

**Reading:** John 19:16-37

**Theme:** The Word of Suffering.

All 4 of the Gospels tell us of the events of that first Good Friday. By piecing the accounts together, we get the fuller understanding of what went on there - events leading up to Jesus' arrest, the mock trials, where although He was proclaimed innocent, the mob baying for His blood forced governor Pilates's hand, who handed Him over to be crucified. On the cross the Lord Jesus uttered 7 sayings before He died. We have looked at those sayings over the last four Good Friday's and are looking at the 5<sup>th</sup> today. Yet, the Lord Jesus did not need to say anything. Our salvation could have been fully accomplished in silence, but He chose to speak, often doing so in a loud voice. God the Holy Spirit saw fit to record these words in the Gospels.

Today we look at the 5<sup>th</sup> saying - **the word of suffering**, found in John 19:28. It is the shortest saying of all the sayings of the Lord Jesus from the cross (*in the Greek too*) and is translated "*I am thirsty*" or "*I thirst*" (διψαω). It's easily overlooked and given no attention, or thought of as insignificant. Yet it is recorded for us as one of the sayings of our Lord Jesus on the cross and indicates it has a precious meaning and is worth thinking about.

I would like us to try and get to grips with this saying to both encourage and challenge us. As I looked at this saying, I asked myself "*Why? Why did He cry it out?*" Here we see the Maker of heaven and earth with parched lips; the Lord of glory in need of a drink; the Beloved of the Father crying "*I am thirsty*". He is the One who would give living water to the woman at the well in Samaria, who later declared that "*If anyone is thirsty, let Him*

*come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within Him."* Yet He is crying out here that He is thirsty! So why does He say it? I feel it is a word of revelation, to reveal, to show a number of things to us. Let's see 4 of them:

### **1. To Show the Scriptures Fulfilled.**

Jesus did not just die, but He died for our sins, was buried and raised on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day "*according to the Scriptures*" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The apostle John in v24, 28, 36-37 emphasises that in His death, Scripture was fulfilled. Jesus lived according to God's word and also died according to God's word. Throughout His life, OT prophecies regarding the Messiah were fulfilled - in His birth, life, work, person, death and resurrection. Yet here as Jesus is only moments from dying, He knows one Scripture is unfulfilled and so He says "*I am thirsty*" and was given wine vinegar to drink. In so doing Psalm 69:21 is fulfilled "*They ... gave me vinegar for my thirst.*" Psalm 69 is a remarkable Psalm. It points to Jesus' death and agony 1000 years or so before it occurred.

Here Jesus was not merely acting out some biblical prophetic script; ticking off prophecies to fulfil them. The OT prophecies were written with Christ's sufferings in view and they spoke of all He **would** certainly experience - in this case, a burning thirst and given vinegar to drink. It wasn't for effect Jesus said "*I am thirsty*", but because He truly knew an intense burning thirst. Psalm 22 was also written 1000 years before crucifixion was known, but described the agonies of such and speaks of Jesus' sufferings. In Psalm 22:15 we read "*My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;*" The Lord Jesus knew an overwhelming agony of thirst. He wasn't

role acting, but it really was His own experience - causing Him to say “*I am thirsty*” - it was a word of personal suffering and when given vinegar to drink, the Scripture was fulfilled to the most minute detail.

What about our lives, do we show respect for the Bible, the Scriptures in our own lives? Do we feel they are so trustworthy, that we can trust our life here on earth, our dying experience and our eternity on the firm and solid foundation of God’s excellent word? This word reveals more:

## **2. To Show His Real Humanity.**

There at the end of the darkness His cry rings out “*I am thirsty*”. Let’s just pause and consider who it is that says this. This is not an ordinary mortal, not even a good man or a great man, certainly not an out and out rotter, but it is the Lord of glory in human flesh, with a real human body just as we have. These are truths the Bible presents to us – God the Son, who is fully and completely God, became flesh and lived amongst us. Jesus did not cease to be God. All He was as God was kept, but He took on that He didn’t have before - perfect humanity and both His humanity and His deity showed through in His life.

Angels do not thirst; God does not thirst, but temporal, mortal creatures of the earth do. Here the Lord Jesus shows, demonstrates He was really human, with all the feelings we have and was not some sort of Superman, but was really extremely thirsty. remember Jesus did not retreat, take refuge in His deity and divinity when things became rough, tough and difficult, but He suffered in His body on the cross as well as in His holy soul. This means He understands when we suffer, are

alone, racked by pain and fear, for He has suffered and suffered in ways we will never ever suffer if we are Christian.

Yet those 2 reasons we have seen so far, do not really deal with why Jesus said this. I feel this word, like the rest, are given to allow us to have insights into what the cross was really about and are pointers, clues to the real meaning of the cross, to enable us to more fully understand and grasp what He suffered on the there. So, it was said:

### **3. To Show the Real Reason for Such A Thirst.**

It is easy to think the reason for Jesus' thirst would have been the events of the previous evening and that day - His betrayal, trials, beatings, being mocked, going to Pilate, to Herod, then to Pilate again. His scourging, His walk to Calvary carrying His cross, being crucified and hanging on the cross for some 6 hours - 3 hours in the hot sun and 3 hours in darkness. Surely these would cause a man to be thirsty, to complain of such a thirst as well as crucifixion itself causing a thirst for those who suffered it - lose fluid through their wounds, by sweat caused by both the heat and the agony.

In a sense, it is the only saying which shows concern for Himself - He wanted something for Himself. We are to understand that this was not a word of complaint caused by all His outward sufferings. He had every reason to complain when beaten, scourged, had thorns thrust on His head, when He was first crucified, yet no word of complaint came from His lips - yes, words of forgiveness, salvation, compassion, but no word of fear or complaint. He is as a lamb led to the slaughter, He opened not His mouth in complaint, anger or bitterness. Only a lamb led by one who it loves and trusts does this.

This is not a word of complaint caused by oppression, but a word which expresses the intensity of the agonies He was undergoing and suffering. Not merely the physical suffering, but something far, far worse and deeper. Jesus' thirst was no ordinary thirst - note this saying follows on closely after the 4<sup>th</sup> saying, so it was said at the end of the 3 hours of darkness that hid from human eyes the events on the cross. There Jesus underwent sufferings we cannot even begin to understand, but at the end of that time, the 4<sup>th</sup> cry of dereliction sounded out "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"

Here is Jesus, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Godhead, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God's Beloved Son and He has been forsaken and alone. The Father and the Holy Spirit have withdrawn, hidden their faces from Him. Their love and presence were withdrawn and Christ is alone. Why is He alone? Because He was made sin! He was not made a sinner, but sin. He became as the worst sinner, adulterer, mass-murderer, sexual predator, pervert, thief, liar, cheat etc. All the sin of all people, of all nations and all ages were laid on Him, including my sin and your sin. Because Jesus is in the place of justice and payment, God could no longer tolerate His beloved Son in His holy presence. Yet worse was to come. God could not allow His Son to do this and conveniently turn a blind eye to sin and the punishment it deserves. Calvary was a place of judgement and reckoning, where God's anger and wrath would be poured out on the One bearing this sin. The eternal holy wrath of God against our sin fell on Jesus in the darkness and the infinite Son of God, took infinite holy punishment to satisfy the demands of God's holiness and justice.

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:24 that Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree, cross. In other words, He took the hell that our sin deserved and it fell on Him there. God the righteous Judge, drew His sword of justice and struck Him blow after blow until all our debt of sin was paid - not one debt of our sin was left unpaid and not one more blow was necessary. Yes, the Lord Jesus, suffered, the God-man suffered these things in His soul and also in His body. Lamentations 1:12-13 (ESV) says *““Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the LORD inflicted on the day of his fierce anger. “From on high he sent fire; into my bones he made it descend; he spread a net for my feet; he turned me back; he has left me stunned, faint all the day long.”*”

Christ suffered our hell in Himself on the cross. Hell is revealed as a place of torment and fire, the rich man seems to have only been in hell a few moments when he asks for Lazarus to be sent to cool his tongue with just a few drops of water. Hell is a dry and barren land, with no relief of suffering. Jesus had endured this eternal punishment in His own body on the tree. His dereliction is shown as He cries *“My God, My God...”* His suffering, His intense agonising suffering is glimpsed in the words *“I am thirsty”* - see Psalm 63:1 *“O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”*

Read with awe and thankfulness v28 *“knowing that all was now completed (accomplished)”*. Jesus knew the price had been paid, the punishment for sin was paid, the debt was settled there, it was all paid. But Christ had also been in a battle on the cross, the powers of hell had been fighting for their very survival and

would not have left Him alone. We are told in Colossians 2:15 that Jesus “*having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*” The battle was over and the victory was won, but Jesus realised in His body the immense work of bearing our punishment and triumphing over those powers and authorities of darkness. Like Samson, who fought and beat 1000 men with a donkey’s jawbone, only after the battle he realised his thirst. The cross was not an easy thing, but involved hard work, pain, agony, suffering as well as a battle.

Jesus’ thirst was due to what we had done and what was in us. He suffered, thirsted on our behalf, so that we may never be condemned to everlasting thirst in hell. Have we wondered why He said “*I am thirsty*”? It was to:

#### **4. To Show A Response Is Required.**

This was said audibly; it was heard and expected a response. One responded and gave Jesus a drink. Sadly, many respond to Christ like this man did - giving wine vinegar and mocking (*as Mark 15: 36 tells us*)! Jesus had suffered such agony, was forsaken by God, suffered the righteous wrath of God the Judge, had such an agony of thirst and said so. What is our response? Surely, we should do all we can to avoid God’s wrath that caused such agony and thirst on His Son on behalf of people like us!

Jesus was forsaken, suffered, thirsted, so that we need never be forsaken or suffer such thirst in hell. It’s been said that hell has 2 gates, one named Forsaken and the other named Thirst and they are locked from the inside! If we neglect or reject the Lord

Jesus, then we lock the doors of hell upon ourselves and deliberately choose to suffer.

Consider that Jesus was thirsty, suffered a burning thirst, so that He could be the Fountain of life for all who go to Him. He makes a glorious invitation to all who are thirsty in Revelation 22:17 *“Whoever is thirsty, let Him come; and whoever wishes, let Him take the free gift of the water of life.”*

If we claim to be a Christian, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then the Lord Jesus looks on our lives and our lives are to be sources of refreshment to Him. The Lord looks for the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, but it would be a shame if we gave Him vinegar instead of that glorious fruit. Instead of the best we could only give the rubbish, the dross of our life’s abilities. Do we as believers play fast and loose with the world and are guilty of spiritual flirtation, even adultery? Instead of sweetness do we give Him bitterness? I pray we will not mock the Lord with our lives as professing Christians.

All of us, whether we are Christians or not, should look again at His agony, His pain, His thirst. Dare we give Him anything less than our best or highest? I pray that the Lord would continue to give us grace and have mercy on us day by day so we live to please Him and we would have a growing thirst in our lives for more of Him, the living water.