

Introduction to the Updated Edition

Streams in the Desert, first published in 1925, along with *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers, has become one of the two most beloved daily devotional books of all time. It has been a source of hope, encouragement, comfort, and strength for millions of people through the years, and has remained a perennial bestseller.

L. B. Cowman, who first published the original edition, was an American missionary in the Orient with her husband, Charles. *Streams in the Desert* is a compilation of Cowman's favorite writings from some of the best-known Christians over the last several centuries, including Charles Spurgeon, F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, A. B. Simpson, and Hannah Whitall Smith, just to name a few. By adding appropriate Scripture passages, poems, and some of her own writings to these great truths by other great Christians, she ultimately compiled one devotional reading for each day of the year.

The enduring power of *Streams in the Desert* is the result of the selections being firmly based on the truth of Scripture. Yet over the last few years, many readers found themselves struggling to understand the full meaning of these writings, especially since some of them had been written hundreds of years before. Therefore, just as there has been a need for new translations of the Bible due to changes in the English language, the wording of these powerful truths needed revision to be understood by today's reader. As the editor of this updated edition, I have endeavored to maintain the beauty of the original without altering its meaning, giving it the same care I gave the updated edition of *My Utmost for His Highest*, which I edited several years ago.

For those of you familiar with both *Streams in the Desert* and *My Utmost for His Highest*, you may be interested in knowing something of the tie between these two best-selling daily devotional books of all time. Not only were they originally published during the same time period (*Streams* in 1925, and *My Utmost* in 1927), but L. B. Cowman and Oswald Chambers had ministered together. They met when the Cowmans were missionaries to Japan and Chambers traveled there to preach. Also, both were greatly influenced by Charles Spurgeon, the great English preacher of the late 1800s. Chambers came to a saving knowledge of Christ through the preaching of Spurgeon, and Cowman selected more of Spurgeon's writings for *Streams in the Desert* than those of any other person.

In this new edition you will find a number of enhancements. All Scripture quotes, except those otherwise marked, are now updated using the New International Version of the Bible and are referenced within the text. My purpose in referencing all Scripture quotes is to facilitate further study of the Bible passages. Also, in order to make this book a further help to the Bible student, teacher, or pastor, I have added a Contributors Index, a Scripture Index, and a Subject Index. Much of the work on the indexes was done by my assistant, Susan Cullen. I wish to thank her for her diligent efforts. Her work was tedious, yet thorough, and she demonstrated a true understanding of the verse: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Col. 3:23).

My prayer for you, the reader, is that you would be blessed by the application of the truths in this book like so many millions before you. God has ministered to me in a very special way as I have worked on this new edition. I know firsthand the power of Christ that lies within these pages, and the hope, encouragement, comfort, and strength that comes from His Word being applied to our hearts. I trust insights shared here from God's Word by many saints of His down through the ages will be like "Streams in the Desert" to you during the difficult times of your life, for He has said, "Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert" (Isa. 35:6).

James Reimann, Editor
January 1

The land you are ... to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. (Deuteronomy 11:11—12)

Today we stand at the threshold of the unknown. Before us lies a new year, and we are going forward to take possession of it. Who knows what we will find? What new experiences or changes will come our way? What new needs will arise? In spite of the uncertainty before us, we have a cheerful and comforting message from our heavenly Father: "The Lord your God cares for [it]; the eyes of the Lord ... are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end."

The Lord is to be our Source of supply. In Him are springs, fountains, and streams that will never be cut off or run dry. To those who are anxious comes the gracious promise of our heavenly Father: If He is the Source of our mercies, mercy will never fail us. No heat or drought can dry the "river whose streams make glad the city of God" (Ps. 46:4).

Yet the land we are to possess is a land of valleys and hills. It is not all flat or downhill. If life were always smooth and level, the boring sameness would weigh us down. We need the valleys *and* the hills. The hills collect the rain for hundreds of fruitful valleys. And so it is with us! It is the difficulty encountered on the hills that drives us to the throne of grace and brings the showers of blessing. Yes, it is the hills, the cold and seemingly barren hills of life that we question and complain about, that bring down the showers. How many people have perished in the wilderness valley, buried under its golden sand, who would have thrived in the hills? And how many would have been killed by the cold, destroyed or swept desolate of their fruitfulness by the wind, if not for the hills—stern, hard, rugged, and so steep to climb? God's hills are a gracious protection for His people against their foes!