

WEEK 8: "You would not have called to Me unless I had been calling to you." (#6-*The Silver Chair*, SC, p. 558)

Having entered Narnia through a door in a wall behind her school, young Jill Pole, a classmate of Eustace, whom we met in the *VDT*, searches the stream which she has heard, in order to quench her thirst. However, she encounters a lion lying next to the stream. "If you are thirsty, come and drink," says the Lion, who is so imposing that Jill becomes terrified. "I daren't come and drink," said Jill. "Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion. "Oh dear!" said Jill coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then." "There is no other stream," said the Lion. Finally convinced, Jill drinks from the stream, and "It was the coldest, most refreshing water she had ever tasted. You didn't need to drink much of it, for it quenched your thirst at once."

This excerpt of *SC* parallels John 7, in which Jesus was attending the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot). On the final day, "the great day of the feast," water was poured out of golden pitchers, draining into pipes that flowed out of the temple. At this time, Jesus loudly declared, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had a conversation with a Samaritan woman at Sychar (John 4), in which He told her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who is saying to you, 'Give me to drink,' you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water." Since the woman didn't understand the spiritual nature of Jesus' remarks, He went on to tell her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

After quenching her thirst from the Narnian stream, Jill is told by the Lion that He has a task for her to complete, for which He had called Jill and Eustace into Narnia from their own world. Jill is confused by Aslan's comments, thinking herself mistaken for someone else.

"Speak your thought, Human Child," said the Lion. "I was wondering—I mean—could there be some mistake? Because nobody called me and Scrubb, you know. It was we who asked to come here. Scrubb said we were to call to—to Somebody—it was a name I wouldn't know—and perhaps the Somebody would let us in. And we did, and then we found the door open." "You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you," said the Lion [the *Somebody* to whom Jill was referring].

In order for humans to even approach God for salvation, they must first have been drawn to God by the Holy Spirit. John Wesley referred to this action as *prevenient grace*, grace which comes before salvation and allows our hearts to be open and receptive to the truth of the gospel. Paul explains in Romans 3:11: "there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God." In other words, God has to take the first step to initiate the potential love relationship with man. Man, or course, has free will and can

choose to accept God's leading or to reject it, as he wishes. To me, this makes the teaching of "Calvinism" unbiblical.

When God calls for a person, He usually does so in a much less dramatic fashion than Aslan did in various places in the series. Consider the call of Elijah. The prophet experience God's speaking to his heart after his dramatic confrontation with and defeat of the prophets of Baal, told in 1 Kings 18. Having heard that queen Jezebel intended to kill him, he escaped into the wilderness, ultimately ending up in a cave on Mt. Horeb, where God told him to: (Here I'm going to use the wonderful translation made by Julius Schubring, librettist for Mendelssohn's magnificent oratorio about the prophet.)

Arise now, get thee without, stand on the mount before the Lord: for there His glory will appear, and shine on thee! Thy face must be veiled, for He draweth near.

Behold, God the Lord passed by! And a mighty wind rent the mountains around, brake in pieces the rocks, brake them before the Lord. But yet the Lord was not in the tempest. Behold, God the Lord passed by! And the sea was upheaved, and the earth was shaken. But yet the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there came a fire. But yet the Lord was *not* in the fire. And after the fire there came a still small voice. And in that still voice onward came the Lord.

The lesson? God could call to you through nature, through music, through His word, or through godly counsel from others (probably not through a lion though!) Is He calling you now? As the Psalm says, "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

Discussion question: How have you heard God speaking to you?

NEXT WEEK: We fight *The Last Battle*. (It takes two weeks.) See you then.