herein is double joy, for does not every true penitent feel that mere pardon would be a poor boon to him if it allowed him to continue in sin? My God, deliver me from sin itself, for this is the great burden of my soul. Oh, could I have the past forgiven, and yet live an enemy to my God, enslaved by evil and a stranger to holiness—then were I still accursed! What if God ceases to punish wickedness, yet sin in itself is a curse; to love the wrong is the beginning of hell. Blessed be the Lord, when he opened the fountain to cleanse his sinful people, he made it “of sin the double cure,” that it might at the same time cleanse us from its guilt and power. For our double need there is, according to the text, one only supply; no mention is made of two fountains, neither are there two methods for the putting away of sin. But the one method is divine, God himself has devised, ordained, and prepared it. Wouldst thou have sin forgiven thee? Wash, for there is a fountain opened. Wouldst thou have sin eradicated from thy nature, and thy heart made pure? Wash, for heaven declares that the fountain is opened for this also. Imagine not that God has proposed an ineffectual means of purgation. His arrangements are never failures. Man may through his poverty provide a feast which is so bare as to mock the hunger of those invited; his starveling hospitality may be an insult to the greatness of human necessity; but it is never so with God. For his banquet of mercy oxen and fatlings are killed, milk and wine run in rivers, fat things full of marrow are heaped up; no stint is found at Jehovah's board. When God appoints a supply for any need, we may be assured that it is a real and sufficient provision. O penitent souls, rest assured that in Jesus' sacrifice there is an effectual provision for the forgiveness of sin, and an infallible means for the purging of your nature from its tendency to sin. God in the covenant of grace provides no seeming, superficial semblance, but in very deed he satisfies the longing soul O men and women, there is provided for your sin and your uncleanness that which exactly meets your need.

According to the verse before us this provision is inexhaustible. There is a fountain opened; not a cistern nor a reservoir, but a fountain. A fountain continues still to bubble up, and is as full after fifty years as at the first; and even so the provision and the mercy of God for the forgiveness and the justification of our souls continually flows and overflows. There is a supply so large that when thousands of the sons of Adam come they find that there is enough for their demands, and as new generations continue still to come all along the centuries, they shall find that the supply has not in any degree been diminished. For the sin of

Adam and Abel the atonement was sufficient, but it shall be equally so for the last repenting sinner. David saw the cleansing flood, and washed away his crimson sins, but he left the fountain undefiled, and it is as effectual for you and for me as it was for him. For sinners in the last days the fountain is as full, as cleansing, and as free, as for sinners in the first ages of the world.

Thus I have testified to you that for the great necessity of men in this double form, there is a divinely appointed and inexhaustible supply, and it is intended for high and low, rich and poor, for the royal and the ragged, the prince and the pauper.

When was this fountain opened? When was this divine and inexhaustible supply revealed to men? The answer may be given thus. The fountain was opened for sin and for uncleanness when the Lord Jesus died. God, the everlasting Word, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and in fullness of time the weight of human sin was laid on him. In order to put that sin away he must die, for death was the penalty for guilt; up to the cross he went through agonies unspeakable, and at the last he yielded up his soul; and when he did so sin was put away, and the fountain for the cleansing of sin was effectually opened. When the soldier with the spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came forth blood and water, then was it proven that this was he who came not with water only, but by water and by blood, a Savior who takes away the offense of sin as touching God, and the defilement of sin in human nature.

Furthermore, the fountain may be said to be opened to each one of us when the gospel is preached to us. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened," means secondarily, that whenever the gospel of Jesus Christ is fully and faithfully preached, then the cleansing efficacy of the atonement of Jesus which aforetime was as a sealed fountain, is opened to those who hear. And best of all, according to the connection of the text, this fountain is opened in the day when men repent of sin. Doth it not say that they shall mourn each family apart, and their wives apart, and in that day shall there be a fountain opened! The sinner does not find a Savior until he bewails his sin; when he sees his own filthiness then it is that the way to have that filthiness removed is made clear to him. God is always willing to forgive, but we are not always willing to be forgiven. The fountain is experimentally opened to each one of us when we spiritually discern it, believe in it, and are made partners of its cleansing power. Years ago a German prince who was entertained by the French Government, was taken to the galleys of Toulon, where a number of men were held as convicts on account of their crimes. The commandant decreed that in honor of the prince's visit, some prisoner whom he might choose should be set at liberty. The prince went round amongst the prisoners, and talked with them, they all knowing that he had the power to liberate some one of them. He found that according to their talk they were nearly all innocent, and had been condemned by mistake, or by flagrant injustice. He passed them all by, and spoke with one who talked in another style. He was guilty upon his own confession. "I certainly," said he, "have no reason to complain of my hard work in the galleys, for if I had my due I should have been put to death for my crimes." He went on to acknowledge with much humility the former evils of his life, and the justice of his sentence. The prince set him free, and said, "This is the only man in the whole of this place who is fit to be pardoned; he has a sense of his transgressions, he may be trusted in society." So too, the pardoning mercy of God passes by those who say each one in their souls, "I am not guilty, I have not been more sinful than other people, I see nothing very remarkable in my case, and if I were sent to hell the sentence would be too severe." Although there is a fountain for sin and uncleanness by Jesus Christ, it is not opened personally to your experience, you cannot see it, do not appreciate it, and will not participate in its benefits unless you know yourself to be a sinner; but if there be here one really guilty, one who feels his sin to be deserving the wrath of God, then this day I have authority from the Most High to say to him, there is a fountain opened for sin and

uncleanness. You mourn your sin, you confess your guilt, you wish you could mourn it more, you feel yourself undeserving and unworthy—then you are the man to whom the mercy of heaven is this day freely proclaimed. Jesus has come forth on purpose to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. The time for the actual opening of the cleansing fountain to us is the time when the heart confesses its guilt, and desires pardon of the Most High. Dear friend, has this time come to you? I pray you as you love your soul consider your ways, acknowledge your transgressions, and rest not till the blood of atonement has made you clear from guilt. Need the subject be pressed upon you? Surely your own reason should lead you to be anxious upon a matter so vital to your soul's eternal interests. How sad it will be if there be a fountain and yet you die unwashed! If there be a Savior, and you perish for ever, what wretchedness it will be!

II. My chief business, this morning, is to sound forth the second note of my text—it is a fountain OPEN.

The means by which sin and sinfulness can be put away are at this moment accessible to the sons of men. The atonement is not a fountain hid and concealed, and closed and barred and bolted, it is a fountain open. The doctrine I have to teach is very simple and plain; there is no room here for oratory and elocution, and polished periods; it is the plainest gospel doctrine in the world, and yet I am very, very happy to have to speak it to you, for I do trust God may bless it to many, that they may find the pardon of their sin, and the removal of their uncleanness. I would sooner tell you the good news from heaven in broken accents than anything else with the tongue of an angel.

The fountain which God has provided is open at this day. Now what is meant by this? It means partly that the gospel is so preached that you can understand it; the gospel at this day is not concealed in Latin, as it was before the days of Luther, it is not wrapped up in types and shadows, as it was in the old dispensation; the gospel is preached in many places in this country as plainly as words could deliver it, so plainly that he that runs may read it. I will tell it to you again. God must punish sin, but he has laid the punishment on Christ, and whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus is forgiven. Why do not men accept the Savior? Why do they not come and trust him? for when they trust him they are saved at once. Ah! my hearers, if any of you do not wash from your uncleanness it is not because you do not know how; if our gospel be hid it is not our fault, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded their eyes. God is our witness, we have never sought after excellency of speech, nor the gaudiness or elegance of language, but as of simplicity, we have set before your souls this fact that Jesus Christ is the substitute for sinners, and that you must simply trust in him and you shall be saved. At your own peril be it if you reject the gospel; but if you do so, at least bear us this witness, that we have set forth Christ visibly crucified among you, not hanging up veils of human speculation of our own spinning, or curtains embroidered with curious devices of logic and theology, or of ceremony and ritual. We have cried aloud in plain words—

“There is life in a look at the Crucified One.”

We have bidden you look to Jesus, and have told you, in God's name, that as you look to the Crucified you shall find eternal life. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; more blessed still if they yield obedience thereto.

In the next place, it is meant that the provision made in Jesus is accessible to you all, and there is no barrier on account of uncircumcision or natural descent. When first Peter began to preach the gospel, if he had heard that there was a Gentile in the congregation I am afraid he would have put in a question as to

whether a Gentile could be saved; it took some time to bring Peter's mind round to the belief that to the Gentiles also the gospel was to be preached. Paul seemed far more readily to imbibe that idea; but now to me, a Gentile preaching to you Gentiles, this difficulty does not arise, but how thankful we ought to be that it does not! "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." Our Lord Jesus, by his death, has rent the veil, and pulled down every wall of separation, so that the same Messiah who was sent to the seed of Abraham after the flesh is sent to us also who were sinners of the Gentiles, but who become of the seed of Abraham when we believe in Christ, for Abraham was the "father of the faithful." The fountain is open then in the removal of the barrier which divided the natural Israel from the rest of mankind.

So, too, at this day, when we read that the provision made for the removal of sin and sinfulness is open, we learn that it is personally approachable by us. Certain fanatics in our day will have it that grace comes to us through priests; there is the fountain, but you must not touch a drop of the purifying stream yourself; that venerable gentleman in white, or black, or blue, or scarlet, or violet, as the day of the month or the change of the moon may be, must stand at the fountain head and catch the water as it flows, and then after he has practiced upon it sundry manipulations you may drink from his hand, but you who are unordained must not go to the fountain for yourselves. Ah, my brethren, but we know better than to make gods of men, or saviours of sinners like ourselves. We dispense with priests, for we know that the fountain of salvation is open for us to come personally, and directly, and without any intervention. There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, but no other mediator is there. One of our colporteurs, some years ago abroad, was selling his Testaments, when the cure of a parish said to him, "Your books say a very great deal about pardon, but I do not see much in them about confession." The colporteur was about to reply, when a public notary, who was present, taking up the Testament, said to the priest, "Ah, my dear sir, what you say is very true, the New Testament does not say much about confession to priests; do you not remember that Jesus Christ saved the dying thief without the help of a priest, and that St. Stephen, when he was stoned was not shriven by a confessor, but entered glory without a priest!" "Ah," said the cur,— "but the rules of the church were very different in those days from what they are now." Full surely they were! We will go back however to the primitive times, and as the dying thief said, "Lord, remember me," so will we turn our eyes to that once crucified Savior, sitting in the highest heaven, and breathe the selfsame prayer, "Lord, remember me:" and as Stephen looked up directly into heaven, and found peace even amidst that stony shower, so on our dying bed, our glance shall be to the Christ in the open heaven; and we shall find rest in our last hours. Blessed be God, the doctrine of justification by faith is now so openly declared that priestcraft cannot hold us captives. The nations no longer need to crouch at the feet of shaveling impostors. Now that there is a fountain open, we can say, "Begone, ye priests, the whole herd of you, to whichever church ye belong; we who have believed are truly priests every one of us, and ye are mere pretenders. We have done with you; a plague and curse to humanity have ye been too long, and the gospel ends your detestable trade."

The text yet further signifies that the fountain is not marred by any amount of sin which we have already committed. If there be a fountain opened on purpose to remove filth, that man must be insane who shall say that his need of washing is a barrier to prevent his using it. Shall I stand outside the bath and say, "I am prevented from bathing because I am filthy"? everyone detects at once my illogical talk. If the fountain is open for sin, then sin is a qualification for washing in it. If Christ be a Savior for sinners, then no man may say that on the ground of sin Jesus cannot be his Savior; rather might he say, "The more truly I am a sinner the more surely is Christ Jesus suited to me." The exceeding heinousness of my sin, though I had been guilty of adultery, of murder, of crimes innumerable, cannot be a preventative to my being washed in

the fount of atonement, because on account of my sin that fountain is provided, on purpose to put it away that cleansing flood was poured forth. Yet it ever is of the nature of sin, when the soul begins to know the bitterness of it, to make us fear that sin is a disqualification for mercy, and a reason why we should not believe in Christ Jesus the great propitiation for sin. O sinner, do not believe that sin unfits thee for a Savior, but believe that the Redeemer is come on purpose to save such as thou art. Some little time ago an earnest lady seeking the good of others, met with a poor girl some twenty years of age, who had most fearfully fallen and become a gross sinner, though still so young. She talked with her frequently, and at last saw in her tokens of repentance, but the poor girl's complaint was, "I can never be restored, I am so bad, nobody would ever take notice of me." "Have you not a mother?" "No," said the girl, "she died years ago." "Have you not a father?" "Yes, but I have not heard of him for years." "Does he know where you are?" "No, I do not want he should." "Do not you think he would receive you back into his house?" "No, that I know he would not, I could not expect him to do so; if I were in his place I would not receive such a one as I am." "Have you ever written to him since you have gone astray?" "No, I have kept out of the way of everybody that knew me; I do not want anybody to know what I am." "Have you tried your father whether he will receive you?" "No, I knew it was no good, pray do not mention it." "But," said the good sister, "who can tell? I think I will try and see if your father will receive you now that you are truly penitent for the past." "Oh, yes, I hate the sin, but my father would not receive me, it is of no use to ask him." "Well," said the visitor, "I will try;" and so she wrote a note to the father, giving him the daughter's address, telling him about her repentance, and entreating that she might be forgiven. What do you suppose was the reply? The next post brought the penitent girl a letter, on the envelope of which was written in large letters, "IMMEDIATE;" and when she opened it—well, I cannot tell you all her father said, but it just came to this, "Come and welcome, I am ready to forgive you; I have been praying night and day that you might be restored to me." Now, just what that father was to his poor lost girl, in tenderness and readiness to forgive, God is to sinners; if there be any unwillingness it is not on his part, it is all in their hearts, for the answer to every prayer for mercy is, God is ready, nay, he waiteth to be gracious, his heart yearneth over his erring ones. "How shall I give thee up?" saith he; "How shall I make thee as Adam how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man." Our guilt therefore is no legitimate reason why we should not avail ourselves of the provisions of grace.

Neither is there any effectual barrier in the consideration of our inward sinfulness. If you say, "I could not be a Christian, I have such a bad disposition, I could not become holy it is impossible." This is true so far as you are concerned, but things impossible with men are possible with God. There is a fountain open for this very reason that this uncleanness of yours might be put away. Christ's blood will prove more than a match for the evil of your heart; his Spirit can renew you, make you a new creature, and from this day forward the things you hated you shall love, and the evil things you have delighted in shall become detestable to you. Is it not written, "Behold, I make all things new"?

The fountain of cleansing is not sealed by any demands in the gospel requiring one to prepare yourself for it before you come. The fountain is open, and if you are filthy, you are welcome to come to it. All that is asked of you is that you believe in Jesus; this he gives you, it is his own work in you. You must also repent and hate the sin which you have committed; this also he works in you, causing you by his Spirit to loathe the sin which aforetime you delighted in. Had there been a sort of purgatorial preparation, had there been a kind of quarantine through which the sinner had to pass before he could be renewed and forgiven, then were not the fountain completely open; but between you, a sinner, and acceptance before God, there need not be even a step of delay; believe now, and by believing you shall obtain the perfect pardon and

the renewal of your soul.

Nor is there any other real barrier to shut up the fountain from the sinner. Some will say, "Perhaps I am not elected." My friend, read the text, the fountain is open; open for all ranks, "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The doctrine of election, true as it is, does not make my text a falsehood, or close the fount of grace upon any seeking soul. Can you think of any other doctrine? Does any other truth discourage you? Whatever it is I need only quote the text in order to answer your suspicion: The fountain is open for sin and for uncleanness, who dares say it is shut? If any theologian should say so, methinks I would push him into the fountain to make way for the sinner to come. There cannot be anything in theology, nor in nature, nor in heaven, nor earth, nor hell, which can shut what God declares to be open. If thou wilt to be saved, if thou comest to Christ believing in him, there is nothing to shut up the fountain of life or prevent thee from being cleansed and healed. If there be any shutting and forbidding it is thy heart that is closed, and thy pride which forbids. No difficulties remain save only difficulties of thine own creating, there is none with God. There is a fountain opened by him for sin and for uncleanness, and thou hast enough of both, therefore come with them even as thou art. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins;" dost thou? It is an old doctrine of the Christian church—dost thou believe it? Methinks I hear thee say, "I believe in the forgiveness of everybody's sin but mine own." Brother, I believe in the forgiveness of thy sins. There was a time when it would not have troubled me to believe for thee, but it troubled me to believe for myself; now, can I believe for myself and for thee also. If thou desires forgiveness, take it; if thou desires a new heart and a right spirit, Jesus will give them to thee; the fountain is open, and none shall dare to deny access to the anxious heart. Jesus says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Would God that some were drawn of the Holy Spirit to come to-day and partake of the mercy which is so richly provided and so freely presented.

III. We have a rich consolation in the last point. The fountain is OPEN STILL.

The text says the fountain is opened, and I do not upon the closest inspection discover that it declares that it was afterwards shut; I find no intimation that the opening was for an occasion only; on the contrary, the opening is left as a fact accomplished. What a blessing is this to every child of God here; the fountain is still open for sin and uncleanness! What a comfort it is to that young man who but lately believed. Some little time after conversion there usually comes a period of surprising discoveries. The heart has believed in Jesus and found rest, and it has deluded itself into the idea that it is now so clean delivered from sin that it will never fall into it any more; but on a sudden it is tempted, it is overtaken in a fault, and then the devil cries, "You! Why, you are not saved, you are not a believer, see where you are now." Many remind me of a little girl who I trust was converted to God she in her simplicity quoted that sweet little hymn to her teacher, and said, "Teacher, 'I laid my sins on Jesus,' and now I love him so much that I never mean to do any more sins to lay on him." That is just what we thought when we were first pardoned; we did not quite say so, but we thought so. "All the past? Yes, that is all on him; now for the love we bear his name we will never sin again." So we thought; but, alas! we soon found that we were in the body still. When sin is seen to be still within us, how sweetly does the text ring out, like a silver bell, glad tidings of great joy—there is a fountain opened! You went at first to Jesus, young believer, go again. The fountain is not shut; you have washed in it once, it is not closed nor dried up, wash again; the same Christ you wanted when you first believed is there now as ready and willing as ever. His blood is equally efficacious, go, thou surprised one, and wash again:—

"This fountain from guilt not only makes pure,

And gives, soon as felt, infallible cure;

But if guilt removed return, and remain,

Its power may be proved again and again."

It will happen as we grow older and make progress in the Christian life, that we shall discover every day some fresh degree of defilement acquired by our pilgrimage through a sinful world. Do you ever go to rest a single night without feeling that you have been in many places during the day, and that there is fresh dust upon the garment, new soil upon the feet? Ah! bethink thee every night there is a fountain opened. To-day's sins can be as easily put away as yesterday's sins; and to-day's sinfulness, which I feel unconquerable for the moment, can be conquered still. I can go to Christ again and say, "Let thy blood kill this sin of mine, and soften my heart into tenderness and holiness once more." The fountain is still open, and no man can shut it.

I know that you in business, coming into contact with the world, must sometimes encounter some very trying circumstances. When perhaps you thought all would be plain sailing you meet with terrible storms. Though minded to live in peace, you fall into a sort of wrestling match with ungodly men; you are obliged to stand up for your own, and you try to do so with moderation of temper, yet your spirit becomes ruffled; and you have to say afterwards, when undergoing self-examination, "I do not know that I did exactly what I ought to have done; besides, my quiet walk with Christ has been broken by this strife with the sons of men; woe is me that I dwell in Mesech and tabernacle in the tents of Kedar." Beloved, there is a fountain open, go again by simple faith and look to Jesus once again and you will find fresh pardon, and the grace which restores the heart to its repose in Jesus. Your inner life will be again refreshed as you wash in the life-restoring fount prepared for you.

If you are at all like me you will at times feel your inner life to be sadly declining. I am ashamed to confess it, but even when I seek to live nearest to God, I feel an evil heart of unbelief struggling within me. There may come times when you will anxiously enquire, "Can I be a child of God at all? I cannot arouse my feelings towards God, my passions will not stir; even in holy duties I lack the living power; there is the wood, but where is the fire for the burnt offering? I would fain be zealous, earnest, intense, fervent, but I am sluggish, a very dolt in the Master's cause." At such times we are apt to say, "I must try to make myself somewhat better than this by some means, before I dare again to hope in God;" and then we go off to our own selves and our own works, and we sink in the deep mire where there is no standing. It is a happy thing if at such moments we turn again to Christ, and say, "O my Master, unworthy as I am to be thy follower, though vilest of all those whose names are written on thy roll, yet I do believe in thee still. To thy cross I will cling, I will never let go my hope, for thou hast come to save sinners even such as I am, and on thee I will continue to trust. "My dear brethren, you will find that while this restores your peace, it at the same time excites you to seek after higher degrees of holiness. It is the idea of the worldling that if sin be pardoned so easily men will live in it, but it is not so; to the spiritual mind the great love displayed in the pardon of sin is the very highest motive for overcoming every unhallowed propensity. A sense of blood-bought pardon seals the death-warrant of the most favored sin. Ever shall we find our safest mode of battling with sin to be a new resort to the cross. Happy is it for us that the blood cleanseth from all sin; that is, it continues to do so every day. I should die in despair if it were not for this truth, that there is a fountain open still.

Some of us may have a long time to live possibly, but we shall never outlive that open fountain. Others may die soon, but, dear brother, in the last moment your eye may glance at the open fountain, and if the sins of all your life should rise before you, if in grim procession your transgressions should pass before your eyes each one accusing you, you may fly to the open fountain and they will disappear; and if the old Adam should rise even at the last, and some strong corruption should seek to prevail, there is the fountain open which will purge away the corruption of the flesh, and work in you the new nature yet more mightily, and preserve you to the Lord's eternal kingdom and glory.

I desire to close this sermon, all too poverty-stricken, with this thought. See here what our work is as a church. We have not to provide an atonement for the sinners round about us, but we have to point them to the fountain which is already opened. I want every one of you church members to be always telling others of the way of salvation. "It is so simple," you say; well, then you have no excuse if you do not tell it. Make your neighbors know the way of salvation, din it into their ears, constrain them to know it, so that if they die it shall not be for want of knowing the way of life.

I want to remind you as a church of one most important fact. Here is our preparation for the season of revival which I hope God is about to give us. The fountain open for the sinner is also open for the child of God. Let us all wash again. Have you grown cold? Come and get your spiritual life revived. Do any of you fear that you are becoming worldly and carnal? Come to Jesus, for where you first found life there you shall find it more abundantly. Come and wash again. I desire as your pastor to receive another baptism in the sacred atoning flood, and then to come and preach to you in its heavenly power. I pray God, that my dear brethren, the deacons and elders, may each one individually apart confess his sin, and apart receive the washing. And then I want every member, every Sunday-school teacher, and every worker, to prepare to serve God by receiving another of these blessed cleansings. In the old tabernacle there was a laver, and the priests washed their feet and their hands in it, which had to be filled up every now and then, because it was exhausted or foul; now we have not a brazen laver, but we have a fountain which never can be dried, and never becomes defiled. If you wash your feet in a little pool, the water is muddy directly, but if you wash in a running stream, as I have often done when climbing the Alps, or in a living fountain, you may wash, hundreds of you, and the water bears all defilement away and is just as bright as if it had never been touched by your feet. So there is here for all the church members a blessed flowing fountain; come and wash, I beseech you, even now.

I pray God backsliders may come hither, that those who have gone farther astray than in heart, and have wandered into outward actions of rebellion, may come to the fountain which is still open, and be cleansed anew. What sin it will be on our part if we neglect what God has provided! Though we have often come before, let us come again. I should like to suggest that this afternoon we each of us should spend a season alone, and pray for a renewed application of that blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. The Master, after the last Supper, took a towel and girded himself, and went round with a basin and washed all his disciples' feet, and when he had done it said, "And ye are clean every whit." That is what I want him to do to all the members of this my beloved church now. You cannot serve God while you are defiled; you need fresh cleansing for successful service. O may he take the towel now in his infinite condescension, and visit each one and wash you one by one. Pastors, deacons, elders, members, may we all avail ourselves of the open fountain at this hour. O that the Holy Spirit might give to each one of us that cleansing which shall make us fit for service, O that we shall be useful during the coming months in the ingathering of his poor lost ones, to his praise and glory. May God grant it, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Zechariah 12, and 13:1.

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