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"And how can they hear without a preacher?"—ST. PAUL.

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THE UPPER AND THE NETHER SPRINGS.

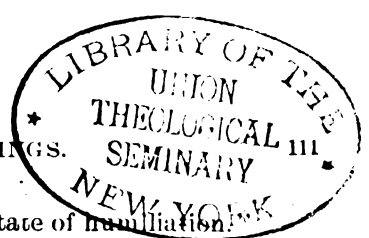
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TEXT.—“And he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.”—Joshua xv: 19.

HALF way between Hebron and Beersheba there once stood the ancient city of Debir. It was the city of brains and books, the centre of intellectual culture of the olden times. What Athens was to Greece, Debir was to Palestine. Caleb was very anxious to secure possession of this city. It is this fact which gives rise to our text. Caleb, we all remember, was one of the twelve spies sent over into Canaan to spy out the land. He and Joshua were the two who brought back the good report, and the only two of all who came out of Egypt, who were given the privilege of entering Canaan, with the possible exception of the Levites, and not only because they had brought back a truthful report concerning the land, but were willing to trust God to lead them to victory. After entering the land, Caleb applied to Joshua for the share of the land which had been promised to him, and among other portions there was given him the city of Debir, the city of learning. It was still, however, in the possession of the Canaanites and must be captured to be possessed.

Caleb then made the proposition that he would give his daughter Achsah in marriage to any one who would take the city, and a warrior named Othniel marched against Debir. After a great struggle the gates were broken down, the giants overcome, and the City of Books lay at the feet of the conqueror. When the victory was won, Caleb gave his daughter to the victorious soldier. With her he also gave, as an inheritance, a piece of property known as “The South Land,” valuable, but moun-

tainous and sloping southward toward the deserts of Arabia, the hot winds of which again and again swept across it, and his daughter besought her father to give her springs of water, and so we read in my text, “He gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.” Now, I find in this beautiful story a good illustration of the blessings which our Father bestows upon His children. Some, perhaps, have come to Kadesh-Barnea and passed “over the line.” They have entered the surrendered life and now think that everything is settled. If you have passed “over the line,” it is only the south line. God wants to give you both the upper springs and the nether springs. All that is bestowed upon us is associated with the victory of Him whose name was called in the prophets, the Conqueror. In Him God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Now, some have taken this inheritance and treated it as the man with the five talents, they have gained other five talents also; others, like the man with the one talent, have wrapped it in a napkin; they live on the border-land, where are the hot winds of the wilderness, the scorching winds of care and worry. Oh beloved, it is yours to have something better than that! You may have passed “over the line” at Kadesh-Barnea; you may be in Canaan, but if your life is a restless life, if your life is one where you are constantly failing at the same point, I do not say constant failure, but constant failure at the same point, it is then you need the added blessing of “the upper springs and the nether springs.” If you do not pray



as you should or might pray, it is clear that you are not drinking of "the upper springs, and the nether springs." Andrew Murray has said, "Feebleness in prayer is a mark of disease, and if this be true, many are sick children and need the great Physician." Now, you may be Christians, but if you find these things to be true in your experience you need to push on.

This is by no means a new idea to represent in the Gospel of Christ. In John 4th, we read Christ's words to the woman of Samaria. "But whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Some one has said, "Do you believe in a second conversion?" No. Once a man is justified, he can never be more justified. Justification is an act, something God does at once. But there is something more than this for us. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." It is ours to push on to the enjoyment of "peace with God." As the Apostle taught the Philippians, "In nothing be anxious but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." Phil. 4: 6-9. John McNeill bids us be careful when we begin to read these verses. He quotes them, "The Lord is at hand, be careful for nothing," etc.

Dear friends, let me ask, Have you crossed the line? For oh! there is so much more to the Christian life than merely being saved. Some one has suggested that there are many kinds of Christians. Some are only Calvary Christians; they never get further than the cross. While we glory in the cross of Christ as the means of our salvation, at the foot of the cross is not the place for a believer to live. Mr. Ottman, one of our fellow-laborers, said recently, "I can never get a vision of Christ on the cross. Now that He is exalted He does not want you to see

Him in His state of humiliation."

Then there are resurrection Christians, who seem to be unable to get beyond the idea of being justified. Then we find many forty day-Christians,—with Christ one day and away from Him the next, up one day and down the next, living an intermittent life. Another kind is ascension Christians. But better than all is a Pentecostal-Christian, one who believes in the Holy Ghost and lives and labors in the life of the Holy Ghost. Oh beloved, rest not satisfied with merely being saved; that is only the beginning. The whole Christian experience stretches away from that point and gets brighter and brighter as the days go by. Whether the strict exegesis of the text will allow the interpretation or not, I am quite sure that all will agree that it is a perfect illustration. To drink at the nether spring is salvation, but to drink at the upper spring is a high privilege that is offered to every child of God. Take these Scriptures to illustrate what we mean, Eph. 1: 3; Col. 2: 12; 3: 1-3; Phil. 3: 20.

At the nether spring, first of all, I see myself and all my sinfulness; then I see Christ in all His righteousness, and then I hear Him say that, though my sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, and there, at the nether spring, I am made whole, but with the upper spring it is different. There it is all about the things that are above, and as I drink of its waters, I find myself being lifted above this world, and my conversation not only, but my very life, may be in the Heavens. Oh! what a power for good our lives might be did we get "over the line and beyond" and drink daily from the upper spring. On the English coast there is a certain fountain which is within the tide-mark. Twice each day the tide spreads over it, and the pure sweet waters are defiled and spoiled by the briny wave. But the tide goes down and then the fountain washes itself clear of the defilement. This is an emblem of a life that is daily in contact with the world and its defilement. Again and again it is touched by the evil one, but I bring you the cure today. Live close to the upper spring

and in the midst of trials most perplexing, great peace shall fill your soul. It is possible to be a Christian, simply saved, and not have much positive influence over the world around you; but it would not be possible to live in close communion with Christ (which is only another way of speaking of the upper spring) without having the greatest possible influence for good over all with whom we come into contact.

Let me just mention three nether springs:

(1) The Bible. If I were to ask, "How much of the Bible have you read to-day?" what would your answer be? It is sad to think how this nether spring is neglected by many Christians, and yet they wonder how it is that they so often fail, that their faith is so weak, that they have so little joy. Dr. Moorehead tells of a missionary who had labored for months teaching the natives some portions of God's Word, and yet they seemed to forget it so easily. One day when he was speaking to them about their forgetfulness, some replied that their minds were like sieves, and the words of the Bible ran through them like water, but although the words, like water, ran through so easily, they left them cleaner each time. We are sure to fail if we do not keep sipping from this nether spring. The Bible is all as sparkling with wells, springs, rivers and seas. They toss up their brightness from almost every chapter. To this nether spring, whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.

(2) Prayer. As Achsah came to her father, and besought his blessing, so it is our high privilege to come to this nether spring. He not only says, "Ask, and ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you," but "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." A judge's son was killed in our war. Before he passed away, one of his comrades gave him a few sips of water which gave him a little strength. He wrote on the back of an old envelope, "Dear father, this man helped me when I was dying. You help him for Charlie's sake." When the wounded and tattered sol-

dier came to Detroit and sought out the home of his dead comrade, his relations were disposed to pay no attention to his appeal until he showed the father the note by his dead son, and then for Charlie's sake he got all he needed. So that when we come to the nether spring of prayer we hear our Lord say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full."

(3) The "Quiet Hour" or half hour or quarter of an hour of waiting upon God. The monster Frazer Gun, after firing, on its return to its carriage, fills its air chambers and thus makes ready for firing again. Just as we live physically by inbreathing and outbreathing, so, as we live out, we must be taking in the life which comes from this spring of waiting upon God. Compare Psa. 25: 3; 27: 14; 37: 9; 130: 5; Isa. 40: 28-31.

The *upper spring* is the fellowship of the Christ. In these days when we hear so much about the Holy Spirit we are apt to forget Christ. Fellowship is partnership. If I were a partner with Mr. Rockefeller how rich I would be. I may have nothing, but taken into partnership with the multi-millionaire, how rich I would become. So John, the beloved disciple, says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," 1 John 1: 3. And the Apostle Paul says, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 8: 16, 17. It was by drinking at this upper spring, that Paul learned to say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me," Galatians 2: 20. So with us, as we stoop and drink at this upper spring, "Reflecting as in a mirror the glory of Christ, we are changed into the same

image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3: 18. The head of the springs, both upper and nether, is found at the throne of God. Come, then, and drink freely, and on the principle that water seeks

its own level, coming from the throne it will go back again, bearing us into His very presence, whom to know is life everlasting, and whom to see is joy without end.

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