THE SHORTEST OF THE SEVEN CRIES

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON
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"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."
John 19:28

IT was most fitting that every word of our Lord upon the cross should be gathered up and preserved. As not a bone of Him shall be broken, so not a word shall be lost. The Holy Spirit took special care that each of the sacred utterances should be fittingly recorded. There were, as you know, seven of those last words, and seven is the number of perfection and fullness, the number which blends the three of the infinite God with the four of complete creation. Our Lord in His death-cries, as in all else, was perfection itself.

There is a fullness of meaning in each utterance which no human shall be able fully to bring forth, and when combined they make up a vast deep of thought, which no human line can fathom. Here, as everywhere else, we are constrained to say of our Lord, "Never man spake like this man." Amid all the anguish of His spirit His last words prove Him to have remained fully self-possessed, true to His forgiving nature, true to His kingly office, true to His filial relationship, true to His God, true to His love of the written word, true to His glorious work, and true to His faith in His Father.

As these seven sayings were so faithfully recorded, we do not wonder that they have frequently been the subject of devout meditation. Fathers and confessors, preachers and divines have delighted to dwell upon every syllable of these matchless cries. These solemn sentences have shone like the seven golden candlesticks or the seven stars of the Apocalypse, and have lighted multitudes of men to Him who spoke them.

Thoughtful men have drawn a wealth of meaning from them, and in so doing have arranged them into different groups, and placed them under several heads. I cannot give you more than a mere taste of this rich subject, but I have been most struck with two ways of regarding our Lord's last words.

First, they teach and confirm many of the doctrines of our holy faith. "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" is the first. Here is the forgiveness of sin—free forgiveness in answer to the Savior's plea.

"*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*." Here is the safety of the believer in the hour of his departure, and his instant admission into the presence of his Lord. It is a blow at the fable of "purgatory" which strikes it to the heart.

"*Woman, behold thy son*!" This very plainly sets forth the true and proper humanity of Christ, who to the end, recognized His human relationship to Mary, of whom He was born. Yet His language teaches us not to worship *her*, for He calls her "woman," but to honor Him who in His direst agony thought of her needs and griefs, as He also thinks of all His people, for these are His mother and sister and brother.

"*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*?" is the fourth cry, and it illustrates the penalty endured by our Substitute when He bore our sins, and so was forsaken of His God. The sharpness of that sentence no exposition can fully disclose to us, it is keen as the very edge and point of the sword which pierced His heart.

"*I thirst*," is the fifth cry, and its utterance teaches us the truth of Scripture, for all things were accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and therefore our Lord said, "I thirst." Holy Scripture remains the basis of our faith, established by every word and act of our Redeemer.

The last word but one is, "*It is finished*." There is the complete justification of the believer, since the work by which he is accepted is fully accomplished.

The last of His last words is also taken from the Scriptures, and shows where His mind was feeding. He cried, ere He bowed the head which He had held erect amid all His conflict, as one who never yielded, "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*." In that cry there is reconciliation to God. He who stood in our stead has finished all His work, and now His spirit comes back to the Father, and He brings us with Him. Every word, therefore, teaches us some grand fundamental doctrine of our blessed faith. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

A second mode of treating these seven cries is to view them as setting forth the person and offices of our Lord who uttered them. "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*"—here we see the Mediator interceding, Jesus standing before the Father pleading for the guilty. "*Verily I say unto thee, today shall thou be with me in paradise*"—this is the Lord Jesus in kingly power, opening with the key of David a door which none can shut, admitting into the gates of heaven the poor soul who had confessed Him on the tree.

Hail, everlasting King in heaven, You do admit to Your paradise whomsoever You will! Nor do You set a time for waiting, but instantly You set wide the gate of pearl. You have all power in heaven as well as upon earth.

Then came, "*Woman, behold thy son*!" wherein we see the Son of man in the gentleness of a son caring for His bereaved mother. In the former cry, as He opened paradise, you saw the Son of God. Now you see Him who was verily and truly born of a woman, made under the law. And under the law you see Him still, for He honors His mother and cares for her in the last article of death.

Then comes the, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*?" Here we behold His human soul in anguish, His inmost heart overwhelmed by the withdrawing of JEHOVAH's face, and made to cry out as if in perplexity and amazement.

"*I thirst*," is His human *body* tormented by grievous pain. Here you see how the mortal flesh had to share in the agony of the inward spirit. "*It is finished*" is the last word but one, and there you see the perfected Savior, the Captain of our salvation, who has completed the undertaking upon which He had entered, finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness.

The last expiring word, in which He *commended His spirit to His Father*, is the note of acceptance for Himself and for us all. As He commends His spirit into the Father's hand, so does He bring all believers nigh to God, and henceforth we are in the hand of the Father, who is greater than all, and none shall pluck us thence. Is not this a fertile field of thought? May the Holy Spirit often lead us to glean therein.

There are many other ways in which these words might be read, and they would be found to be all full of instruction. Like the steps of a ladder or the links of a golden chain, there is a mutual dependence and interlinking of each of the cries, so that one leads to another and that to a third. Separately or in connection our Master's words overflow with instruction to thoughtful minds, but of all save one I must say, "Of which we cannot now speak particularly."

Our text is the shortest of all the words of Calvary. It stands as two words in our language—"I thirst," but in the Greek it is only one. I cannot say that it is short and sweet, for, alas, it was bitterness itself to our Lord Jesus. And yet out of its bitterness I trust there will come great sweetness to us. Though bitter to Him in the speaking it will be sweet to us in the hearing—so sweet that all the bitterness of our trials shall be forgotten as we remember the vinegar and gall of which He drank.

We shall by the assistance of the Holy Spirit try to regard these words of our Savior in a five-fold light.

I. First, we shall look upon them as THE ENSIGN OF HIS TRUE HUMANITY.

Jesus said, "I thirst," and this is the complaint of a man. Our Lord is the Maker of the ocean and the waters that are above the firmament, it is His hand that stays or opens the bottles of heaven, and sends rain upon the evil and upon the good. "The sea is his, and he made it," and all fountains and springs are

of His digging. He pours out the streams that run among the hills, the torrents which rush adown the mountains, and the flowing rivers which enrich the plains.

One would have said, "If He were thirsty He would not tell us, for all the clouds and rains would be glad to refresh His brow, and the brooks and streams would joyously flow at His feet." And yet, though He was Lord of all, He had so fully taken upon Himself the form of a servant and was so perfectly made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that He cried with fainting voice, "I thirst."

How truly man He is. He is, indeed, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," for He bears our infirmities. I invite you to meditate upon the true humanity of our Lord very reverently, and very lovingly. Jesus was proved to be really man because He suffered the pains which belong to manhood. Angels cannot suffer thirst. A phantom, as some have called Him, could not suffer in this fashion, but Jesus really suffered, not only the more refined pains of delicate and sensitive minds, but the rougher and common pangs of flesh and blood.

Thirst is a common-place misery, such as may happen to peasants or beggars. It is a real pain, and not a thing of a fancy or a nightmare of dreamland. Thirst is no royal grief, but an evil of universal manhood. Jesus is brother to the poorest and most humble of our race. Our Lord, however, endured thirst to an extreme degree, for it was the thirst of death which was upon Him, and more, it was the thirst of one whose death was not a common one, for "He tasted death for every man."

That thirst was caused, perhaps, in part by the loss of blood, and by the fever created by the irritation caused by His four grievous wounds. The nails were fastened in the most sensitive parts of the body, and the wounds were widened as the weight of His body dragged the nails through His blessed flesh and tore His tender nerves.

The extreme tension produced a burning feverishness. It was pain that dried His mouth and made it like an oven, till He declared, in the language of the twenty-second psalm, "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws." It was a thirst such as none of us have ever known, for not yet has the death dew condensed upon our brows. We shall perhaps know it in our measure in our dying hour, but not yet, nor ever so terribly as He did.

Our Lord felt that grievous drought of dissolution by which all moisture seems dried up, and the flesh returns to the dust of death. This those know who have commenced to tread the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus, being a man, escaped none of the ills which are allotted to man in death. He is indeed "Immanuel, God with us" everywhere.

Believing this, let us tenderly feel how very near akin to us our Lord Jesus has become. You have been ill, and you have been parched with fever as He was, and then you too have gasped out "I thirst." Your path runs hard by that of your Master. He said, "I thirst," in order that someone might bring Him drink, even as you have wished to have a cooling draught handed to you when you could not help yourself.

Can you help feeling how very near Jesus is to us when His lips must be moistened with a sponge, and He must be so dependent upon others as to ask for a drink from their hands? Next time your fevered lips murmur, "I am very thirsty," you may say to yourself, "Those are sacred words, for my Lord spoke in that fashion."

The words, "I thirst," are a common voice in death chambers. We can never forget the painful scenes of which we have been witness, when we have watched the dissolving of the human frame. Some of those whom we loved very dearly we have seen quite unable to help themselves. The death sweat has been upon them, and this has been one of the marks of their approaching dissolution, that they have been parched with thirst and could only mutter between their half-closed lips, "Give me a drink."

Ah, beloved, our Lord was so truly man that all our griefs remind us of Him, the next time we are thirsty we may gaze upon Him. And whenever we see a friend faint and thirsting while dying we may behold our Lord dimly, but truly, mirrored in his members. How near akin the thirsty Savior is to us. Let us love Him more and more.

How great the love which led Him to such a condescension as this! Do not let us forget the infinite distance between the Lord of glory on His throne and the Crucified dried up with thirst. A river of the water of life, pure as crystal, proceeds today out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and yet once He condescended to say, "I thirst." He is Lord of fountains and all deeps, but not a cup of cold water was placed to His lips.

Oh, if He had at any time said, "I thirst," before His angelic guards, they would surely have emulated the courage of the men of David, when they cut their way to the well of Bethlehem that was within the gate, and drew water in jeopardy of their lives.

Who among us would not willingly pour out his soul unto death if he might but give refreshment to the Lord? And yet He placed Himself for our sakes into a position of shame and suffering where none would wait upon Him, but when He cried, "I thirst," they gave Him vinegar to drink. Glorious stoop of our exalted Head! O Lord Jesus, we love You and we worship You! We would fain lift Your name on high in grateful remembrance of the depths to which You did descend!

While thus we admire His condescension let our thoughts also turn with delight to His sure sympathy, for if Jesus said, "I thirst," then He knows all our frailties and woes. The next time we are in pain or are suffering depression of spirit we will remember that our Lord understands it all, for He has had practical, personal experience of it. Neither in torture of body nor in sadness of heart are we deserted by our Lord, His line is parallel with ours.

The arrow which has lately pierced you, my brother, was first stained with His blood. The cup of which you are made to drink, though it be very bitter, bears the marks of His lips about its brim. He has traversed the mournful way before you, and every footprint you leave in the sodden soil is stamped side by side with His footmarks. Let the sympathy of Christ, then, be fully believed in and deeply appreciated, since He said, "I thirst."

Henceforth, also, let us cultivate the spirit of resignation, for we may well rejoice to carry a cross which His shoulders have borne before us. Beloved, if our Master said, "I thirst," do we expect every day to drink of streams from Lebanon? He was innocent, and yet He thirsted, shall we marvel if guilty ones are now and then chastened?

If He were so poor that His garments were stripped from Him, and He was hung up upon the tree, penniless and friendless, hungering and thirsting, will you henceforth groan and murmur because you bear the yoke of poverty and want? There is bread upon your table, today, and there will be at least a cup of cold water to refresh you. You are not, therefore, so poor as He. Complain not, then. Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? Let patience have her perfect work. You do suffer.

Perhaps, dear sister, you carry about with you a gnawing disease which eats at your heart, but Jesus took our sicknesses, and His cup was more bitter than yours. In your chamber let the gasp of your Lord as He said, "I thirst," go through your ears, and as you hear it let it touch your heart and cause you to gird up yourself and say, "Does He say, 'I thirst'? Then I will thirst with Him and not complain, I will suffer with Him and not murmur." The Redeemer's cry of "I thirst" is a solemn lesson of patience to His afflicted.

Once again, as we think of this, "I thirst," which proves our Lord's humanity, let us resolve to shun no denials, but rather court them that we may be conformed to His image. May we not be half ashamed of our pleasures when *He* says, "I thirst"? May we not despise our loaded table while *He* is so neglected? Shall it ever be a hardship to be denied the satisfying draught when *He* said, "I thirst"? Shall carnal appetites be indulged and bodies pampered when Jesus cried, "I thirst"?

What if the bread be dry, what if the medicine be nauseous, yet for His thirst there was no relief but gall and vinegar, and dare we complain? For His sake we may rejoice in self-denials and accept Christ and a crust as all we desire between here and heaven.

A Christian living to indulge the base appetites of a brute beast, to eat and to drink almost to gluttony and drunkenness, is utterly unworthy of the name. The conquest of the appetites, the entire subjugation of the flesh, must be achieved, for before our great Exemplar said, "It is finished," wherein I think He

reached the greatest height of all, He stood as only upon the next lower step to that elevation and said, "I thirst."

The power to suffer for another, the capacity to be self-denying even to an extreme to accomplish some great work for God—this is a thing to be sought after, and must be gained before our work is done, and in this Jesus is before us as our example and our strength.

Thus have I tried to spy out a measure of teaching, by using that one glass for the soul's eye, through which we look upon "I thirst" as the ensign of His true humanity.

II. Secondly, we shall regard these words, "I thirst," as THE TOKEN OF HIS SUFFERING SUBSTITUTION.

The great Surety says, "I thirst," because He is placed in the sinner's stead, and He must therefore undergo the penalty of sin for the ungodly. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" points to the anguish of His soul. "I thirst" expresses in part the torture of His body, and they were both needful, because it is written of the God of justice that He is "able to destroy both soul and body in hell," and the pangs that are due to law are of both kinds, touching both heart and flesh.

See, brethren, where sin begins, and mark that there it ends. It began with the mouth of appetite, when it was sinfully gratified, and it ends when a kindred appetite is graciously denied. Our first parents plucked forbidden fruit, and by eating slew the race. Appetite was the door of sin, and therefore in that point our Lord was put to pain. With "I thirst" the evil is destroyed and receives its expiation.

I saw the other day the emblem of a serpent with its tail in its mouth, and if I carry it a little beyond the artist's intention the symbol may set forth appetite swallowing up itself. A carnal appetite of the body, the satisfaction of the desire for food, first brought us down under the first Adam, and now the pang of thirst, the denial of what the body craved for, restores us to our place.

Nor is this all. We know from experience that the present effect of sin in every man who indulges in it is thirst of soul. The mind of man is like the daughters of the horseleech, which cry forever "Give, give." Metaphorically understood, thirst is dissatisfaction, the craving of the mind for something which it has not, but which it pines for. Our Lord says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," that thirst being the result of sin in every ungodly man at this moment.

Now Christ standing in the stead of the ungodly suffers thirst as a type of His enduring the result of sin. More solemn still is the reflection that according to our Lord's own teaching, thirst will also be the eternal result of sin, for He says concerning the rich glutton, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment," and his prayer, which was denied him, was, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

Now recollect, if Jesus had not thirsted, every one of us would have thirsted forever afar off from God, with an impassable gulf between us and heaven. Our sinful tongues, blistered by the fever of passion, must have burned forever had not His tongue been tormented with thirst in our stead.

I suppose that the "I thirst" was uttered softly, so that perhaps only one and another who stood near the cross heard it at all, in contrast with the louder cry of "*Lama sabachthani*" and the triumphant shout of "It is finished." But that soft, expiring sigh, "I thirst," has ended for us the thirst which else, insatiably fierce, had preyed upon us throughout eternity. Oh, wondrous substitution of the just for the unjust, of God for man, of the perfect Christ for us guilty, hell-deserving rebels. Let us magnify and bless our Redeemer's name.

It seems to me very wonderful that this "I thirst" should be, as it were, the clearance of it all. He had no sooner said "I thirst," and sipped the vinegar, than He shouted, "It is finished," and all was over. The battle was fought and the victory won forever, and our great Deliverer's thirst was the sign of His having smitten the last foe. The flood of His grief had passed the high-water mark, and began to be assuaged. The "I thirst" was the bearing of the last pang, what if I say it was the expression of the fact that His pangs had at last begun to cease, and their fury had spent itself, and left Him able to note His lesser pains?

The excitement of a great struggle makes men forget thirst and faintness. It is only when all is over that they come back to themselves and note the spending of their strength. The great agony of being forsaken by God was over, and He felt faint when the strain was withdrawn. I like to think of our Lord's saying, "It is finished," directly after He had exclaimed, "I thirst," because these two voices come so naturally together.

Our glorious Samson had been fighting our foes. Heaps upon heaps He had slain His thousands, and now like Samson He was sore athirst. He sipped of the vinegar and He was refreshed, and no sooner has He thrown off the thirst than He shouted like a conqueror, "It is finished," and quitted the field, covered with renown. Let us exult as we see our Substitute going through with His work even to the bitter end, and then with a "Consummatum est" returning to His Father, God. O souls, burdened with sin, rest ye here, and resting live.

III. We will now take the text in a third way, and may the Spirit of God instruct us once again. The utterance of "I thirst" brought out A TYPE OF MAN'S TREATMENT OF HIS LORD.

It was a confirmation of the Scripture testimony with regard to man's natural enmity to God. According to modern thought man is a very fine and noble creature, struggling to become better. He is greatly to be commended and admired, for his sin is said to be a seeking after God, and his superstition is a struggling after light. Great and worshipful being that he is, truth is to be altered for him, the Gospel is to be modulated to suit the tone of his various generations, and all the arrangements of the universe are to be rendered subservient to his interests.

Justice must fly the field lest it be severe to so deserving a being. As for punishment, it must not be whispered to his ears polite. In fact, the tendency is to exalt man above God and give him the highest place. But such is not the truthful estimate of man according to the Scriptures, there man is a fallen creature, with a carnal mind which cannot be reconciled to God. A worse than brutish creature, rendering evil for good, and treating his God with vile ingratitude.

Alas, man is the slave and the dupe of Satan, and a black-hearted traitor to his God. Did not the prophecies say that man would give to his incarnate God gall to eat and vinegar to drink? It is done. He came to save, and man denied Him hospitality. At first there was no room for Him at the inn, and at the last there was not one cool cup of water for Him to drink. But when He thirsted they gave Him vinegar to drink. This is man's treatment of His Savior.

Universal manhood, left to itself, rejects, crucifies, and mocks the Christ of God. This was the act too of man at his best, when he is moved to pity, for it seems clear that he who lifted up the wet sponge to the Redeemer's lips did it in compassion. I think that Roman soldier meant well, at least well for a rough warrior with his little light and knowledge. He ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, it was the best way he knew of putting a few drops of moisture to the lips of one who was suffering so much. But though he felt a degree of pity, it was such as one might show to a dog. He felt no reverence, but mocked as he relieved.

We read, "The soldiers also mocked him, offering him vinegar." When our Lord cried, "Eloi, Eloi," and afterwards said, "I thirst," the persons around the cross said, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him," mocking Him. And according to Mark, he who gave the vinegar uttered much the same words. He pitied the sufferer, but he thought so little of Him that he joined in the voice of scorn. Even when man compassionates the sufferings of Christ, and man would have ceased to be human if he did not, still he scorns Him. The very cup which man gives to Jesus is at once scorn and pity, for "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

See how man at his best mingles admiration of the Savior's person with scorn of His claims, writing books to hold Him up as an example and at the same moment rejecting His deity. Admitting that He was a wonderful man, but denying His most sacred mission. Extolling His ethical teaching and then trampling on His blood, thus giving Him drink, but that drink, vinegar. O my hearers, beware of praising Jesus and denying His atoning sacrifice. Beware of rendering Him homage and dishonoring His name at the same time.

Alas, my brethren, I cannot say much on the score of man's cruelty to our Lord without touching myself and you. Have *we* not often given Him vinegar to drink? Did we not do so years ago before we knew Him? We used to melt when we heard about His sufferings, but we did not turn from our sins. We gave Him our tears and then grieved Him with our sins. We thought sometimes that we loved Him as we heard the story of His death, but we did not change our lives for His sake, nor put our trust in Him, and so we gave Him vinegar to drink.

Nor does the grief end here, for have not the best works we have ever done, the best feelings we have ever felt, and the best prayers we have ever offered, been tart and sour with sin? Can they be compared to generous wine? Are they not more like sharp vinegar? I wonder He has ever received them, as one marvels why He received this vinegar, and yet He has received them, and smiled upon us for presenting them. He knew once how to turn water into wine, and in matchless love He has often turned our sour drink offerings into something sweet to Himself, though in themselves, I think, they have been the juice of sour grapes, sharp enough to set His teeth on edge.

We may therefore come before Him, with all the rest of our race, when God subdues them to repentance by His love, and look on Him whom we have pierced, and mourn for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. We may well remember our faults this day,

"We, whose proneness to forget
Thy dear love, on Olivet
Bathed Thy brow with bloody sweat;

"We, whose sins, with awful power,
Like a cloud did o'er Thee lower,
In that God-excluding hour;

"We, who still, in thought and deed,
Often hold the bitter reed
To Thee, in Thy time of need."

I have touched this point very lightly because I want a little more time to dwell upon a fourth view of this scene. May the Holy Ghost help us to hear a fourth tuning of the dolorous music, "I thirst."

IV. I think, beloved friends, that the cry of "I thirst" was THE MYSTICAL EXPRESSION OF THE DESIRE OF HIS HEART—"I thirst."

I cannot think that natural thirst was all He felt. He thirsted for water doubtless, but His soul was thirsty in a higher sense. Indeed, He seems only to have spoken that the Scriptures might be fulfilled as to the offering Him vinegar. Always was He in harmony with Himself, and His body was always expressive of His soul's cravings as well as of its own longings.

"I thirst" meant that His heart was thirsting to save men. This thirst had been on Him from the earliest of His earthly days. "Wist ye not," said He, while yet a boy, "that I must be about my Father's business?" Did He not tell His disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished"? He thirsted to pluck us from between the jaws of hell, to pay our redemption price, and set us free from the eternal condemnation which hung over us. And when on the cross the work was almost done His thirst was not assuaged, and could not be till He could say, "It is finished."

It is almost done, You Christ of God, You have almost saved Your people. There remains but one thing more, that You should actually die, and hence Your strong desire to come to the end and complete Your labor. You were still straitened till the last pang was felt and the last word spoken to complete the full redemption, and hence Your cry, "I thirst."

Beloved, there is now upon our Master and there always has been, a thirst after the love of His people. Do you not remember how that thirst of His was strong in the old days of the prophet? Call to mind His complaint in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, "Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my

beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein."

What was He looking for from His vineyard and its winepress? What but for the juice of the vine that He might be refreshed? "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes"—vinegar, not wine, sourness, and not sweetness. So He was thirsting then.

According to the sacred canticle of love, in the fifth chapter of the Song of Songs, we learn that when He drank in those olden times it was in the garden of His church that He was refreshed. What does He say? "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

In the same song He speaks of His church, and says, "The roof of thy mouth is as the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak." And yet again in the eighth chapter the bride says, "I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." Yes, He loves to be with His people. They are the garden where He walks for refreshment, and their love, their graces, are the milk and wine of which He delights to drink.

Christ was always thirsty to save men, and to be loved of men. And we see a type of His life-long desire when, being weary, He sat thus on the well and said to the woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink." There was a deeper meaning in His words than she dreamed of, as a verse further down fully proves, when He said to His disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He derived spiritual refreshment from the winning of that woman's heart to Himself.

And now, brethren, our blessed Lord has at this time a thirst for communion with each one of you who are His people, not because you can do Him good, but because He can do you good. He thirsts to bless you and to receive your grateful love in return. He thirsts to see you looking with believing eye to His fullness, and holding out your emptiness that He may supply it. He saith, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What knocks He for? It is that He may eat and drink with you, for He promises that if we open to Him He will enter in and sup with us and we with Him. He is thirsty still, you see, for our poor love, and surely we cannot deny it to Him.

Come let us pour out full flagons, until His joy is fulfilled in us. And what makes Him love us so? Ah, that I cannot tell, except His own great love. He *must* love, it is His nature. He must love His chosen whom He has once begun to love, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His great love makes Him thirst to have us much nearer than we are. He will never be satisfied till all His redeemed are beyond gunshot of the enemy.

I will give you one of His thirsty prayers—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." He wants you brother, He wants you, dear sister, He longs to have you wholly to Himself! Come to Him in prayer, come to Him in fellowship, come to Him by perfect consecration, come to Him by surrendering your whole being to the sweet mysterious influences of His Spirit. Sit at His feet with Mary, lean on His breast with John. Yea, come with the spouse in the song and say, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." He calls for that, will you not give it to Him?

Are you so frozen at heart that not a cup of cold water can be melted for Jesus? Are you lukewarm? O brother, if He says, "I thirst" and you bring Him a lukewarm heart, that is worse than vinegar, for He has said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He can receive vinegar, but not lukewarm love. Come, bring Him your warm heart, and let Him drink from that purified chalice as much as He wills. Let all your love be His.

I know He loves to receive from you because He delights even in a cup of cold water that you give to one of His disciples. How much more will He delight in the giving of your whole self to Him? Therefore, while He thirsts give Him to drink this day.

V. Lastly, the cry of "I thirst" is to us THE PATTERN OF OUR DEATH WITH HIM.

Know you not, beloved—for I speak to those who know the Lord—that you are crucified together with Christ? Well, then, what means this cry, "I thirst," but this, that we should thirst too? We do not thirst after the old manner wherein we were bitterly afflicted, for He hath said, "He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst." But now we covet a new thirst, a refined and heavenly appetite, a craving for our Lord. O You blessed Master, if we are indeed nailed up to the tree with You, give us to thirst after You with a thirst which only the cup of "the new covenant in thy blood" can ever satisfy.

Certain philosophers have said that they love the pursuit of truth even better than the knowledge of truth. I differ from them greatly, but I will say this, that next to the actual enjoyment of my Lord's presence I love to hunger and to thirst after Him. Rutherford used words somewhat to this effect, "I thirst for my Lord and this is joy, a joy which no man takes from me. Even if I may not come to Him, yet shall I be full of consolation, for it is heaven to thirst after Him, and surely He will never deny a poor soul liberty to admire Him, and adore Him, and thirst after Him."

As for myself, I would grow more and more insatiable after my divine Lord, and when I have much of Him I would still cry for more, and then for more, and still more. My heart shall not be content till He is all in all to me, and I am altogether lost in Him. O to be enlarged in soul so as to take deeper draughts of His sweet love, for our heart cannot have enough.

One would wish to be as the spouse, who, when she had already been feasting in the banqueting house, and had found His fruit sweet to her taste, so that she was overjoyed, yet cried out, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." She craved full flagons of love though she was already overpowered by it.

This is a kind of sweet whereof if a man has much he must have more, and when he has more he is under a still greater necessity to receive more, and so on, his appetite is forever growing by that which it feeds upon, till he is filled with all the fullness of God. "I thirst"—ay, this is my soul's word with her Lord. Borrowed from His lips it well suits my mouth.

"I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.

"Dear fountain of delight unknown!
No longer sink below the brim;
But overflow, and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream."

Jesus thirsted, then let us thirst in this dry and thirsty land where no water is. Even as the hart panteth after the water brooks, our souls would thirst after Thee, O God.

Beloved, let us thirst for the souls of our fellow men. I have already told you that such was our Lord's mystical desire, let it be ours also. Brother, thirst to have your children saved. Brother, thirst I pray you to have your workpeople saved. Sister, thirst for the salvation of your class, thirst for the redemption of your family, thirst for the conversion of your husband.

We ought all to have a longing for conversions. Is it so with each one of you? If not, bestir yourselves at once. Fix your hearts upon some unsaved one, and thirst until he is saved. It is the way whereby many shall be brought to Christ, when this blessed soul-thirst of true Christian charity shall be upon those who are themselves saved.

Remember how Paul said, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He would have sacrificed himself to save his countrymen, so heartily did he desire their eternal welfare. Let this mind be in you also.

As for yourselves, thirst after perfection. Hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled. Hate sin, and heartily loathe it. But thirst to be holy as God is holy, thirst to be like Christ, thirst to bring glory to His sacred name by complete conformity to His will.

May the Holy Ghost work in you the complete pattern of Christ crucified, and to Him shall be praise forever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MARK 15:15-37 AND PSALM 69:1-21

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.