
One Personal Request

*“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth” (John 19:28, 29).
“Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink . . .” (Mark 15:36).*

Toward the end of His lingering death on the cross, John wrote that Jesus cried, “I am thirsty.” Because the Greek pronoun is given in the ending of the verb, our Lord was able to use a single word to make His statement. He uttered the word *διψᾶω* (*dipsao*), a verb that is translated with two English words, “I thirst” (John 19:28; KJV).

This is the only time that Jesus spoke of any of His own physical needs from the cross. He thought only of others until His work of redemption had been finished.

It is common knowledge that one of the excruciating agonies of crucifixion was the terrible thirst that accompanied the blood loss, the dehydration, and the exposure to the blazing Judean sun. Earlier, Jesus had been offered a drink of drugged wine, wine that had been mixed with myrrh, to dull His senses to the pain of crucifixion, but had He refused to drink it (Mark 15:23). He wanted to be as clear-headed as possible as He experienced the tortures of the cross. However, near the end of His six hours of pain, He spoke of a different type of drink, one that would moisten His parched lips and wet His swollen tongue so that He could at least utter His final words audibly enough to be understood.

The coming of the three hours of darkness upon the land must have silenced the crowd that had viciously cried for Him to work a miracle and come down from the cross. Matthew wrote that “from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour” (Matthew 27:45). That is, from 12 noon until 3 o’clock, darkness

was draped by God’s hand over Jerusalem and the surrounding area. Hugo McCord wrote, “For the saddest event in history, God miraculously removed the cheer of sunlight and placed the mantle of mourning over his world.”¹ Those who remained at the cross surely were mystified and astonished by the dark blanket that covered them throughout the afternoon.

As the ninth hour drew near, Jesus gathered His energy and cried out (see Matthew 27:46, 50; Mark 15:34), uttering the words of a psalm that pictured the situation that He had experienced: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1). His journey through the hellish sacrifice of carrying the burden of our sin had been a solitary one. He had walked through the fires of eternal judgment carrying upon His shoulders a weight that no mortal man can envision. As He emerged from it, and as the darkness lifted, He followed His psalmic quotation with a declaration of His physical condition. He said, “I am thirsty.”

What is evident in this statement?

First, we see in it His incarnation. The human Jesus was thirsty. The God of glory does not get thirsty. The angels of heaven do not thirst. However, men who go too long without life-sustaining water develop a burning thirst. These words tell us with vividness and pathos that Jesus was human. He had likely gone eighteen hours without any water, and His body was crying out for it.

¹Hugo McCord, “The Crucifixion of Christ,” *Fifty Years of Lectures* (Atwood, Tenn.: By the author, n.d.), 199.

He had come to the earth to be one of us. He was both fully man and fully God. He was the perfect, sinless man whom God had sent to be the sacrifice for sin; but He was also the second member of the Godhead. He had to be both in order to carry the weight of the sin of the world.

Second, in His words we see a revelation about the sacrifice of Jesus. In the greatest ordeal of history, Jesus had placed His physical condition last. Great mental concentration had been necessary. In facing the devil in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry, He had been too involved in His commitment to His earthly mission to think about eating. On the cross He was so caught up in the sacrifice that He was fulfilling that He pushed the physical discomfort out of His mind. He did not speak of His physical agony until He had completed the spiritual conquest of sin. The apex of Jesus' spiritual agonies on the cross was His experience of being forsaken by His Father. Once He had endured that agony, He referred to His most excruciating physical suffering, thirst.

Third, we see reflected in these words the propitiation of our sins. John wrote, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished . . ." (John 19:28a). What did Jesus know at this point? Everything necessary for Him to complete His work of redemption had been accomplished. He had fulfilled the prophecies about His death; He had provided atonement for the sins of the human race. The task had been completed. Almost with His next breath, Jesus would utter, "It is finished!"

Fourth, we see divine verification in His words. We are told that this was done so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. John wrote, "... to fulfill the Scripture, [Jesus] said, 'I am thirsty'" (John 19:28b). Only at the completion of His sacrifice did He turn His attention to His physical thirst. Then, in order that the predictions of the Old Testament Scriptures might be fulfilled in His death, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

When Jesus mentioned His thirst, He may have been thinking of Psalm 69:21: "They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." As He had quoted Psalm 22 to picture His forsaken condition, He may have recalled the words of Psalm 69 in connection with His burning thirst. It could

well be that Jesus said this knowing that He was fulfilling the psalmic picture.

John may not have been referring to the fulfillment of a specific prophecy, but to the general completion of all that had been predicted. Whether this reference is to a group of prophecies or to a particular prophecy, Jesus waited until the fulfillment was realized before He turned His mind to His physical condition. His intense physical suffering had been forgotten in the awful mental anguish of being identified with our sin and being separated from His Father as He bore the burden of the world's sin.

Mark 15:36 says that someone, maybe one of the soldiers, ran over to a jar of sour wine, soaked a sponge full of the wine, attached it to the end of a stalk of hyssop, and raised it to Jesus' lips. According to the verb that is used, whoever lifted it to Jesus' lips must have pressed it several times against His lips.

Jesus' cry of thirst immediately followed His quotation of Psalm 22:1: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (see Matthew 27:46). Some of those who had remained at the cross thought that His prayer to God, "Eli," was a call for Elijah to come and rescue Him. Mark indicated that the one who gave Him the sour wine said with the group, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down."

With one Greek word, Jesus made an announcement, uttered an affirmation, or perhaps made a request. In His fifth statement from the cross, we see His incarnation, a revelation, the propitiation of sin, and the fulfillment of prophecy. He would speak two more times, to announce His victory and to surrender His spirit unto the Father. Then He would permit His body to die.

Eddie Cloer



Jesus cried, "I am thirsty," so that you and I would never have to make such a cry in this life or in the life to come.

"Jesus answered and said to her, '... but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life'" (John 4:13, 14).