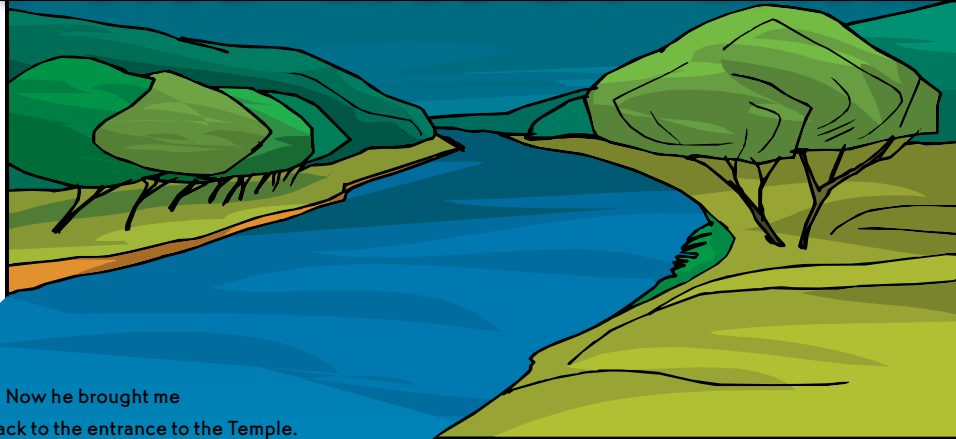


Let the River Run



Now he brought me back to the entrance to the Temple. I saw water pouring out from under the Temple porch to the east (the Temple faced east). The water poured from the south side of the Temple, south of the altar. He then took me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the gate complex on the east. The water was gushing from under the south front of the Temple.

He walked to the east with a measuring tape and measured off fifteen hundred feet, leading me through water that was ankle-deep. He measured off another fifteen hundred feet, leading me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another fifteen hundred feet, leading me through water waist-deep. He measured off another fifteen hundred feet.

By now it was a river over my head, water to swim in, water no one could possibly walk through.

He said, "Son of man, have you had a good look?" Then he took me back to the riverbank. While sitting on the bank, I noticed a lot of trees on both sides of the river.

He told me, "This water flows east, descends to the Arabah and then into the sea, the sea of stagnant waters. When it empties into those waters, the sea will become fresh. Wherever the river flows, life will flourish—great schools of fish—because the river is turning the salt sea into fresh water. Where the river flows, life abounds." (Ezekiel 47:1-9 *The Message*)

Water is once again on our minds here in this fabled land where all storm systems meet. A salesman visited last evening, and to get here he took a paved highway that would normally have been bordered on both sides by farm land. Last night the highway was a causeway passing through the midst of a lake. Incessant rain has reduced the ground to mushy pulp; country roads and city streets are under water. Once again the rivers are out of their banks. Once again farmers curse the weather that causes new-sprouted crops—their livelihood—to drown in a sea of muddy, smelly, river water.

Eternal Spring

Earthly rivers are famously undependable. When low, they restrict transit, fishing, drinking water. When high, they threaten roads, homes, profit. Man's efforts to harness and tame rivers often produce mixed results: levees may save one field, but do greater harm to another; dams may reduce seasonal flooding in one area, but permanently flood another. There is no clear or easy answer.

Earthly rivers may change their course or overflow their banks; springs and creeks may dry up in a season. But the river that flows from the throne of God is constant, unfailing, ever sustaining. If we camp by the river that flows through our city, we may be washed away, or be left standing by a dry wadi. But if we camp by the River of Life that flows from under the Temple door, we will know only eternal comfort and refuge.

There is something that earthly rivers do have in common with God's eternal river: When man tries to confine and alter the flow of a river, that river will fight back—sometimes with disastrous results. When man tries to confine and alter the flow of God's river, the effort is likewise doomed to failure. Because it emanates from perfect God, the river itself is perfect. It is an act of supreme arrogance to think we can in any way improve upon what has been delivered from the throne of God.

The Lord's way will stand. No dike or levee can reshape it, no dam will restrain its flow.

All merely human efforts at social reform, rivers that do not rise in the Temple, are like the rivers in Mongolia, that run for a few miles and then get sucked up by the hot sands and are lost and nobody sees them anymore. Only the perennial stream, that comes out from beneath the Temple threshold, can sustain itself in the desert, to say nothing of transforming the desert into a Garden of Eden. (Alexander Maclaren)

Life Source

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)

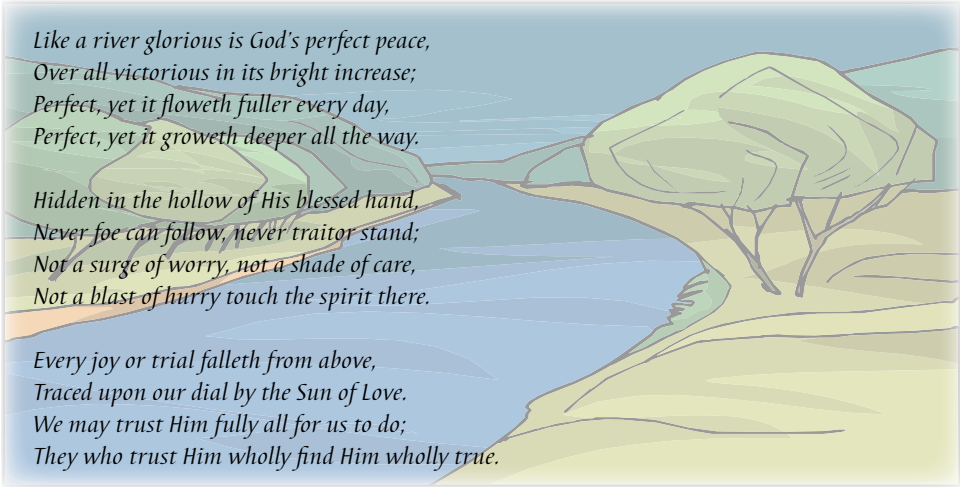
The river flowing from the throne of God is our life source. We drink from it by coming to Christ as we are, and believing in Him as He is. As we drink of this water, we are gradually changed into the likeness of the Son; His Spirit possesses us and we gain His eternal life, which replaces our original, doomed life. The process is never reversed. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, gain nothing from us. We have no living water with which to sustain them. And, likewise, we have no business trying to reshape their river as it flows out into the world.

This world today is actively engaged in rearranging the things of God to fit them into a definition built by human hands. Instead of the questions "What can I do for Him?"

(worship, servanthood) or "What can I learn from Him?" (attentive pupil), the question more typically asked is "What can He do for me?" (self-centric). And like the tortured flow of the Midwest rivers and creeks, the things of God will inevitably come crashing through the sodden levees erected by hands intent on their own agenda. We are to be conforming ourselves to the ways of God. Trying to conform Him to our ways results in, at best, confusion and grief—at worst, disaster. Conforming ourselves to His ways results in joy, peace—even reward.

The river is from God. It is crystalline pure, untouched by the foul refuse of this world. The river is fresh and sweet, and carries no disease—only enriching life. We need not fear this river—no matter how high. We must let it flow into our lives. We must let it flow all around and encompass us, depositing its enriching silt into our lives.

The picture that ought to be realised by each of us is God's ideal, which there is power in the gospel to make real in the case of every one of us, the rapid and continuous increase in the depth and in the scour of "the river of the water of life," that flows through our lives. Luther used to say, "If you want to clean out a dunghill, turn the Elbe into it." If you desire to have your hearts cleansed of all their foulness, turn the river into it. But it needs to be a progressively deepening river, or there will be no scour in the feeble trickle, and we shall not be a bit the holier or the purer for our potential and imperfect Christianity. (Maclaren)



*Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious in its bright increase;
Perfect, yet it floweth fuller every day,
Perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way.*

*Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand;
Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there.*

*Every joy or trial falleth from above,
Traced upon our dial by the Sun of Love.
We may trust Him fully all for us to do;
They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.*

*Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest;
Finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest.
(Frances R. Havergal)*