

A.B. Simpson:

"Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto me and eat 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." (Isa. 55: 1-3.)

The fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah naturally follows the fifty-third as the proclamation of the Gospel follows the cross of Calvary and the completed atonement.

The chapter opens with a business note, in fact, it is like an announcement from an Oriental bargain counter. The Jews had already begun to learn from their relation with the Babylonians those commercial lessons which have made them ever since the great traders of the world. Like an Eastern merchant offering his wares to the passerby, the prophet cries, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, come buy and eat without money and without price." It is indeed a great bargain that He is offering -- everything for nothing.

I. What He offers. In a word, it is the gospel in all the fulness of its blessings.

1. The waters represent the more ordinary and essential blessings of the gospel; its cleansing and satisfying streams of life and salvation.

2. Wine represents rather the cordials and comforts and the special provisions which Christ has made for the sick, the suffering and the feeble. "Give wine to him that is ready to perish," is the prescription of the Hebrew sage. And so wine represents the richer, choicer things which the Holy Spirit gives to the hearts that are prepared.

3. Milk. This is food for babes. This is the gospel's provision for the little children. This is the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus whose salvation is adapted alike to the humblest child and the loftiest sage.

4. The feast of fat things. "Eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness." The gospel has the choicest blessings, the supreme joys, and, best of all, the power to quicken our being so that we can take in these higher blessings and our capacity for enjoyment is immeasurably enlarged as well as the means to satisfy it.

5. Life in all its deep and everlasting meaning. "Hear and your soul shall live." (Is. 55: 3.) Life for the soul, life for the spirit, life more abundantly, life forever more, eternal life "begun on earth and perfect in the skies."

6. Forgiveness of sins, mercy and pardon. "He will have mercy upon him." "He will abundantly pardon." (Is. 55: 7.)

7. The covenanted life. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (Is. 55: 3.) The ungodly has no security for the future. The sinner knows not what a day may bring forth. Life has nothing guaranteed and eternity is still more uncertain and unsafe. The unsaved man is adrift upon a shoreless ocean, at the mercy of every wind and tide. But the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has a covenanted life. His future is guaranteed and he knows that all is well. Of the one it is said, "Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Eph. 2: 12.) And of the other it is true, "I am persuaded that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8: 38, 39.) "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8: 28.)

8. Joy and Peace. "For you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." (Is. 55: 12.) This is the life of triumph. The mountains stand for difficulties; the trees for the fruits of our lives. Everything shall fall in line with the triumphant future of the children of God and earth and heaven claim their "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

9. Victory over trial and suffering. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree and instead of the briar the myrtle tree." (Is. 55: 13.) This is the promise of the transformation of evil into good and the curse into a

blessing. The thorn and the briar represent the bitter present ills of life, but these shall be so overruled and so counteracted that we shall meet them in the land beyond as palms of victory and myrtles of beauty and the very trees that shall adorn our home in paradise shall be made out of the thorns and briars of our earthly wilderness.

Oh, what a gospel this is that can turn the world upside down and transmute the darkest, saddest things into memorials of blessing and voices of everlasting praise.

II. The persons to whom this offer is made.

1. The thirsty. "Ho, everyone that thirsts." (Is. 55: 1.) These are the souls that have grown weary of this vain and empty world and found its promises and even its pleasures "vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit." How unsatisfying are all earthly things. Their chief enjoyment consists in their pursuit. Their attainment leaves us sated, tired and ready for some new excitement. How pathetic the cry of that weary heart that had gone from flower to flower in her reckless pursuit of pleasure and yet was compelled to cry, "Lord, give me to drink of this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

2. The poor. "He that has no money, come." (Is. 55: 1.) This means the poor in spirit, the people that have nothing to give in return for the mercy of God. He asks nothing but our poverty, our helplessness and the opportunity of saving us, blessing us and making our lives happy and receiving back the recompense of our joy and our praise. You are not really ready to come until you find your poverty and are willing to say:

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling;
Naked, come to You for dress,
Helpless, look to You for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die."

3. The deceived. "Why spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not?" (Is. 55: 2.) You have been fooled by the tempter. You have sought, in the broken cisterns of earth, to quench your thirst and they have all disappointed you. Perhaps you have been more cruelly deceived by wicked men, unprincipled women and a false and selfish world. Come to Him. He will never deceive you. Why should you pay so much and get so little when He has all to give and nothing to ask but your trust and love?

4. The sinner. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts." (Is. 55: 7.) Human societies are looking out for the people that have references and can show their good standing. Christ is looking out for people that have no standing. Here is one place you are welcome in proportion to your unworthiness. It is passing strange indeed, but wonderful and divine. "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Are you unworthy? Are you conscious of wrong? Are you tired of sinning? There is welcome for you.

III. The terms and conditions on which we are invited.

1. It is all free. There is nothing to pay. Even our future life of love and service is not a recompense but a grateful and loving return. We are not accepted and saved because we are going to be good, but because we are utterly bad and our goodness is but the offering up of our grateful love. It is grace, grace alone; love for the unlovely; help for the helpless and everything for nothing.

2. The first step to God is to hearken. "Hear, and your soul shall live; hearken diligently unto Me." (Is. 55: 3, 2). The greatest hindrances to true life are inattention, insensibility, indifference and hardness of heart. Our ears are deafened by the voices of the world. Our minds are absorbed by the vanities of earth. We do not really give attention to the things of God. The round of fashion; the routine of daily duty; the rush of life drive us along like a great torrent and we come to the end of life before we really awake to its solemn meaning. Therefore God calls us aloud: "Ho, hearken, incline your ear, hear and your soul shall live," and the Holy Spirit waits, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

3. The first thing we are invited to do is to come. This is an approach to God, a move toward Him. Anything that brings us nearer is coming: the putting forth of desire; the stretching out a hand; the kneeling in prayer of a penitent and a suppliant; the movement forward to the altar of the inquirer or better than all, the lifting up of the heart to God and the reaching out of the soul in earnest prayer. Come any way at all, but come, and "He that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

4. Buy. This means to appropriate; to make it your own; to put your name in it; to claim it. The things you purchase are yours. So we must take Christ and His salvation. We must not only ask for it, but we must say, "It is mine," and we must begin to act and think as though it were ours. You don't have to pay for it, and yet you buy it. The price has been paid by another, and it becomes yours, not as a charity but as a redemption right, and you can look in the face of a just and holy God and claim it and know that He cannot refuse to give it to you not only as a matter of grace, but as a matter of justice and right inasmuch as it has been purchased for you by the precious blood of His only begotten Son.

5. Eat. This is more than buying. This is beginning to enjoy your purchase. This is getting the good of it and taking into your life the comfort, the strength, the joy which you have claimed by faith, and it is your privilege to know by actual experience as well.

6. "Seek the Lord." This is for the souls that are far away. They may not find Him at once, but they are to continue to seek, to press their suit and to wait upon Him until they receive the fulness of His blessing. He is not far from the earnest seeker. "Seek the Lord while He may be found," and found He shall surely be.

7. "Call upon Him." This represents prayer. It is thus that we shall find Him, on our knees and at the throne of grace. Anybody can call. It is the cry of distress. It needs no science or education, but a deep sense of need and a simple confidence that there is some One sure to hear and answer. "Call upon Him while He is near."

8. Turn from sin to God. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him turn to the Lord." This is repentance. There must be an actual forsaking of sin. There must be an honest turning to God. There must be an uncompromising "No" to the devil and the world and the flesh and the voice of sin and temptation; and there must be an everlasting "Yes" to God in all His good and holy will. Without this our own conscience and sense of right forbid us to expect an answer or a blessing; but acting thus no past transgression, no record of sin, no imperfection of your faith or your prayer, no possible barrier can keep you back from His mercy and His blessing. "He will have mercy upon you; He will abundantly pardon."

IV. God's appeal.

1. The waste of life. "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?" (Is. 55: 2.) He pleads with us to give up the foolish waste of life on things that do not profit and to take the things that alone are worth living for. Oh, how cheaply we sell our souls! It is said that Rowland Hill, while preaching in the open air one day, was attracted by the passing of Lady Erskine, a distinguished duchess. Suddenly he stopped in his discourse and striking the pose of an auctioneer, he said, "Lady Erskine's soul is for sale. Who will have it? Ah, Satan, you are bidding. You will give the world, pleasure, honor; every earthly attraction. But I hear another voice. It is the voice of the Lord Jesus. 'I have given My life for her, and I will give to her eternal life.' Lady Erskine, who shall have your soul?" And the duchess cried out, "Mr. Hill, the Lord Jesus shall have my soul, for He has paid the greater price and offers the richer boon."

Oh, shall we waste our real treasures and throw ourselves away for the tinsel of a passing world?

2. He appeals by His own great love. "My thoughts are not your thoughts nor your ways My ways." We may not be able to understand how God can give away so much for so little. It may seem too good to be true, but it is not. It is just like Him, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

"How Thou canst think so well of us
And be the God Thou art
Is darkness to my intellect,
But sunshine to my heart"

3. His unfailing Word. "My Word shall not return unto Me void," He says. We can trust this promise. We can take Him at His Word and He will never, never fail us. Shall we do so? Shall we put our names in these great promises? Shall we claim this rich inheritance? Shall we accept the gospel of Isaiah which is the precious gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?