

Broken Cisterns

by John Isaac Edwards

The Lord said, “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13). A cistern is a reservoir to catch and store rainwater. Suppose you had a natural spring, and traded it for a cistern that could hold no water. You would have exchanged something of great value for something that had no value whatsoever! I am making spiritual application of this in our study.

1) **Idols.** When the nation of Israel forsook Almighty God and bowed their knees to other gods, they hewed them out broken cisterns. They “... changed their glory for that which doth not profit” (Jer. 2:11). Samuel said, “...serve the Lord with all your heart; And turn not aside; for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain” (1 Sam. 12:20-21). Isaiah revealed, “They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?” (Is. 44:9-10). An idol is any object other than God!

2) **False Standards Of Authority.** The word of God is a fountain of living water. It is being exchanged for some broken cisterns. When men say, “I think”, “It seems to me”, “My preacher says”, “My parents”, “The majority”, “Following my conscience” they have hewed them out broken cisterns. The Lord declared through Isaiah, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways...For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Is. 55:8-9). Proverbs 14:12 teaches, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Paul informed the Corinthians, “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5). Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...” (Mt. 10:37). The mountain message proclaimed, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mt. 7:13-14). Jeremiah exclaimed, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man

that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

3) **Half-Hearted Service.** To give less than our whole heart in service unto the Lord is of no value! Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Mt. 22:37). The appeal of the Hebrew writer was, “Let us draw near with a true heart...” (Heb. 10:22). Paul made known the grace of God “...bestowed upon me was not in vain...” Why was it not in vain, Paul? “...I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). The Devil will settle for just a little of your heart, because He knows that if he has some of it the Lord does not have it all!

4) **Human Denominations.** The Scriptures teach, “There is one body...” (Eph. 4:4), “... which is the church” (Col. 1:24). The blood flows through it (Eph. 1:7; 2:13, 16). Christ is the savior of it (Eph. 5:23). There are those who have passed over the blood-bought body of Christ for

churches formed and founded by men — religious bodies that originated at different places and times, wearing different names, teaching different doctrines, with different organizational arrangements, worshipping contrary to the authority of Christ, and engaged in different works. Do you know what they have done? Hewed them out broken cisterns! Only the church of the Lord will be delivered up to God (1 Cor. 15:24). All other plants will be rooted up! (Mt. 15:13).

5) **Vain Worship.** Did you know that you can worship the Lord in vain? The Lord told His people in ancient times, “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me...Bring no more vain oblations...” (Is. 1:10, 13). Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mt. 15:9). Anytime we teach for doctrines the commandments of men, our worship is vain! Don’t hew out a broken cistern! “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24).

6) **Preaching With No Scripture.** Paul affirmed, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Preaching with little Scripture profits little, and preaching with no Scripture profits nothing! When Philip preached to the traveling treasurer, he “...opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Compare that with how your preacher begins his sermon! When Paul entered a Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica, he “...reasoned with them out of the scriptures” (Acts 17:2). There is a famine of the word of God in many pulpits today as many are speaking smooth things (Is. 30:9-10), lying words (Jer. 7:8), and vain words (Eph. 5:6)!

7) **Faith Without Works.** James asked, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (Jas. 2:14). Faith without works is as profitable as saying peace only to the naked and destitute (Jas. 2:15-16)! It takes both faith and works as demonstrated in the faith chapter, Hebrews 11. All of

these folks were said to have faith because of what they did! Take Abel, for example. “By faith Abel offered...” (Heb. 11:4). To have faith without works is to have a broken cistern!

8) **Human Plans Of Salvation.** There is only one plan that can save — the gospel plan! “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation...” (Rom. 1:16). The plan involves hearing (Mt. 17:5), believing (Jn. 8:24), repenting (Lk. 13:3), confessing (Rom. 10:9-10), being baptized (Acts 2:38), and being faithful (Rev. 2:10). When men come along and teach grace only, faith alone, praying the sinner’s prayer, goodness alone, once saved, always saved or anything else opposed to God’s plan for saving man, they are hewing out broken cisterns that hold no water!

There’s a fountain of living waters flowing abundantly and freely (Jn. 4:14; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:17). We bid you come drink!

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