

A WORD OF DEITY AND HUMANITY
JOHN 19:28-29

Explanations of why you love whom you love are sometimes difficult.

A baby might have been born only minutes earlier, but her new mother or father will undoubtedly be willing to die for the one they barely know. And they hardly know the characteristics and nature of that child and may not even have noticed yet the eye color of the baby, yet they are passionately in love with that little one. You go to visit the family in the hospital and you see the baby and hold the baby, but she's just...a baby — because you don't see her with the same set of eyes as her parents.

A young man might be falling in love with a young lady while away at college and he calls his parents to tell them about her and they start probing and asking questions about her and he answers them, but he can't tell that they aren't grasping the wonder of this young ladies' character. He is enamored and he can't understand why they don't see her in the same way yet. So finally he says, "You'll just have to meet her — then you'll see just how great she is!"

The believer will sometimes have the same problem in trying to explain the character of Christ. Like John, we have seen Him in Scripture and we have heard His Words through Scripture, and He has touched us through the regenerating work of the Spirit, but how might we articulate the wonder of who Christ is? How can others see and experience His glorious nature in the way we have?

Surely nothing reveals Christ in the way His cross does. And while on that cross, Jesus makes seven statements (often called the "seven words of Christ") that serve as an act of great self-revelation. In these words we discover the uniqueness and power of Christ. It has been noted that these words can be divided into three groups:

- ✓ The first three words concern His personal relationships — a prayer for His executioners, a promise to the thief (His fellow-sufferer on that day), and a provision for His mother.
- ✓ The next three words concern His work of salvation — the cry concerning His moral suffering ("My God..."), the groan concerning His physical suffering ("I am thirsty"), and the triumphant declaration of victory ("it is finished").
- ✓ The final word concerns His fellowship with and trust of the Father in all things — "into Your hands I commend My spirit."

This evening we are considering the second of His words about His work of salvation — "I am thirsty" in [John 19:28-29](#). While these are simple words, this single, three-word saying, is also a profound revelation of three truths about the nature of Christ.

1. This is a Word about Jesus' Deity

Several times in His ministry, Jesus spoke about the work that the Father had given Him to do. Early in John's gospel, Mary asks Jesus to help with a wine shortage at a wedding and Jesus responds, "what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come" (2:4). In other words, that was not the appointed time for His redemptive work and His return to the Father. He will say similar things three more times (7:30; 8:20; Lk. 20:19ff). But in 13:1 John says, "Jesus knowing that His hour had come..." This was the time to accomplish the purpose for which God sent Him.

Several other times, Jesus talks about the work that God had given Him to do: 4:34; 5:36; 17:4. What is the work that God gave Him and what is included in the "all things" that He says here are accomplished?

- ✓ The work of living a righteous life that would be substituted for the unrighteous lives of sinners has been lived. Christ has lived a full life into adulthood and experienced temptation to the full extent of Satan's power and "in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).
- ✓ The pouring out of God's wrath is complete — the horror of the cross that He dreaded to the point of sweating drops of blood (Lk. 22:44) has been finished. The three hours of agony when He was experiencing the outpouring of God's infinite wrath against Him are finished. He drank the cup of God's wrath dry. Nothing more was needed. Now He could die and be resurrected to complete the act of redemption. He did not need to do one more thing to accomplish redemption. He could die knowing that His earthly ministry was complete. So we can say —
- ✓ The work of atonement is now complete. He has provided the perfect sacrifice for sin and God has been satisfied with His payment. And that satisfaction will be validated on Sunday morning at His resurrection. The provision of redemption for sinners has been accomplished.

And notice that Jesus **knows** that all things had already been accomplished. Even while experiencing the agony of the cross, He is conscious that His suffering is fulfilling God's eternal plan of redemption. But these words are more than just an awareness of His circumstances. Jesus was consciously in control of His circumstances. This is not happening to Him against His will; He is sovereignly orchestrating all these events for the purpose of fulfilling God's plan. He is in full command — His mind is not dulled, and He is fully able to accomplish God's purpose for His advent.

And even while in His agony He is aware of the opportunity to fulfill one more OT prophecy, he speaks the words, "I am thirsty." This is likely a reference to Ps. 69:21. Apart from the fulfillment of this prophecy, it is interesting to notice John's choice of words. The word for **accomplished** is *tetelestai*. You may have heard that word before, because it is the same word that Jesus will use in v. 30 — **it is finished** (*tetelestai*). And the word **fulfill** is a related word that means "to bring to completion" or "to finish" and "to bring to a close." With all these words John is demonstrating the finality of Christ's work.

And that finality can only be achieved because *Christ is God*. In His omniscience — knowing that all things had been accomplished and in order to fulfill Scripture, He uttered these words. As God He has orchestrated these events and as an infinitely righteous God He was able to bear the judgment of an infinite wrath and provide His own righteousness for needy sinners.

But this is also a revelation about another aspect of Christ —

2. This is a Word about Jesus' Humanity

The words *I am thirsty* demonstrate that *Jesus is human*. God cannot be thirsty. As God-man, Christ could. This is but one of many illustrations in the NT that Christ was truly a man. As a human He grew in knowledge (Lk. 2:52); as a human He became hungry (Mt. 4:2); as a human He became tired (Jn. 4:6); as a human He slept (Mk. 4:38); as a human He grieved over Lazarus' death (Jn. 11:34-35). And as a human He was thirsty on the cross.

It is not surprising that Jesus was thirsty if we remember the events of the day that led to this moment:

- ✓ There was the trial before Pilate
- ✓ There was the journey across the city to Herod
- ✓ There was the appearance before Herod and a the mocking of His soldiers
- ✓ There was the journey across the city to Pilate, after which he was scourged
- ✓ There was the passing of the final sentence by Pilate
- ✓ There was the carrying of the cross (which has ravaged body could not complete)
- ✓ His hands and feet being nailed to the cross
- ✓ The intensity of the sun beating down on Him throughout the day
- ✓ The silence and horror of the three hours of darkness (and God's wrath)
- ✓ The darkness over, the heat from the sun resumed

Some have suggested that thirst was one of the great agonies of the crucified man. Scourged, bleeding, and baking under the hot sun, the victim would undoubtedly be severely dehydrated. That, too, was part of the cruelty of this torturous death. So why did Jesus wait so long to express His thirst? Why did He wait until now? It was likely so that He could with moist lips and throat have a strong voice to shout his final two statements for all to hear: "It is finished" (19:30) and "Father, into Your hands I commend my Spirit" (Lk. 23:46). Until now He did not need strength of voice, but these final two cries demanded boldness of voice that could only come through a quenched thirst.

So it is no surprise that Jesus mentioned his thirst at this moment. Yet there is also some irony in this event. Unbelievers typically accept the humanity of Christ without question and doubt the deity of Christ; and believers generally accept the deity of Christ and have trouble accepting the humanity of Christ.

Yet here He is on the cross, truly man (and truly God), and thirsty. As Philip Ryken has noted, "If the thirst of Jesus Christ was a genuine thirst, then it was a human thirst. God...is never short on fluids. Angels do not get thirsty. They are spiritual beings who do not experience physical lack. Among rational beings, only human beings have the capacity for thirst. The thirst of Jesus Christ on the cross was the thirst of a dying man. It was proof that He was human after all....There is something scandalous about the truth that God became a man in Jesus Christ and, most scandalous of all, that He died on a cross." [Ryken, *14 Words From Jesus*.] He was thirsty. And because He was a man, we can say that He had to be thirsty.

Here in Jesus' thirst we are reminded that the union of deity and humanity in Jesus are essential. In fact, John says that believing in this union is a mark of an authentic faith (**1 John. 4:1-3**):

- ✓ It is only as the God-man that Christ could be both sin bearer and substitute.
- ✓ It is only as the God-man that Christ could be both tempted and sinless.
- ✓ It is only as the God-Man that Christ could be our Savior. And here is the great irony: it was only because He was a man who became physically thirsty that the One who the water of life was able to satisfy our spiritual thirst. If He had not taken on manhood, He could not have become thirsty and He could not have hung in our place on the cross and He could not have been our substitute and Savior. It took His thirsty manhood to accomplish our redemption. And this is also a reminder to us that there is a thirsty world that is seeking satisfaction in all kinds of poisonous waters while only the refreshing and eternal water of Christ and His salvation will ever quench their thirst. He was thirst so that we (and they) would not be.
- ✓ Both humanity and deity are crucial for redemption. Only as a man could Christ represent man and die as a man. But only as God could the death of Christ have infinite value sufficient to provide redemption for the sins of the world.

3. This is a Word about Jesus' Suffering

When Jesus said, *I am thirsty*, we noted that meant that He is human. It is impossible for God to be thirsty, but Christ was thirsty. What is unique about thirst is that it is also a form of suffering. It is to experience weakness in our bodies and the inadequacy of our bodies. It is to experience harm, an "it shouldn't be this way" circumstance. God can't suffer. But as the God-Man, Christ could.

In Matthew 1, the angel appeared to Joseph and promised Him that the child being carried by Mary was the divinely conceived Messiah, one who would be called "Immanuel...God with us" (Mt. 1:23). So Jesus came to dwell among us so that we could see His glory (Jn. 1:14). But He also dwelt among us and was made in our likeness (Phil. 2:6-7) so that He could experience our sorrows and temptations and overcome them with His righteousness (**Heb. 2:17-18**). As God incarnate He could sympathize with our suffering.

In fact, His suffering infinitely surpassed our suffering. Others also had been crucified on a cross and experienced the suffering that He did there. Others had similarly been flogged prior to crucifixion. Others had been similarly dehydrated. But no one ever surpassed the suffering that He did as the sin-bearer. No one else has heard the verdict from God, “Guilty” when he was not guilty. Everyone carries the guilt and weight of their own sin; no one else has carried the weight of the sin of all men who would believe in Christ. No one else has been a member of the Triune Godhead only to receive infinite wrath from that Godhead. But Christ did — and that was the horror of His suffering. The physical torture was excruciating; the spiritual suffering was (and always will be, I believe) unimaginable.

The significance of Christ’s suffering has been summarized well by A. W. Pink:

The cross shows us that God is not ignorant of our sorrows, for in the person of his Son he has himself “borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4)! The cross shows us God is not unmindful of our distress and anguish, for becoming incarnate, he suffered himself! The cross tells us God is not indifferent to pain for in the Saviour he experienced it!

What then is the value of these facts? This: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted (or tried) like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Our Redeemer is not one so removed from us that he is unable to enter, sympathetically, into our sorrows, for he was himself “the Man of Sorrows”. Here then is comfort for the aching heart. No matter how despondent you maybe, no matter how rugged your path and sad your lot, you are invited to spread it all before the Lord Jesus and cast all your care upon him, knowing that “he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Is your body wracked with pain? So was his! Are you misunderstood, misjudged, misrepresented? So was he! Have those who are nearest and dearest turned away from you? They did from him! Are you in the darkness? So was he for three hours! “Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb. 2:17). [Pink, *Seven Sayings of the Saviour*, 96.]

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, there is consolation in Jesus’ suffering words, “I am thirsty.”

And if you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, recognize that He became a man and endured the thirst and wrath of the cross so that He could satisfy the deepest longing of your soul. Your sin is your attempt to find satisfaction in life without Christ. Not only will that not satisfy you, but you will endure a torturous and eternal thirst in Hell that will never be quenched (Lk. 16:24). Unless you repent of your sin. And if you confess your sin (admit to God you are a sinner that hates Him) and turn away from your sin (repent, asking God to change the way you live and enable you to live for Him), then He will in fact forgive you and change you. He who was thirsty on the cross will give you water of life — He will give you a new life that will be eternally satisfying to both you and Him. Will you repent and trust the God-man who was thirsty on the cross?