

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH
THE PIONEER BAPTIST

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THIRSTING FOR GOD

By: C. D. Cole

Psalm 42:1-2, *“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”*

Thirst is a word that describes the deepest desire and the most intense longing of the human body. There is no craving like the craving for water. There is no physical need like the need for water. Man can live a long time without food, but not long without water. The deer, tired and hot from being chased by the dogs, pants after the water brooks. The expiring cry of the soldier on the blood-soaked battlefield is the call for water. The hopeless petition of the rich man in Hades was for a little water. The first word of the patient coming out from under the anesthetic, following the operation, is the cry for water.

Genesis 21:14-19, *“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.”*

Man is more than body and has more than physical needs. He is composed of matter and mind, or as we prefer to say, body and spirit. There is something about man that is invisible, and this invisible part of him has its needs. There is an inner man and an outward man; a visible man and an invisible man in one person. This distinguishes man from the beast. The beast is a lower order of sentient life and has only physical needs. Man is a higher order of sentient life and has more needs than the beast. Man has a larger capacity and therefore has deeper needs. Man has a capacity for God and therefore needs God to satisfy him. Man has an inward craving. He thirsts for something more than food and water. These things satisfy the beast but not man made in the image and likeness of God and with a capacity for God.

Thirst is used to describe the craving of the soul or the inner man. And soul blessings or spiritual blessings are represented in the Bible under the figure of water. Isaiah is speaking of blessings for the inner man, Isaiah 55:1, *“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”* Our Lord was referring to spiritual blessings under the figure of water when He said to the woman at Jacob’s well: John 4:13-14, *“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the*

water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” And again it was to spiritual blessings He referred when at the feast of Tabernacles, He stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.



Thirst describes the most intense longing of the human body, the craving of the soul; and denotes the dependency of man.

Thirst is a word that denotes the dependency of man. Man is not self-sufficient and independent. He must look out of himself for his needs. All creatures have their needs. Otherwise every creature would be a God. We never read of God thirsting. He alone knows nothing of need. He is self-sufficient and independent. He carries within Himself all that is needed for satisfaction. But not so with man. Man does not have springs within himself from which he can slake the thirst of soul. All supplies for the human soul must come from God. Psalm 107:8-9, *“Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”*

Let us consider the thirst of the human soul in three states or conditions of existence:

State of Nature or The Fallen State

In his natural or fallen state man has an unconscious and unsatisfied thirst or longing after God. Every man has a soul that thirsts for God. No man is made to be satisfied from himself. For the comfort of our own hearts, for the satisfying of our own nature, for the joy and strength of our being, we must go beyond ourselves and fix our hope upon something external to

ourselves. "I thirst," is the voice of every man.

But here is a sad fact. Man in his natural state, man without the Spirit of God, misinterprets the thirst of his soul. He cannot say, "My soul thirsteth for God." This is indeed what his soul thirsts for, but he does not know it. Sin has ruined human judgment and the unbeliever thinks he can get along without God. He is mistaken as to the crying needs of the soul. The sinner thinks his soul is crying for things, and that it will be satisfied with things, and when he gets the things they are as ashes in the mouth, and the soul still cries out in its thirst. The sinner takes the wrong medicine for his soul's needs. Like Adam and Eve in the long ago; he takes Satan's prescription for a soul happiness rather than God's. He goes to Satan's mud-paddles to slake his thirst instead of to the water of life provided by God in Christ. God pleading with the Jews, Jeremiah 2:13, "*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.*" The sinner forsakes God. Fallen human nature is in a state of unrest, panting, and desperately thirsty, and deceiving itself as to where it should go to slake its thirst.

Think of what men do in an effort to satisfy the longing of their souls. Some think that soul rest can be found in wealth, and so they dedicate all their powers to the service of mammon, and perhaps get their coveted prize – they become rich. But are they satisfied? No; Ecclesiastes 5:10, "*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.*" Others think that soul satisfaction comes through the eye. They frequent the movies, they travel and look upon works of human achievement; they gaze upon the wonders of nature; but they are not satisfied. Ecclesiastes 1:8, "*...the eye is not satisfied with seeing,...*" Some search for satisfaction in the fashions of the age. "I can't die, I can't die," said a woman who was fatally injured in a train wreck. "I can't die," she cried again, and added, "I have never yet begun to live; all I have ever done has been to lead the fashion." In these words she admitted that soul rest had not been found in the ways of the world. I Timothy 5:6, Paul says, "*But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.*"

God who made us is the only One who can satisfy us, Psalm 107:9, "*For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.*" Soul rest is to be found in a person, not in things. God's satisfying portion is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. To the longing soul our Lord met the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, John 4:10, "*Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*"

*"Fade, fade each earthly joy, Jesus is mine
Break every tender tie, Jesus is mine.
Dark is the wilderness, Earth has no resting place,
Jesus alone can bless, Jesus is mine.*

*Tempt not my soul away, Jesus is mine;
Here would I ever stay, Jesus is mine.
Perishing things of clay, Born but for one brief day,
Pass from my heart away; Jesus is mine.*

*Farewell ye dreams of night, Jesus is mine;
Lost in this dawning bright, Jesus is mine;
All that my soul has tried, Left but a dismal void;
Jesus has satisfied; Jesus is mine."*

The Jewish feast of Tabernacles, commemorative of Israel's wilderness life, was supposed to be a happy occasion. The people were to rejoice before the Lord seven days. Our Lord attended one of these feasts, and knowing the longing of the human heart and knowing the emptiness of ceremonial religion, John 7:37-38, "*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*" In scripture belly stands for the desires of the inner man, the longing of the human soul. Our Saviour promised a full and overflowing cup to all who would look to Him for satisfaction.

Do I speak to somebody today whose soul thirst has never been satisfied? Somebody in whose heart there is an aching void? Let me ask, have you ever tried the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you ever looked upon Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world? Have you ever trusted Him as the One who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? God says that there is eternal life in His Son. Do you believe it? No sinner can save himself. God does not ask a sinner to do anything to save himself. Christ died to save sinners. He bare the sins of sinners in His own body on the tree. He can put the guilt of sin away because He paid its penalty with His own blood. John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" This is why we tell you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. May the Spirit cause you to do it now!

Every man who is not trusting Christ is thirsting after God, and not knowing it, his thirst is not satisfied. They do not know the truth about their soul needs. If thou knewest the gift of God, you would hurry to Him and find rest.

State of Grace or After Regeneration

In the state of grace there is a conscious, imperfect longing that is answered. David was in a state of grace, when he said, "*My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God...*" He knew God, but was away from the temple where God's presence was seen in the shekinah glory. He was craving the manifest presence of God. He wanted to be closer to God. He wanted to behold His beauty and to inquire in his temple. David was in a state of spiritual depression, and this is the healthy state of the soul. Jesus teaching the multitudes, Matthew 5:2-4,6, "*And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*" There is one sense in which the believer is satisfied, and another sense in which he is not satisfied. He is satisfied with God, but he is not satisfied with what he has of God. He longs for more of the Divine fulness. Does anyone ask how we harmonize the words of Christ to the woman when He said, "*...whosoever drin-*

ket of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; ...” with the beatitudes we have just quoted? This way – the soul that trusts Christ for salvation is satisfied with Christ and will never search for another Saviour; but at the same time is dissatisfied with self, and mourns over his sins. While rejoicing in Christ and His imputed righteousness, the believer is thirsting after personal and practical righteousness. While rich in Christ, the believer is poor in spirit. While rejoicing in Christ the believer is grieved with himself. He is sick of self and fond of Christ.

Frances R. Havergal (1836-1879), has put the experiences of the believer in verse:

*“We could not do without Thee, O Saviour of the lost,
Whose precious blood redeemed us, At such tremendous cost:
Thy righteousness, Thy pardon, Thy precious blood must be
Our only hope and comfort, Our glory and our plea.*

*We could not do without Thee! We cannot stand alone,
We have no strength or goodness, No wisdom of our own.
How could we do without Thee? We do not know the way;
Thou knowest and Thou leadest, And wilt not let us stray.*

*We could not do without Thee, O Jesus, Saviour dear!
E'en when our eyes are holden, We know that Thou art near.
How dreary and how lonely This changeful life would be,
Without the sweet communion, The secret rest in Thee.”*

State of Glory or The Sinless State

In the sinless and glorified and heavenly state, there will be a perfect longing perfectly satisfied. The believer in Christ will never be self-sufficient and independent. He will always need constant filling from the fulness of God. Of that future life in glory with its continual longing after God and its immediate and perpetual filling from God, we can do no better than to quote from Alexander MacLaren, the great English preacher and expositor: He says:

“That future life gives us two elements, an infinite God, and an indefinitely expansible human spirit; an infinite God to fill, and a soul to be filled, the measure and capacity of which has no limit set to it that we can see. What will be the consequence of the contact of these two? Why this, for the first thing, that always at every moment of that blessed life, there shall be a perpetual fruition, a perpetual satisfaction, a deep and full fountain filling the whole soul with the refreshment of its waves and the music of its flow. And yet, and yet – though at every moment in heaven we shall be satisfied, filled full of God, full to overflowing in all our powers – yet the very fact that the God who dwells in us,

and fills our whole natures with unsullied and perfect blessedness, is an infinite God; and that we in whom the infinite Father dwells are men with souls that can grow, and can grow forever – will result in this, that at every moment our capacities will expand; that at every moment, therefore, the desire will grow and spring afresh; that at every moment God will be seen unveiling undreamed-of beauties, and revealing hitherto unknown heights of blessedness before us: and that at the sight of that transcendent, unapproached, unapproachable, and yet attracting and transforming glory, will draw us onward as by an impulse from above, and the possession of some portion of it will bear us upward as by a power from within; and so, nearer, nearer, ever nearer to the throne of light, the centre of blessedness, the growing, and glorifying and greatening souls of the perfectly and increasing blessed shall ‘mount up with wings as eagles. Heaven is endless longing, accompanied with endless fruition – a longing which is blessedness.”

What MacLaren is saying is that in the glory the cups of our capacity for God and for happiness will get larger and larger and larger and will always be filled to overflowing. How seldom are we ever in such a state of ecstasy that we can say that our cup is running over. David wrote many Psalms but in only one do we read where he said, “My cup runneth over.” But in the glory our soul will always be like cups running over.

In South America there is a strange plant that is called the pitcher plant. Under each leaf on the stalk there is a cup-like formation which is always filled with water. It is full when the plant is small; it is full as the plant gets larger; and it is still full when the plant is grown. In heaven our cup of joy will never fail us. Like the pitcher plant we may continue to grow in our capacity for God, but just as fast as we grow and our thirst for God increases, this thirst will be immediately and perfectly satisfied.

John’s description of the home of the saints, Revelation 21:1-7, “*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of*

God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away, And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

Then John describes another company of people and shows us their eternal dwelling place. Verse 8, “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*” This is for those who forget God; for those who scorn salvation provided by Him in the gift of His Son; for those who do not consciously thirst for God.

Thank God, that we shall always need Him. We need Him now, and we have Him, but our cups are so small that we do not seem to have much of Him. But we know Him and thirst for a closer walk with Him. We anticipate the coming day when we shall be filled with all the fulness of God. In the meantime we sing:

*“Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens – Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers sail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!*

*Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day,
Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me.*

*I need thy presence every passing hour,
What but thy grace can foil the tempter’s power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!*

*Hold Thou the cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heaven’s morning breaks, and earth’s vain shadows flee!
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!”*



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31st Annual

MISSION BIBLE CONFERENCE
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Please note date change!

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