

The Fifth Word

By William A. Bass

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Can you imagine the son of God being given a sponge full of vinegar upon a hyssop when he was on the cross and being taunted with the words, "Let us see whether Elijah cometh to take him down." This did happen and is recorded in John 12:28 and is customarily called the fifth word from the Cross. He had just said the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He was about to say it is finished and give up the ghost and say, "into thy hands, I commend my spirit." This was very real. Here was genuine relief from his suffering, a drink of pure, sour soldier's wine. By this time, his suffering was most intense. He was undoubtedly tortured with fever, He was thirsty, both because of the natural nervousness of the situation, because of the intense pain, the dust and dryness, his own loss of blood and probably dehydration. It had been many hours since the previous evening that had passed without food. Here is an incomprehensible mystery that the son of God and son of man who was to reign over the Kingdom of God is to suffer so extremely and ask for the fruit of the vine to quench his thirst. The mystery is deepened by the following thoughts. Christ our savior was one with God as the glorious fountain of creative life. Out of his very nature and being he spoke the words that created the heavens, the stars, the planets, the moon and the earth with its envisionment of his handiwork. Christ who, was the fountain of life, It was he who had made the fullness of the earth. He made not only the great number of kinds of living things, but also the great number of individuals within the kinds. The Psalmist rightly says that the fullness of the earth is the glory of

the Lord. Our God and our savior had made planets and stars. He had made the Earth teeming with life. And now he says, "I thirst". Following the words and ideas of Psalm 36:9, we know that, as David said, "he is the fountain of life and in thy light, shall we see light." He is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. As the Apostle John told us, the glory of the heavens from Psalm 19 are his, and even the minor glories of Earth belong to him. He sustains us not only by the word of his power, but also by the light and heat of the nature in which we live. He was the very glory of God, and we might express it that he was the fountain of light. His signs and wonders had been performed in Egypt and in Elijah's time, and in Ezekiel's time. And in his previous ministry upon the Earth, he had shown great signs and wonders showing his power and His Majesty and John the Apostle describes these as being signs of his glory.

This, then, is a most marvelous thing that the Christ, our Lord, who was such a magnificent fountain of all things created, should say, I thirst. Asking for a drink of water, asking for a drink of the soldier's wine that they had before them there. It is a most marvelous thing that he who was recognized in one period of our Western world officially by the scholars and by the teachers, this was in medieval times, as the fountain of life, they carefully analyze this. They spelled it out. They elaborated upon it. They preached about I and they taught about it in their universities that Jesus Christ was the fountain of everything in this world. I think that the most marvelous presentation of Christ as the fountain of life and the fountain of being was made by John Owen, the great Puritan preacher. In the days before freeways and automobiles, Men would come in their horses and buggies and wagons 20 miles to hear him preach and hold forth the words about Christ as the divine fountain. He used the term Christ, the divine egress and Christ the light so often and in so many of his contexts that it permeates his sermon, his preaching, and

his glorification of Christ. John Owen was the greatest of the Puritan preachers, and he never tired of speaking of Christ the Fountain. Richard Baxter and other Puritan preachers did likewise.

There was more to Christ the fountain, however, than just his fountain of creation for he was to the fountain of salvation. The fountain of blood that cleanses from sin flowed from his very veins. If we look back to the time of the Israelites and their blood upon the door posts and their blood in the temple and Tabernacle, this blood was to have only meaning as it made reference back to Christ The fountain filled with blood that flows from Emmanuel's veins. He it was, in his blood, which satisfied the great heavenly altar of God. It is this fountain where the scarlet sinner may be washed white as snow and in which if we follow and read revelation carefully, we see that the garments of the saints are made white and bright and clean. Yes, it is by Christ the fountain that a divine transfusion is made, which unites man or woman to God himself in a new, vital, and loving relationship. It was thus that John Newton, the ex-slaver, could say, "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains", and he made it personal, "there May I as vile as he wash all my sins away". Yes Christ was that fountain, and he was that fountain as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. It is the lamb itself then, which was on this cross at this time. A brutal cross, an austere cross of timbers and spikes and rope, a real cross, who shed the blood of that great and glorious and majestic fountain. It was here then, that we see the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world as the artesian well of salvation, saying I thirst.

But there's still more to Christ as the fountain. It is he who immediately after death went and spoke to the spirits in prison and poured grace upon them. It was he who, as soon as his ascension was completed, poured out the Holy Spirit upon the Earth. Peter indeed uses these very words of poured out with reference to this marvelous gift. All the blessings which you and I

enjoy, the blessings of the Church of God, the gifts of the saints, the personal happiness, and the broader graces shown to the world are all aspects of the marvels of that fountain, that fountain filled with blood. And there's still more. In the ages to come, When Christ sets up his kingdom and his glorious throne, there will be literal and there will be spiritual waters flowing out from before that throne. Refreshing waters to the ends of the earth, giving life and joy and happiness and peace to all men. And even before this, according to many biblical texts, it would seem that there will be a lot of rain, a washing of regeneration for millions upon this planet who do not yet know the savior of the world.

In light of all this, how can he say I thirst? I'm sure that Paul would have answered, He came to thirst for us. He came to thirst so that our thirsting as well as the outpouring could be in him. He thirsted for the greater body of Christ. That in him would be both our thirst and our satiation, both our panting after the water brooks and both that and our peace. Christ, at one time before in his life had come to a woman at a well in Samaria at noon And here he had asked for a drink. As a result of that asking and their subsequent conversation, she received living water and this living water in turned flowed from Christ and from her to her neighbors and friends of Samaria. Samaria became a leading church in the apostolic age.

Now, in the scene before us, Christ is thirsty. He asks for a drop from his own countless grapes that he had created. His thirst was slaked for a moment then, undoubtedly the natural normal torments began again, and then death came. But oh, the meaning of this is so far deeper, and so much more meaningful that both the fountain of life issued forth from that cross, as well as the thirsting that all men might have for the water of everlasting life, might be in him. There is depth here and there is application and significance for all of us how we should look daily and constantly to that lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and how often we should

be in thoughts of that cross upon which he was crucified, and also upon his most magnificent works that he did prior to the cross. But I'm sure that, as David said in the Psalm, David who incidentally was a type of Christ, "as the heart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

Give us water, give us living water that will feed us our Lord Jesus, and make us alive unto thee. Are you, dear friend, trusting in that living fountain? And having trusted, are you looking often? Are you looking frequently to the cross from which it comes? But we do need to remember that the great outpouring comes from the risen Christ and not only the risen Christ, but the exalted Christ, not only the exalted Christ, but also the glorified Christ. How marvelous, indeed, are the words from the cross, and how penetrating for our souls, the concept I thirst, as it came from our Savior's lips. Lord Jesus, our risen Christ and savior, we would seek from thee that our natural normal thirsts might be satiated in the fountain flowing deep and rich and wide, which thou dost give. We would pray together with each listener who is needy and who has needs that are above and beyond them, that your grace, as it has proved sufficient to countless millions, will continue to not only count, but also to be applicable to those who pray and seek thee just now. May we continue to thirst until the day of Christ appearing comes. But may it be a thirst that knows the fullness of Christ and our union with God. We ask in his name, amen.