3-22-20

John 19:28

“I am thirsty.” What words could better show the humanity of Jesus Christ. Needing to have thirst quenched is such a human condition. God doesn’t have to drink anything; but people do. Yes, Jesus is also God; but the One here hanging on the cross is truly a human-being. He has experienced blood loss, exertion, and hanging in the hot Judean sun. His spirit has just been subjected to the full wrath of God. It makes sense that He was thirsty.

But Jesus didn’t just say this simply because He was thirsty; He had not once complained. As we are told in this verse, He said it in order to fulfill Scripture. Psalm 22 is one of the Messianic Psalms; it applies directly to many of the things that Jesus suffered on the cross. In verse 15 it reads, “My tongue cleaves to my jaws”. All of us know what it is like to be thirsty. We may not have experienced it to this point, but we get the idea. When the moisture is gone, when our mouths are dry, it feels like our tongue sticks to the inside of our mouth. Picture how dry Jesus’ mouth must have been; it would have been hard for Him to even say this. But He still had two things to say that all needed to hear; He needed for His mouth to be moistened.

Psalm 69 is another Psalm regarding suffering and also applies to Jesus. In Verse 21 it says, “They also gave me gall for my food; And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” Matthew 27:34 tells us that they tried to give Jesus wine mixed with gall. This would have deadened His senses during the crucifixion; but He refused to drink it. He chose to drink the full cup of God’s wrath with all His senses fully intact. Now, in John 19:29, right after Jesus said that He was thirsty, someone put a sponge to His mouth that had been soaked in wine vinegar.

Not one little part of God’s word will ever be left unfulfilled. This one verse in Psalm 69 said two things that were going to take place; apparently insignificant, but showing that all of God’s word comes to pass. If little things come to pass, you can bet that the big things will come to pass also. The gall was given to Him as a matter of course in the crucifixion. When He said that He was thirsty, they gave Him vinegar to drink.

There is no doubt that the man Jesus suffered very real physical thirst. But we can also look at His spirit. He had just spent three hours in complete separation from His Father. He longed for the close company of God. In Psalm 42:1-2 we read, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?” He had never known separation from His Father. This was excruciating for Jesus. His soul and spirit ached to return to the Father. Still, He was willing to undergo all this, to give us a chance for salvation.

Even at the end of the abandonment from the Father that He suffered, He remained completely dependent on Him; and obedient. Remember the temptation that Jesus endured in the wilderness immediately after He was baptized. He had fasted for forty days and Scripture tells us He was hungry. Satan’s first attempt was to have Jesus turn the stones into bread, to satisfy His own hunger. If Jesus would have done this, He would have been using His own Godhood instead of depending on the Father to provide for Him. The man Jesus had laid aside His own Godhood and depended entirely on the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Now, at this point in the crucifixion, He could have certainly used His divinity to provide for His own thirst. He could have called forth water or wine or anything else; even simply that the thirst would be gone. But, in obedience to the Father and the work He was sent for, Jesus continued to wait for God’s provision. The provision came, as prophetic fulfillment, in the form of wine vinegar. This would not have been enough to ease His suffering or slake His thirst; but it was enough for Him to utter His last two phrases.

How ironic it is that Jesus would suffer from thirst. It is He who provides living water; water that will quench thirst forever more. Recall John 4, where Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well. Here again, Jesus was thirsty and He asked the woman for a drink. In the discussion that followed, Jesus told the woman that she should have asked Him to give her water, and He would have provided her with living water; receiving this, she would never thirst again.

Of course, she misunderstood Him; but before all was done, the woman and many people of the town came to faith in Christ. Notice that Jesus never did get His drink. He was refreshed by doing the will of His Father.

We even find that Jesus provided water in the Old Testament. I think we are all familiar with the account in Exodus 17: The people were complaining because they had no water. By the command of God, Moses took his staff and struck the rock that God brought him to. Water gushed out of it; enough to satisfy all Israel.

A similar account takes place in Numbers 20. Again, the Israelites complained about the lack of water and again they tested the LORD. This time, God told Moses to speak to the rock so that water would come out. Unfortunately for Moses, instead of speaking to the rock, he struck it with his staff. Water came from the rock, enough for all the people and their animals. But because Moses disobeyed God, he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

It is not until 1 Corinthians 10:4 that we find out what this water had to do with Jesus.

[A]ll drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

This water that the Israelites received in the desert was life giving water from Jesus. It was real water; it quenched their thirst, but more importantly it was spiritual water from a spiritual source; Jesus.

We can see now how these events in the desert tie in with our subject of the crucifixion and why Moses was so severely punished. The rock in the desert was Christ and the first time it brought forth water, Moses was to strike it with his wooden staff. In the same way, Jesus was struck by the wooden cross in the crucifixion. The second time, Moses was not to strike the rock, only speak to it. Jesus’ one crucifixion was entirely sufficient; it never needs to be repeated. Yet Moses struck the rock a second time representing a second crucifixion.

Certainly, Moses had no idea of the significance of what he was doing. But he did disobey the word of God. This is a valuable lesson for us: we need to obey God’s word even when we don’t think it seems that important. We don’t always know what is behind His commands.

We see here in Jesus a complete surrendering of life to God and to the Scriptures. Even after all He had been through, even still hanging on the cross, He was conscious of prophecy and desired to fill it. He ordered all of His life to God’s word. He was the living Word of God.

Christians are called to this same dedication to God and to Scripture. We must constantly ask ourselves, “*Is the Bible our guidance in all of life?*” It needs to be. The Bible isn’t just for church and some devotions throughout the week. It should be foundational in every decision we make. It applies to being a husband or wife; mother or father; it applies to being a child in a family. The principles in the Bible should guide us in business, social settings, and every interaction we have with others. Why? Because we are citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Being citizens of the Kingdom of God and subjects of Jesus Christ our King, has an interesting effect on our trying to live this way. The more we try to follow Christ, the more we want to. It becomes a thirst for us. Following the lifestyle shown in the Bible becomes a joy; although sometimes difficult, it is not a burden. The more we follow Christ, the more we want to; this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

As fallen human-beings, our natural desire is to reject the things of the Bible. But once we accept Jesus by the faith the Holy Spirit gives us, He helps us to turn away from the things of the world. Here is where we must not quench the Holy Spirit. Our flesh will resist Him. But the more we give Him room to work, the more we become like Jesus, and the more we desire to live out God’s word.

It is amazing how this works. Jesus does provide us with living water so that we never thirst again. But at the same time, we develop another thirst. Because we all start off spiritually dead due to sin, we have something missing in our lives that we long for; that we thirst for. That something missing is God. People spend their lives trying to fill that longing. They seek money, power, fame, love; they turn to drugs, alcohol, sex; even idolatrous religious activities. But that thirst will never go away until they turn to Christ.

Once turned to Christ, that longing for what’s missing is gone. It’s gone because the relationship with God has been reestablished and our spirits have been reborn; they are alive again. But a new thirst does emerge. This thirst is not bad or unpleasant. It’s a desire to come closer to Christ and follow His commands out of love. And here is where we find that unending stream of spiritual water that flows from Jesus. We can drink as much as we want, without cost. There is none of the misery of being thirsty, just the pleasure of drinking in more of our Saviour.

It is also comforting to us to realize that there is a way in which Jesus also still thirsts. He desires us to be with Him. He made it possible for all of our sins to be erased so that we could spend eternity in His presence. He wants us to be with Him. He will not turn away any who come to Him. In everything we face in our lives, turn to Him; He is there with outstretched arms and a smile.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You endured a terrible physical thirst on our behalf; even more, You suffered a horrible spiritual thirst in being separated from Your Father; again, on our behalf. In You and in what You have done, we see the perfect example of obedience and love; love for God and love for us.

We pray that You would make us more like You in obedience to God. One of God’s commands was to listen to You. Jesus, open our ears that we may truly hear You and also live as You command us. Make us more like You in love. Help us to show our love for You by following Your commands. Give us also that love for others that You want us to have.

We praise almighty God, that You will never again suffer as You did on that cross. The Bible tells us that Your one act was perfect and sufficient to satisfy the Father’s wrath on our behalf and to bring us into fellowship with You for eternity. One day, we will happily bend the knee before You and proclaim You Lord.

We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus

Amen