

I Thirst

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[0 : 0 0] Let us turn now to consider words you will find in the Gospel according to John, chapter 19, reading at verse 28.

John's Gospel, chapter 19, reading at verse 28.

And after this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar, and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon his hip and put it to his mouth.

Jesus saith, I thirst. We come now to the fifth of the seven sayings on the cross.

[1 : 1 6] This, as you can see, is the shortest of all the sayings. Indeed, in the Greek language, it is one word, thirst.

Let us remind ourselves of the circumstance again that took place this day. Our Lord was arrested during the night watches.

He was taken from Pilate to Herod and back again to Pilate in the course of the night and the early morning. He had been scourged. And after the sentence of death by crucifixion was announced, he had to carry the cross beam of his own cross part of the way until his physical strength failed him.

Around about nine o'clock in the morning, he was nailed to the cross. And the act of crucifixion began. For three hours, he hung on that cross until darkness.

That wonderful and awful darkness covered the scene. And he hung within that darkness for three hours.

[2 : 3 9] And at the end of that period, he uttered the fourth cry from the cross, which we looked at last Sabbath evening, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

During that time and from, actually the time of his arrest, our Lord had been subjected to great humiliation, to great pain and abuse.

great spiritual conflict. And on behalf of those for whom he was suffering.

And it is possible that the cry, it is indeed true that the cry was the natural response to the physical condition in which he now found himself.

As death approached prior to his great act of obedience in giving himself, or rather the great culminating act in the process of obedience, giving himself to death.

[4 : 1 2] You remember that when our Lord, three years previously, had been tempted by the devil in the wilderness, the gospel writers, the way the account is written for us, the gospel writers lead us to believe that he was so absorbed in the conflict of the temptation for forty days, that it was after the conflict that he hungered, that he became aware of his bodily needs.

And it may very well be that our Lord was so absorbed during the crucifixion, so absorbed in the work that he was performing, that it was only after he had accomplished all that was required of him to do, that he became aware of his actual physical needs.

I came across a story in my reading last week of a soldier who had been wounded during the First World War. And he lay on the field of battle amongst the dead and the dying, with the shells bursting around him.

He was aware of intense pain from the wound, and he thought that he was going to die. But after a while, one agony began to swallow up all the rest.

It was the agony of thirst. And he said that he would have given the world for a cup of water. He wasn't aware of it until after a period of time.

[6 : 24] And here we have the supreme physical distress of the crucifixion brought before us, in the only cry of pain and of need that our Lord uttered during his crucifixion, the cry of thirst.

The soldier around the cross responded by giving him vinegar. That was the common drink of the Roman soldier, the kind of sour, bad and cheap wine that they drank themselves, a mixture of vinegar and wine.

And this was pushed up to his lips on a sponge-like substance held at the end of a reed, or a rod. Now you know that this was not the first drink that was offered to Jesus on the cross.

When he was hung there, when he was nailed to the cross, when the cross was lifted up into the ground, he was offered that mixture of vinegar and myrrh, that it is reckoned that it was the women of Jerusalem, though that is a point of debate, that it was the women of Jerusalem, in their kindness, who concocted this kind of anesthetic, so that people who were crucified could take it to dull their senses as they experienced the awful pain of crucifixion.

Our Lord was offered that drink, and we read that when he tasted it, when he knew what it was, he wouldn't take it. It has been said that it was the only act of human kindness extended to our Lord on the cross.

[8 : 23] He wouldn't take that drink because we believe that he wanted to retain his consciousness, his consciousness of all that he had to suffer.

He wanted to retain that consciousness fully because he wanted to bear, and he had to bear, the full weight of the wrath of God, and in bearing it he wanted to have a spiritual awareness under the weight of these sufferings.

There was to be no anesthetic for him. I heard recently that, and some of you may know this, that the late Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who preached from this pulpit some years ago, that when he was dying, he refused to take sedatives from his doctors.

He just wanted a mild sedative because he said that he wanted to retain as much of his consciousness as possible in entering into the actual act of dying so that in a measure at least he could follow his Lord in that act.

Of course, he could only follow it in a measure. We live in a day when people in the throes of death are very, very heavily sedated, and no doubt the people who minister to them and who wait anxiously around their bed are glad that medical science has made that progress whereby that sedation can be administered in such a way that the often and often excruciating pain through which people pass in death is in a measure at least alleviated.

[10 : 35] But it was not to be so for Jesus. When he was offered that anesthetic, he refused it.

But at the end of his sufferings on the cross, he expressed his condition, his physical and mental state was such that he thirsted.

Now, as I said, this is understandable. The cry in the first instance, this word, this statement, is a very natural one and a very human one and a very understandable one.

It was one of these statements in the Bible that remind us yet again of the humanness of our Lord.

He was very man of very man. And it was perfectly natural that after all the sufferings of that early morning and of the crucifixion since early morning, it was natural that the awful and excruciating physical sufferings and mental stress would produce this cry, I thirst.

[12 : 16] But the cry also brings this before us. Secondly, and I'm treading my way as warily as I can through this great and mysterious utterance.

The second thing that the cry brings before us is this, that it reminds us that our Lord Jesus Christ, and I'm just going to mention this in the passage, was God in our nature.

This is at the very heart of the redemption purchased for us. That our redemption was purchased by God in our nature.

In the book of Acts, we read these wonderful words, the church of God, which has been purchased by his blood. God took our nature and in our nature he suffered.

In our nature he became dependent and in our nature he entered into all these circumstances that you and I pass through in a measure at least in this world.

[13 : 32] And yet, in these sufferings, he was still God in our nature. And as God, he had the power to call into exercise at any given moment, as he said to Peter in the garden of Gethsemane, do you not think, he says, when he saw Peter taking the sword to defend him, do you not think that I could call legions of angels to my assistance for help?

Put your sword away. And there he was showing Peter that though he had that power to exercise, yet in the interest of our redemption, he laid that power to one side in our nature.

And in our nature it became totally dependent on what was to be done for him. And the cry shows as well, therefore, not just the humanness of Jesus, but the voluntariness of his humiliation.

The voluntariness of the condition into which he entered on our behalf. That he voluntarily came to a state where he would not call upon the exercise of his own power to meet his own need.

Remember what he said of him in Psalm 50? In Psalm 50? The cattle on thousand hills are mine. He was the one who created all things, the heavens and the seas.

[15 : 10] To him, as the young ones I've been learning in the Sunday school of late, to him the spacious sea belongs and all that it contains. And it was he who gave being to everything.

the world and all the oceans and all the rivers and all the streams. And yet here he is in our nature, in a condition in which he cried, I thirst.

And the third thing it brings before us is this. It reminds us of the very real connection that exists between mental, spiritual, anguish and physical sufferings.

Now of course you don't need to be a doctor to know this. All you have to do is to study the word of God for confirmation of this fact. In that wonderful messianic psalm, Psalm 22 verse 14, listen to the words of Jesus there, spoken in prophecy hundreds of years, 700 years before he actually suffered.

I am like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

[16 : 27] My strength is dried up like a pot sherd and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws.

There you have this picture, wonderful picture of Jesus Christ in his inner sufferings and these inner sufferings having a profound effect upon his physical condition, his state physically at the time.

He was dried up physically, shriveled up physically. His tongue was so dry in his mouth. Do you know what that's like? Your tongue drying up in your mouth under a sheer stress and the strain of the situation in which you find yourself.

I remember attending a meeting once and I would not believe that if it hadn't happened to myself when under what I considered severe stress mental stress and strain I tried to speak and my tongue had actually dried up in my mouth and I couldn't utter one syllable without a sip of water.

Now if you and I can pass through experiences like that what was it like for him to pass through these experiences and it tells us something else that people who are in great physical and mental stress can have that stress often eased and helped not just by the administration of drugs but by spiritual comfort comfort that can be brought to them in their distress and in common with many other people we believe in the church of Jesus Christ that the pastor or the chaplain or the spiritual counsellor has a role to fill at the bedside of those who are in great physical and mental distress the two go hand in glove and though it is possible and it is possible of course for us we would have to accept this if some people are well

[19:10] Jesus crying I thirst on the cross that was just an evidence of that fact that he was dehydrated over all that long period of suffering and the loss of blood and the excruciating pain he was dehydrated of course he was we don't deny that and in this day and age a person in that condition were possible would have been given some sort of saline solution to alleviate his condition but you see there was something far far deeper than the actual physical experience of the thirst that was his on the cross this was far deeper than the physical what was it well here we come surely to the heart of the matter here he was bearing the full weight of the wrath of God in his mind and in his body and it was the experience and this is what

I want to emphasize and I want you to grasp it it was the experience through which he had passed that produced this thirst thirst thirst this physical thirst it wasn't just the experience of his actual physical sufferings and distress yes it was more it was that through which he had passed on the cross and what was it that he had passed through on the cross well now read the verse again after this Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished that the scripture might be fulfilled saith I thirst have you noticed that that the scripture might be fulfilled he said I thirst now what exactly does that mean does it mean this

Jesus knew the old testament and he knew all the old testament predictions and prophecies concerning himself one after one had been fulfilled one after one every single prophecy in the old testament about Jesus in his humiliation in his sufferings unto death had been fully and completely fulfilled every single one that was written about and does this mean therefore that on the cross knowing that all these predictions were accomplished except one the one that said about him I thirst he said in order to fulfill that scripture I thirst well it might mean that the only problem with it is that you would have to search very very minute the old testament scriptures for the prophecy concerning him that he would thirst if you take it that if you take that that's the meaning of these words well I will ask you just this one question where in the old testament is the prophecy concerning

Jesus that he would thirst it might mean that but that isn't really the full meaning of these words knowing that all things were now accomplished that the scripture might fulfill phil said I thirst it means this surely the old testament scriptures have predicted all that you would have to pass through all the demands that god was laying upon him in the work of redemption all that was necessary for him to redeem the sinner from hell all that was necessary had now been accomplished there was only one thing left for him to do and that was to give himself to death that was the only thing that was left he had passed through it all and what he had passed through had caused this awful experience of thirst what had he passed through well it was all last week in connection with the cry why has no forsaken me he had passed through the darkness of forsaken he had entered into the awful weight of the wrath of god he tasted death for us remember what I said last week he went into the hell of his own people what was the hell of his people it was to be forsaken by god remember when adam sinned he died spiritually he died and he was heir of eternal death and jesus had to deliver us from that death what is spiritual death it is to be forsaken by god it is to know nothing consciously of the love and the favour and the presence and the gracious of god and he went there what is eternal death it is to be it is to be forsaken by god in such a way that there is no hope of having the favour of god throughout the age of eternity and jesus delivered us from there remember i quoted the apostle's creed he descended into hell and there he experienced in his forsakenness in his desolation and in the desertion of the cross he experienced the awful intensity of these inner sufferings in his soul and they were so awful that he thused had passed through these things now my friend let me tell you this jesus in his teaching during his earthly ministry told people that this was exactly what hell was like he told them in the story of the rich man and

Lazarus that when the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus and he cried and he said father Abraham send Lazarus that he may dip that he may dip the tip of his finger and just give him some water and put some water in his tongue because I am tormented in this flame and there he teaches the unutterable woe of eternal wrath and eternal darkness and eternal desolation the flame of wrath of God causing that aridness that barrenness that dryness of mind and of soul in hell where there is no love no fellowship with God where there is no favor of God where people are eternally forsaken and suffer in the forsakenness of that place and the cry

[27 : 16] I thirst is the cry that comes from one who has been in the land of the damned and one uses the words advisedly you've heard the great story I'm sure of the of the great renowned Robbie Duncan who was a professor in the last century in the Free Church College a professor of Old Testament language and literature and one day he was in his class pacing the floor speaking about Psalm 22 and in these words my God my God why hast thou forsaken me and he was a man who was given to great periods of forgetfulness and he was pacing the floor back and forth and he was there to say brethren what does this mean what does it mean what does it mean and then he said this he said was damnation voluntarily endured voluntarily suffered and when our Lord and don't forget it he came into the world to save the lost to save the damned and he went to the land of the damned and into the experience of the damned and of the lost and the experience was so off that it produced first in his own body this was that cry and this gives us no other cry in the bible gives us this gives us an insight into the intensity of the sufferings of the lost and the wail of the unreconciled to God the suffering of those who are without God the experience

I said last week of the far off land the regions of sorrow and shame and darkness and lostness nothing someone said expresses the sufferings of hell better than the words of Christ I first you know that in Greek mythology some of you will know this that Tantalus the remember this story the son of Jupiter that for the murder of a man wasn't he called Pelops that for his murder he was made to stand breast deep in water and that water retreated receded every single time he bent down towards the water with his burning lips and Greek mythologists themselves were there trying to portray the fearful awful sufferings of the damned and that was the best way they could portray it and it was very very like the scriptural presentation of sufferings in the thirst of

Jesus we are told we have the liveliest emblem of the state of the damned that was ever presented to man in this world here you see a person laboring in extremity under the infinite wrath of the great and terrible God lying upon his soul and hushed hell and the experience of hell produces this awful unsatisfied longing for relief it is the thirst of the perishing and there are people who don't believe in hell well my friend if Christ came to deliver us from it he must enter into it he must touch the world that he came to deliver people from and here therefore the scriptures were fulfilled as someone put it a small statement hidden often forgotten lodged between so many words but in that tiny statement

Christ's whole life is opened up to us and all these appointed sufferings that he came to endure were now accomplished except the actual act of dying and he cried I thirst remember he said last week before he died physically he tested that death that spiritual alienation that eternal forsakenness he tested that before he died physically he had only to die now physically he had only to give himself in the actual act of dying and surveying Israel the whole sin he knew that he had been through it all and all that he had been through produced this cry of thirst oh what must the awfulness of hell be like when this person came back from the bottomless abyss with his body rocked in the pain of thirst he had passed along walked along and willingly travelled along that dusty road that led to the obedience of forsakenness to the ultimate act obedience and now having thrusted it as a result of it he can give himself to death well now before I close what application can we make of this well I want to make four or five very very brief ones in closing the first is this

Jesus thirsted that our thirst might be relieved isn't it wonderful that you and I can sing as we sang here tonight my soul thirsts for God in a dry parched land isn't it wonderful that you here tonight can thirst for the living God and you know why it is my friend that you can thirst for God because he thirsted in the experience and the awful experience of his sufferings on the cross his sufferings occasioned that thirst why did he thirst because ultimately God turned away from him my God my God why hast thou forsaken all comfort was withdrawn every comfort he had in the world was taken away from him before he was nailed to the cross they all forsook but fled

[35 : 52] I looked at my right hand and knew but none to know me well I cried to thee I said thou art my refuge and then his refuge turned away he had nothing and in the desolation of that forsakenness he thirsted and that has won for you the favor of a God who can produce in your heart the desire to thirst and to long for himself oh that you and I would thirst now for God would thirst for the one who can put the cup of living water to our lips when the cup was drained by him in its fullness and at the very bottom of it was this no

God to comfort him in the depths of his sorrow he suffered as someone put it he suffered that on Calvary's hill that he our thirsty hearts might fill to open wide a fount of grace for all who seek the saviour's face that's the first application he thirsted so that you and I he thirsted because God was forsaken so that you and I can thirst for the God who has promised never to leave nor to forsake us listen to what he says come unto me and drink the spirit and the bride say come and let whosoever will come and take the water of life freely and the second application is this the sympathy that

Jesus has with his people in their experiences in life when they do thirst in a dry parched land listen to the words of the prophecy in Isaiah when the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue faileth for thirst I the Lord will hear them I the God of Israel will not forsake them here's the promise from one who is in sympathy with his people when they are passing through times of great extremities in their great need and under extraordinary pressures in this life confronted with distresses that leave them feeling like that their tongue dried up I the Lord will hear them I the God of Israel will not forsake them he is with them to supply them and with them to relieve them and the third application is this here is a warning truly to all those who are on the road to hell who are tonight without

God in a measure spiritually in a forsaken land thirsting for everything but for God and tonight in this church again with an unrelieved thirst in your mind and in your heart no matter what you try there is always this missing element in your life ah well my friend here's an awful warning for you from one who was exposed to the torments of the lost and who came back from that far off land and who tells us from his own experience what it is like there if you die as you live

I tell you this the authority of God's word you will enter into the land of eternal forsakenness where the favor and the love and the mercy of God are unknown and where people thirst eternally with a thirst which will never be relieved and the God who could have met their thirst in time is viewed as one who is hated and abandoned by them eternally and he abandons them and there is no relief throughout the ages of eternity there are no full cups as someone said in hell an eternal unrelieved thirst is all that people experience think of that he said you who had

[41 : 26] Christlessness to drink no water no wine no cups no glasses no rivalry no relief in hell to not plenty to open where the song of the drunkard is turned to wailing and to gnashing of teeth and Jesus my friend came back from that place to purchase heaven for lost sinner will you listen to the one who went there and who cried in the depths of his distress.

I thirst. Then there's one other application I want to make, it is this. Eternal satisfaction is provided in Christ for those who thirst for God.

The little ones in the Sunday school are learning that verse in the Beatitudes. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Well, those who thirst for Jesus tonight, I tell you this, there's a day coming when they will drink fully from the fountain that he is himself.

They drink from the streams here below on earth. But then you see the days coming when the streams will merge into the ocean of his love.

[43 : 18] There'll be no means of grace in heaven. There'll be no need for gatherings such as these every so often. There'll be no need for a Bible, no need for prayers, no need for preaching.

He is there in all his blessed fullness. And they who thirst for him in the means of grace here, they who come to a church such as this and say before they leave the home, Oh, that I might feel his presence, that I might see his face, and that I might know his power.

They who say these words as they come to a church, and who from time to time have their wishes met and their desires fulfilled, will one day stand in that place in the assembly of the redeemed in heaven above.

They will drink of his love and praise his name, praise his name and drink of his love throughout the endless ages of eternity.

No wonder the Bible presents to us a heaven which is highly desirable, purchased for us by one who cried, I thirst.

[44 : 36] And dare I say this, what a solace for Christ himself to enter into the presence of the Father immediately after this.

Matter of moments after this he cried with a loud voice, Father into thy hands I commend my spirit, it is finished. And he passed from time into eternity.

Dear one said, Was it not a relief, was it not a relief, was it not solace of heart, of mind and of soul, for the Savior of the lost, to come back from the bottomless abyss, and to enter into the blessedness of his Father's presence in heaven above?

There, and I use the word in inverted commas, waiting for the arrival of the soul of the one who was saved by his grace beside him on Calvary.

Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise. What a difference between the abyss that produced thy thirst and the paradise that produced glory to God in the highest.

[46 : 14] Peace on earth and good will to men from the land of forsakenness to the most favored spot in the creation of God at the right hand of the Father on high.

And if it be, my friend, and I say this to encourage you, if it be that the Lord has worked in your heart, the smallest, the feeblest desire and thirst for the things of God, what an eternity awaits you, when your thirst will be made eternally, and when you will drink out of the ocean of his fullness forever and ever.

Oh, my poor lost sinner, why stay in the state of lostness into which Jesus went in his experience, and from which and in which was produced this thirst in his soul, why should you allow yourself to be abandoned in that lostness when Jesus came back from it, that he might deliver you from it by the power of his grace.

Jesus, will you not come to seek him tonight? And I just wonder if it would be biblical for me to end on this note. He who cried on the cross, I thirst.

Do you know that in a measure, at least speaking with all reverence, and I hope in accordance with the word of God, I hope, do you not realize this, that this same Jesus, speaking with reverence, thirsts, and oh, this is the wonder of grace, thirsts, for people like you and me tonight, behold, I stand at the door and knock.

[48 : 39] And if any man is open unto me, I will come in with him, and sub with him, and he with me.

Can it be that the Lord of glory who came to these depths, can it be that he really wants me, that he wants to hear my voice, and that he wants to win my heart, and that he wants to speak with me, and to hear me speaking to him, I tell you, it is true.

And this is the wonder of grace, as I said, and the glory of the gospel, that you and I are here tonight, around this wonderful world, which tells of the depths to which he went, to redeem our soul, and to bid us come and be filled.

Oh, don't stay away, and don't carry on living on the way to lostness, to barrenness, and to desolation, when your life can be filled with this love.

Let us pray. Oh, Lord, do thou take us by thy power.

[50 : 17] Take us, we pray thee, to thyself, in the exercise of faith, and commitment, and trust, and love. Young and old, here tonight, parents, families, children, oh, Lord, make these things real to us, make them relevant.

Apply them with the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we might thirst for God, the living God, and know that there is a fullness, a fountain of life, at thy right hand, and know that there are pleasures there forevermore.

Oh, do thou save us, we pray thee, from the barrenness of our sinful existence, and bring us into the glory and the wonder, and the fertility of the life that is in Christ, and that is available for all who come.

Part us with thy blessing, have mercy upon us, for thy name's sake. Amen.