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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Sunday, April 20. 1980.

Evening Lesson. Isaiah 55.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. Psalm 42. 2.

We may by His grace and Spirit present to you a summary in relation to what the people of God, by the quickening influence of the Spirit long for, and especially in a view and saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly from the moment of regeneration and recognition consequently of the solemnity and ^{seriousness} ~~sinnerness~~ of their sinnership, the Lord will put in their soul a thirst for divine mercy. Undoubtedly the first living prayer that goes out of the soul of a quickened, burdened sinner is the cry that is concisely expressed in the gospel as in the case of the poor publican. With life in his soul, smiting on his breast, he cried to the Lord for His divine mercy. I believe we may well say, taking the whole spectrum of life from the moment of the new birth to the consummation the thirst of a poor, needy sinner and a favoured saint is for divine mercy, for His clemency, His compassion reaches us, my friends. Take the word from the prophet; "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by, - When I see the blood I will pass over you. - and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?" It is because the Lord delighteth in mercy, and because of His infinite compassion. That is the first thirst for God, His divine compassion, mercy, grace and pity. Your poor soul recognises the defilement of sin, the failure of your life, and the sad disappointment you are to your self and others. What a disappointment you are to yourself! You look on your life and feel after all the mercy of God vouchsafed to you, what a disappointment you are to yourself. Amidst it all is a spiritually innate thirst for divine mercy. I want to give a summary for all seeking souls, souls who know already of the mercy and compassion of the Lord and ^{have} tasted that the Lord is gracious; you know already a little of the beauty, glory, preciousness of the Lord Jesus to your soul. So a seeking, longing soul is blessed with an amazing spiritual instinct to thirst for God.

I am to endeavour to answer the question as to how we may define thirst; what it is for. It is a craving, yearning after that which is

imperative, needful and eminently desirable. You crave what you know to be needful for the life, peace, health of your precious soul. I will give you a brief time to think of this. It is not my province to come to members of the beloved flock and have a personal word with you. If I could ask you what you are thirsting after, what would be your response? If I came to the dear aged friends on the borders of the Land and said, what are you thirsting for? what would ^{you} reply? What is topical and current and perennial with you? It would be interesting spiritually if you could write in the back of your Bible or Hymnbook as to what you are thirsting for spiritually. I will give a word of definition that covers the whole. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," for the Being of God, for the Trinity, the God of spirits, the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost. "My soul thirsteth for God." A word of definition let us deliver to the congregation. It means you are thirsting for all that is good, loving, gracious and kind of the dear Lord, aren't you? for all of His divine favours; His pity, love, infinite goodness. That is the coverage: you are thirsting for good things. As Jabez said, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed." You are thirsting for blessings, favours, His presence, His love pardon, for blessed answers to your cries. You are thirsting for all that is precious,- the provisions and blessings of the New Covenant. Is that a correct definition? We might say how many good things the Lord has favoured us with as we thirsted for Him by the Spirit, and how much more we long to enjoy and receive. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." So all these things are in one heavenly, divine category. All the blessings of the decrees of salvation, of a once crucified Redeemer, the precious fruits of the dear One who has risen and ascended, is enthroned and waits to answer prayer and dispense blessings to His dear people. It covers the whole. "My soul thirsteth for God."-for the light of His countenance, His peace, for the enjoyment of divine blessing, the sunshine of His love, His rest, joy, and for all the blessings He has decreed to bestow on His waiting people. You know the beautiful word, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." That is how the Lord answers. I have a purpose in presenting this as a summary before you. What you thirst for is that which is sweet, savoury,

comforting, satisfying. Is that true? You long for the abiding presence of the Lord, for His countenance, as in this Psalm. There is no wrath, no curse, no sorrow in it. You long for the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it. I leave this thought with the friends, so when you retire to rest you may ponder what you thirst for. We do not merit good, blessed things, do we? We could never merit the favour or joy of the Lord. So I want, as it may please the Lord to give grace and strength to lay ministerially the foundation for the blessing.

Does it occur to you why He should give you sweet sips of the river of God? why He should anoint your head with oil so your cup runs over? Why should He give you blessed days, sweet occasions when you are satisfied with fatness? There is a sublime, glorious answer to this, and it is a doctrinal, spiritual foundation for the same. It will test your spiritual experience and holy knowledge. What is the foundation for it? "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." The term means you will never have a denial: you will receive the blessing. What is the foundation? I want to turn to St John and deliver to you the foundation. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." What about it? "My soul thirsteth for God." and your Saviour standing as your heavenly Surety, and suffering for you, said, "I thirst." It is the same word, isn't it? There is such a depth in this, I believe you will take it with you and meditate on it. Jesus said, "I thirst." What was the issue? "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar,"- bitter. "How bitter that cup, no heart can conceive." "and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth." Did He reject it? No. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar,"- that was His drink. "in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." Vinegar expresses His vicarious Passion, the curse He drank, the vengeance He exhausted. Because your Saviour drank vinegar, you may thirst for God and drink sweetness, and bliss flows to you through His agony. This opened before my spirit: this is the secret. My Saviour thirsted: they gave Him vinegar to drink, and because of His accomplished priestly work of atonement and all He endured for us, we may drink sweetness and

blessing, joy, comfort, peace, That is the foundation.

"Thy temples, Immanuel bled,
That mine might with glory be crowned."

and because He drank vinegar; endured for you, child of God, the curse, you may drink the heavenly joy, peace, happiness, bliss you thirst for. I might come to the close of the discourse: there is much to assimilate. When you taste blessing remember what the Saviour drank. We do drink; we are not left destitute; we are not denied the blessing. You will say concerning some occasions, Lord's Days and others, what a blessed day it has been to my soul. You said it because you thirsted for God and the Lord gave you to drink living water. He gave you a taste of the water sweet from Bethlehem's well; a sweet sip of His boundless, ineffable love. You know the issue, the spiritual posture, the feeling of your soul when you drink blessing. You can humbly, with the confidence of faith, ^{say} It is well. Why? Because the Lord has satisfied your thirst for God. You go to your home and you hardly know of your surroundings, and the driver of the car hardly knows how the miles passed because the dear Lord has been in the Sanctuary and in your heart. You know what it is to thirst for God. If you once get a taste of it you will want more. You will thirst for 'holiness without a stain', for Glory, for complete likeness to the dear Saviour. O this thirst for Him! Let us bless God that we ^{have} known what it is to partake of sweetness, joy, the blessing of God this year. O the times of blessing!

Another point is, - and following the testimony, It is well: and you are favoured if you can say it concerning your loved ones. I believe I felt a few times in the earlier days at "The Grove", when the Lord blessed my soul I felt that all under the roof would go to Glory. That is drinking. - The Lord would not give you a thirst and disappoint you. If you came to Zoar Chapel with a thirst in your soul for God, He will not send His dear people away empty and ashamed. "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." Sweet moments rich in blessing. You know in your ransomed soul that it is well; you are bound for Glory. Glory has already begun in you, and there is a sweet feeling, "Lord, I could go Home if it were Thy time to call me." It is the Lord satisfying your thirst. If I could appeal to the friends this would be my enquiry. Have you had one day this year when you felt if it

was the Lord's time you could come to be with Him in bliss?- so safe, secure in the arms of Jesus, so peaceful, happy, serene. Why? Because you know the fulness of this; "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Dear discerning hearers, beloved flock and friends will know how we brought it forth in the ministry to show the foundation for it. Because of the vinegar, all He endured, you may drink sweetness; you have blessings and favours. Every time the Lord blesses you, you drink, and presently you will drink at the Fountain source in Glory.

"Beneath the sacred Throne of God
I saw a river rise."

That is the Fountain source. You will be there, and He leading you to living fountains of waters, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. I bless God for this expectation; it is not presumption, it is in my spirit to anticipate the day, 'would stretch her wings and fly away'. O this beloved Saviour! So here below when you drink of the river of God, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, think of vinegar, and what it cost Him. Think of the sweet willingness of Christ to suffer so we might live and be blessed. And think on this word; "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." It relates to those who have been blessed with deliverance and sweet foretastes of Heaven, and need to be led into patient waiting for Christ to come and take them to Himself. Are some of you like that? The Lord has blessed you and you are blessed for ever, and you are patiently waiting for Christ. Some will say, spare them a little longer, subject to Thy will. This is the foundation. "I thirst." said the Lord Jesus. What a cup He drank! and the vinegar He received so we might have blessing, joy, comfort, salvation.

We will look at two other aspects of the Text. One is the aspect of that which is so absolutely essential to our salvation, life and peace. You will thirst for all things indispensable to your soul. It is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and you have defiled yourself and feel a sorry spectacle of a Christian; on your poor heart lies the burden. What you thirst for is for the Lord to come and take a poor sinner and plunge him in the fountain opened for sin and for all uncleanness. Is that true?

"Defiled I am indeed;
Defiled throughout by sin;

"Thy purple fountain, Lord, I need,
To wash a leper clean.

The fountain open stands,
Yet on its brink I dwell;
O put me in with Thy own hands,
And that will make me well."

and you will thirst for this. Take the Lord's dear people: there is the time of love, of great blessing: and then you feel so destitute; you feel so troubled. You will thirst for the Lord to visit you, to come under your roof, into your heart. What is this earth, this planet, skies, this inferior clod? You will thirst for the abiding presence of the Lord. I have always thought of dear Mr Gibb of Tenterden, who occasionally visits this Sanctuary. On the last occasion I was preaching from the word; "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."- the fountain of purgation. After the service of gracious liberty and unction he said to me, "After this evening this is how I feel. I want the dear Lord to plunge me once more in the fountain and take me Home." You will thirst for this. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." Don't you feel you much older friends, "O if the Lord would plunge me in the precious fountain and take me Home, so I am never more defiled by sin!"? Things absolutely essential you thirst for.

I will go to the other side which is this. You will thirst for God because of your delight in Him. Do you see? "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." For absolute, sheer delight, holy pleasure you will thirst for God. There is this particular to name to you. Whereas as a poor guilty sinner under conviction, blessed with repentance, you thirst for the provisions of the gospel, also the new man of grace is holy, impeccable; it can never sin. X You will thirst for God because knowing the principle of holiness in your soul, you thirst for holiness; for the same nature and things, and there are no substitutes. You thirst for all that is holy because you have got holiness in you and there is this aspect of it; things must be of a like nature. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." With this pardoned, justified, sanctified child of God you thirst only for God, for Christ, and this proves relationship, oneness, communion. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." What

a word of comfort this is; "for the living God." When it came to the test on the mount between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, and there is no need to go into it: the first to dress the bullock were the prophets of Baal. They began in the morning and called on the name of Baal until noon, but there was no voice nor any that answered. Elijah mocked them, and said, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." To you who know the Lord, you thirst for the living God. I am sure the resurrection of Christ is here. "Because I live ye shall live also." Think of the living God. He says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."- the living God: living members, lively stones, "built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." Blessed be God.