

“MAN, AM I THIRSTY!”
Philippians 2:1-13, Exodus 17:1-7
September 26 & 27, 2020

Conversion is hardly safe. After all, it requires approaching the King of the Universe, face-to-face. And sometimes it requires us to make some tough decisions. In his book *The Silver Chair*, C. S. Lewis draws an analogy with the story of a young girl named Jill. She's in the land of Narnia, and she's thirsty. At once she sees a magnificent stream . . . and a fearsome lion (Aslan, who represents the Lord Jesus):

"If I run away, it'll be after me in a moment," thought Jill. "And if I go on, I shall run straight into its mouth." Anyway, she couldn't have moved if she had tried, and she couldn't take her eyes off it. How long this lasted, she could not be sure; it seemed like hours. And the thirst became so bad that she almost felt she would not mind being eaten by the Lion if only she could be sure of getting a mouthful of water first. . . . "Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion. "I'm dying of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the Lion. "May I—could I—would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill. The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience. The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

"Will you promise not to—do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill.

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer. "Do you eat girls?" she said. "I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

"I dare not come and drink," said Jill. "Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.

"Oh dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then." "There is no other stream," said the Lion. It never occurred to Jill to disbelieve the Lion—

no one who had seen his stern face could do that—and her mind suddenly made itself up.

It was the worst thing she had ever had to do, but she went straight to the stream, knelt down, and began scooping up water in her hand. It was the coldest, most refreshing water she had ever tasted. You didn't need to drink much of it, for it quenched your thirst at once. Before she tasted it she had been intending to make a dash away from the Lion the moment she had finished. Now, she realized that this would be on the whole the most dangerous thing of all.¹

Have you ever found yourself that thirsty, that you would do almost anything to get a drink of water to wet your mouth? Would you even face a lion in order to get just a mouthful of water, your thirst being that great? I'm not sure if I have had that intense thirst for water before, but I can imagine what it could be like. I've had times when I was pretty thirsty, and I have quenched my thirst in surprising ways that I would never have thought I would before (drinking water right out of a lake).

And have you ever found yourself so empty, **so spiritually thirsty** that you would do almost anything to satisfy that thirst - a thirst for power; a thirst for pleasure; a thirst for money or possessions or companionship? Yeah, I think we can all relate to that, too, because we all come up spiritually empty and have a deep-seated craving that drives us to do astounding things in order to satisfy that thirst.

Well, that is where the people of Israel found themselves as they made their way out of Egypt following God's pillar of cloud and fire toward a new homeland. They had so desperately sought freedom that they accepted Moses' leading. He brought God into their presence to satisfy that deep thirst, but it took the people a long time to come to trust that the Lord God was good on His word. God gave the Egyptians 10 plagues to convince Pharaoh to let the people go. But even when the people were free to go, their trust was not yet completely in the Lord God. And their trials and troubles exposed their lack of faith in Him. God allowed the tests to come so that the people might develop deeper faith.

When **God led them** into the predicament of facing a mountainous cliff, with the Desert of Sinai on their left and the Red Sea to their right and the Egyptian army at their rear, the people panicked and

¹ (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002] pg.

accused Moses of leading them out of Egypt to be massacred in the desert. It was Moses who sought out the Lord's direction, and God called him to lead the people through the Red Sea and He wiped out the Egyptian army at the same time. God piled up the waters to allow the people to find freedom.

Then, there were issues of no food and water, and instead of trusting in the Lord God to supply them with the bare necessities of life, the people turned on Moses once more, accusing him of bringing them out that far only to kill them with lack of food or water. So shallow was their trust in God that they complained and grumbled about what they didn't have rather than looking at what God had already done for them to bring them to the place where they were at that moment. Listen to Exodus 17:1-7 (READ Exodus 17:1-7).

God had supplied them with deliverance from slavery from Egypt, He had given them fresh water at Marah (made clean by putting a piece of wood into the bitter pool), and He had supplied them with quail in the evening and manna in the morning to satisfy their hunger, and still they don't trust God. They ran out of water again and they were ready to stone Moses, once more accusing him of evil intentions toward them. It is easy for us to ask, "When will they begin to learn that God is for them, not against them?" Instead of turning toward God for Him to once more deliver them from their thirst, they were intent upon turning and running away from God at almost every disturbance.

Seems we are all of the very same character as the people of Israel, since we tend to do the very same thing as they did. We easily forget the marvelous things that the Lord God has done for us and we grouch and complain about the other things we don't have in our own life. And rather than seeking the Lord for His supply and deliverance, remembering all His goodness toward us, we even grumble about it, causing ourselves stress and worry and anxiety, when if we went to the Lord God about it in the first place, we would find His marvelous abundance.

“South African pastor Andrew Murray once faced a terrible crisis. Gathering himself into his study, he sat a long while quietly, prayerfully, thoughtfully. His mind flew at last to His Lord Jesus, and picking up his pen, he wrote these words in his journal:

“First, He brought me here, it is by His will that I am in this strait place: in that fact I will rest.

“Next, He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace to behave as His child.

“Then, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn and working in me the grace He means to bestow.

“Last, in His good time, He can bring me out again – how and when He knows.

“Let me say I am here, (1) By God’s appointment, (2) In His keeping, (3) Under His training, and (4) For His time.”²

What a tremendous lesson here, folks. The thirsting of our bodies often exposes the thirsting of our spirits for the fulfillment of the Lord our God. The physical thirsts in our lives manifests the emptiness of our spiritual trust in the Lord our God, and we can do our very best to satisfy the thirsting of our bodies, but never come to satisfying the thirsting of our spirits. Only God can satisfy the thirsty spirit. Yet we turn to all kinds of physical things to try to appease the spiritual thirst raging on inside of us. Our hard hearts keep us from seeing the tremendous blessings we have already experienced, and the thirst inside of us becomes so overpowering that we want what we want when we want it, and we want it NOW! So we go beyond God’s will to try to satisfy that thirst on our own. We run from God!

The sad thing about it all is that **God already knows what we need**. He knows right where we are; He knows right what our situation is; He knows what we need, and He is ready to supply it for us, but He waits to see what we’re going to do. He tests our faith to see whether or not we will trust in Him before we gripe or grumble at not having something. But many times, the things we think we need are really just superficial stuff that is not essential for our life, and we get so caught up in the pursuit of those things that we fail to trust in the wisdom of God’s provision at just the right time, in just the right way. When God says “No,” we get all upset and then proclaim that God is no good.

So we find that there are **many places that we can call Massah and Meribah** in our own lives (Ex. 17:7). These are the places where we complain and put the Lord to the test, asking for our own

² (Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000] pg. 741-742)

selves, “*Is the Lord with us or not?*” And many times we think we know better than God and turn away from Him to do our own thing, in essence giving up on anything that God can do for and through us.

Yet, Moses had it right. He had come to understand that it was the Lord God who supplies all our needs at just the right time when we need it. Moses remembered the trek across the desert after he had fled from the wrath of Pharaoh after he had killed an Egyptian officer and buried his body in the sand. God had supplied him the strength and the endurance to walk the whole way into the land of Midian without much food or water. God had already done it in his own life, so Moses knew that God could do it again in the lives of the people of Israel. Moses knew the awesome power and abundance of God, so when they ran out of food and water, He did his best to bring the people into that kind of faith as they, too, struggled with short supply of the basic necessities of life. Moses constantly told the people, “Why do you come to me? It is not me who has led you out here, but the Lord God Almighty! Why are you putting Him to the test?”

At every struggle, **the people turned to Moses, accusing him** of being the one who did all of the things that had happened. And at every struggle, Moses turns to the Lord God for His guidance and provision. But conversion is hardly safe, and often God allows us to become so low (or so thirsty) that all we can do is to look up. And when we look up finally, we see the One who is in control – The Lord our God. So when the people come to Moses again, he throws up his arms and calls out to God, “*What can I do with these people?*” (Ex. 17:4).

But you know, God is saying this about a lot of us, too. What can I do with these people? He provides so much for us, allows us to enjoy the beauties of His provisions, yet we hold our fists up to Him and say, “That’s Not Enough!” We demand God to become simply a vending machine that dispenses all that we want, whenever we want, to or against whomever we want it, in order to satisfy our thirsts. And if we don’t get what we want, we throw a fit and then disclaim all that God has done for us in the past. We do the same thing to the vending machines when we put our money in to it, punch the codes in and nothing happens – we end up pounding on the machine, even kicking it and swearing at it,

trying to make it give us what we want. But when it doesn't deliver, it ruins the rest of our day! We don't stop and consider, do I really need that junk food, or that soft drink, or that prepackaged item? We just get upset when we haven't gotten what we thought we deserved. We do the same thing that the people of Israel did to God when they ran out of water – *“Is the Lord with us or not?”* (Ex. 17:7).

And it goes a lot deeper, folks. It goes to the very core of our being. We grouch or complain when we don't get our choice of political leader. We get upset when a pandemic cancels out all of our sports programs. We cry injustice when the police do their jobs and people get hurt or killed when they don't do as they are told. We even go the extremes of rioting or luting or destroying other peoples' property when we don't get our way. And God cries, *“What am I to do with these people?”* *“When will they trust Me to make all things new? When will they trust Me to bring justice to the wrong doer in My way? When will they trust Me and turn to Me in the middle of this disease pandemic? Why won't they turn to the very One who can make a difference?”*

You see, after we have satisfied our thirst from the provision of God there is the great temptation to quickly run away from Him because we don't want to have anything to do with Him. He might just be too dangerous to be hanging out with. He just might call us to do something that we are completely against. God might even invite us to change our own ways so that we begin to follow His Word, and abide by His Commands and trust in His Provision rather than seeking our own wants and wishes.

God is not at our beckon command to do for us what we want Him to do! Rather, He is our Lord and Master when we turn our hearts to Him and seek to follow Him. In order for us to find the abundance of His great provision, we must humble ourselves to HIM and allowing HIM to work in His marvelous ways to teach us that we can trust in Him no matter what comes our way. But we can't do that when we're all fired up about this issue, or that policy, or consumed in the current pandemic. We have to let everything go, and then turn our hearts and minds to seeking the Lord for His wisdom, His guidance, and His deliverance.

The Apostle Paul tells us this very clearly in Philippians 2:1-4, *“Your life in Christ makes you*

strong, and His love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own."

Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ changes your life and enables you to make the most out of every situation, whether good or bad. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ gives you the courage to come to Him to satisfy your thirsts, allowing Him to provide for you and surprise you with His goodness. When we trust in the Lord, He leads us to find the impossible solutions to the impossible situations that we find ourselves in. Trust in the Lord comes as we develop deep faith in the One we know that can handle any situation and provide so much more than we could ever hope for or even dream about.

And that's what took place there in the desert mountains on the west side of Midian. There was no water, no stream, no lake, no pools of water to bring satisfaction to the thirst of the people of Israel. So when Moses went to the Lord, seeking His solution to the problem, God tells him, *"Take some of the leaders of Israel with you, and go on ahead of the people. Take along the stick with which you struck the Nile. I will stand before you on a rock at Mount Sinai. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink. Moses did so in the presence of the leaders of Israel"* (Ex. 17:5-6).

And what happened? When Moses hit the rock, it split, not because of Moses hitting it, but because God stood on the top of that rock with His staff in hand and hit it at the same time that Moses did. This action released the spring of water beneath the rock bringing thousands of gallons of water out of the ground, running over the rocks in such a river that it wore the stones smooth like in any riverbed. The water flowed down the mountain, causing streams and rivers abundant enough for all the people and livestock to have their fill, and then some. It satisfied the thirst of all 2 million people, and all the animals that were with them, leaving a lasting trail that endures even to this day. God supplied the peoples' need once more in the most astounding way, witnessed by the leaders of the people.

Folks, please don't just say to yourself, "Well, that was great that the Lord gave the people water when they needed it." Don't pass over the huge significance it has for each one of us. The people had great need, again, and when they finally sought out the Lord God for His help, He did a miracle through Moses to meet that need. When they finally gave up complaining and grumbling about their situation, God allowed their thirst to be satisfied. He did it so that they would come to understand that there is nothing too big or too small for Him to accomplish for us, IF we but turn to Him, trust in His power and love, and release the struggle to Him to achieve it for us. It may not be in any way that we think is possible, but it may be in a way that is so much greater than we could ever think or do on our own.

But remember this, please. Once God supplies us with the astounding solution to our problem, don't turn away from Him, and run back to the arms of the world to try to satisfy all your thirsts. The physical thirsts that we have, always, ALWAYS, leads us to discover the spiritual thirst that we cannot satisfy. We will always have that spiritual emptiness within us until we recognize God's thirst- quencher, Jesus Christ.

Paul states it well for us so that we might find the One who can satisfy our spiritual thirst. He tells us Jesus Christ

"...always had the nature of God, but He did not think that by force He should try to become equal with God. Instead of this, of His own free will He gave up all He had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like man and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death – His death on the cross. For this reason God raised Him to the highest place above and gave Him the name that is greater than any other name. And so, in honor of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees, and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:6-11).

Jesus Christ is our thirst quencher, for He walked this world and knows all that we go through. He endured all the thirst of the world, so that He could satisfy the emptiness of our souls. But He wants us to put our faith and trust in Him so that He can do the work necessary to convert us from the things of this world to the ways of God. But it's your choice. He doesn't force us to follow Him.

So the next time you are thirsty, really thirsty, don't complain, or grumble, or put the Lord to the test. Instead, give yourself into the hands of Jesus so that He can satisfy your thirst, both physical and spiritual, to the glory of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.