

Draw Near to God: Soul Thirst

(Protect Your Thirst - Part 5)

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

You can open your Bibles to Hebrews 8. I would just turn to Hebrews 8. I would not necessarily start reading it because when I start speaking... as I start speaking, you're not going to see any connection. Let's pray.

Father, when it's all said and done, we want to be found in Christ. When it's all been said and done, we want to be found to be one of the redeemed. When it's all said and done, we do want to be the people that hear: "Well done, good and faithful servant." We know that those who are cast away, it is said, "I never knew you." "Depart from Me." We want to hear. And we hear this, it's said of You, Lord, that You'll own us in that day. You'll confess us to Your Father. That's all that will matter in that day that we hear from You: "I knew You." "You're Mine." Lord, I just thank You again. I thank You, we sang it, full atonement - can it be? We thank You there is such a thing. Thank You in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

So yes, I am continuing with the James 4:8 "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." The title of my sermon today is: "Draw Near to God: Soul Thirst." And I'm going to develop that. Of all the messages that I've done in this series, I was not at peace this week. I wrestled over this - what to say, whether even to do this message. Soul thirst.

So, let's just think. This is something we know about, but let's think about it. Solomon can come along and he can say this. He can say: Hearing good news from a far land... He wants to give us something ahead of that to show us what that's like. What's like that? He says, I'll tell you what's like that. Cold water to a thirsty soul. Now see, that is imagery that doesn't need to be defined because we've all been there. It's something that's commonplace. That's why Solomon uses that kind of imagery. Or, the prophet Isaiah says these words: "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, their tongue is parched with thirst." Parched. We can use that. We're parched.

What's thirst? What is thirst? Dry. Parched. Thirst. It's the most basic longing and yearning and desire for water. And I would say this about thirst. Thirst is a sense of our need if you really want to define it, because it's sensory. We sense this. But more than many desires, it's a sense of a need. You know, there are many things we desire that the reality is if we don't get them, we don't die. But if you don't get water, you die. Thirst is different than hunger. Oh, I know we talk about hungering and thirsting for righteousness and sometimes they're companions and they go back to back, but we know, thirst isn't hunger and hunger isn't thirst. And you know the big difference? Do you know you can go without food for four weeks? Eight weeks? Eight weeks is pushing it, but you know you can go a month or two before you starve to death. Anybody know how long you go without water before you die? Three days. Yeah, that's pretty much an accepted number. Three days. Thirst is an intense desire for something you must have. That's the idea.

And you know, you think about water. Did you know, we might think okay, God has created life, so many different kinds of creatures, a vast array, but did you know from the

smallest bacteria to the largest blue whale, every single form of life that God has created that we're aware of, it needs water to live. No water? You don't survive. Life as we know it on this planet would not exist if it wasn't for the fact of water.

Now, brethren, stay with me here. This is where you have to stay tuned in. I had you turn to Hebrews. Why would I have you turn to Hebrews? If you know Hebrews 8, 9? There's nothing said there necessarily about thirst. Look at Hebrews 8. "The point in what we're saying is this: We have such a high priest, One who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man." Do you know there is a tent that man set up? Moses. There was a tabernacle in the wilderness. There was a temple in Jerusalem. You know what we're being told here? Those things, go to v. 5, "They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." You have an earthly priesthood. You have an earthly tabernacle. These things are simply symbolism. These things are a copy. They're a shadow.

Now, here's the thing, part of being a wise and discerning New Testament Christian is being able to differentiate between substance and shadow. And the thing about shadow, shadow is real. But the thing about shadow is God always means for us to look past it to see what's casting the shadow. Because if you stop at the shadow, you always fall short. So you know what? You don't want to stop at the earthly priesthood. You don't want to stop with the earthly tabernacle.

But did you know this? It's not just Old Testament worship. God has been pleased to design shadow into the creation all around us. God created them male and female. The Apostle Paul comes along and says see that husband over there? Look past him. Don't stop there. Look past. He's a shadow. What's casting the shadow? Christ. See the woman? What's casting the shadow? The church is casting that shadow. Ah... you see, this is how He has created things.

I grew up in Michigan. You know what was back there? We lived on 8 acres. Paw Paw, Michigan. If you went out behind my house, yeah, this time of year, you know what you would find across that field back there? Something we call milkweed. Now, we don't have it here. I've never seen it here. If you break them, the juice inside was white as milk, thick as Elmer's glue, and sticky, and it was poisonous. And if anything ate it, it was poisoned. There was only one thing that ate milkweeds. Anybody know? Monarch butterfly. And there'd be these worms back there. And you know what? If I took one of these worms and I threw it in a jar, and I stuffed some of the leaves in there, this thing would get bigger and bigger and eventually it would go up to the top and it would hang upside down and it would turn into this beautiful green with gold gilding cocoon or a chrysalis. And you know what, you give it about 2 weeks and the thing all of a sudden you'd see butterfly wings and it would become translucent. And then suddenly there'd be a monarch butterfly hanging.

Have you ever thought? That is metamorphosis. That is the transformation. That is a picture of God saving and regenerating sinners. A butterfly. This thing is beautiful and it flies and it flies among the flowers. Before that, it was a worm. Have you ever thought God actually created worms to become butterflies. That is an absolute miracle, but because it happens, we get used to it. But you know what? You're never supposed to stop at these kinds of things. We're supposed to look beyond it. There's spiritual truth just interwoven in what God has created. It's all around us.

What does God do in His Word? I'll tell you what He does. He takes our most basic parched yearning for water. He says, men and women, boys and girls, He says, I want you to behold something. I want you to see. I designed you to thirst and you know all about it because every one of you have been thirsty. But that's a shadow and don't stop there. The water that you have a yearning for? That's a shadow. Don't stop there. Something else is casting those shadows. There's a greater substance and a greater reality beyond that.

Do you feel the dryness in your mouth? Sometimes when you start talking about water, you know all you have to do is say to people: "Oh, we're out of water." What happens? You're like... just watch. Are any of you drinking? But what God does is, you know, waterless... See, Carlos is drinking over here.

These waterless, dusty places. The sense of a need for moisture. And God says, you know what, that thirst is not the substance, and this water... We sang about it. That deer panting comes from Psalm 42. "As the deer pants..." And the psalmist says, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" This is just what Jesus did. He said: Woman, you stand there at a well. You're pulling up water. And you're just going to keep thirsting over and over and over for it. But if you knew who I was, you see, all that is just an image. It's a picture. If you knew who I was, oh, there's a water that you know not of, and it will quench a thirst that's different than your thirst for water. It's the true thirst. You see a lamb in the field. No, that's not the end. We don't see a whole lot of them here, but there is a Lamb that is greater.

This is how God created things. God created thirst not as an end in itself. Shadows are never the end. They're never the stopping point. They are to take us upward and onward and outward to greater realities. And think about this, thirst is a sense of our need. Well, there's a greater need than water. You'll die in three days without water. You die eternally without the Living Water. It's a greater need.

Now the passage that I'm interested in and the one that's going to connect us with James 4 is Psalm 63. Everybody turn there. Psalm 42, Psalm 63, and also I think it's Psalm 143. They're the three where the psalmist is really going to deal with us concerning thirst. Psalm 63. There's a reality here that I want you to see. "O God, You are my God; earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh faints for You as in a dry and weary land where there is no water."

Brethren, I want to ask you something. Do you know this? I'm not necessarily asking you where are you at right at this moment? I'm just asking you, do you know this? Do you feel a longing for God where you could say yes, it's akin to thirst. Yes, that accurately describes what I feel. A yearning. Do you get a sense in this world that it's a dusty place? (incomplete thought) Brethren, I know this, I know that thirst is different than taking a deep draught of God. Obviously, thirsting for water and then drinking water - I continue to drink water because the thirst is still there. And what I've found with the Lord that typically the more you drink, the more desperate you become to want more. That doesn't mean that at some occasions you're satisfied or maybe even sometimes it feels like you can't hardly contain more. But even to have that only makes you want more later. It makes you not satisfied. I don't always have the Lord close. Not as close as we might want the Lord drawing near. We draw near to Him, He'll draw near to you. We don't always have Him draw near to us. We don't always see His face the way we want to. We're not always in the near and dear communion with Him the way that we would desire. But at least the next best thing to have, to be languishing with thirst, to be wretched with thirst because we're

missing Him, because we can't find Him and have that thirst burning in us until we do find Him. That is a very healthy thing.

If the Lord - the Lord... I constantly think about that imagery of walking - God walking - in the cool of the day in the garden. And I just have this imagery in my mind of Adam in all that time before he fell walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day with the Lord. And this is what it's all about. This is salvation. It's paradise regained. We want to be back there. But even if we're not manifestly walking with the Lord in the cool of the day, yet so long, brethren, so long as we are not content to not see His face, to not experience the manifestation, as long as there is the sigh and a cry and there's a following hard after and a panting after. You know what? The truth is James 4:8 that says that if I draw near to Him, He'll draw near to me, so long as my heart pants after God and I'm going hard after God, James 4:8 gives me the promise that He's coming.

Just look at the text. Look at Psalm 63. I want you to feel this. Notice "earnestly I seek You." And don't miss the connection with what's said next: "My soul thirsts for You." You see the connection? Brethren, that's the truth in the church. You show me people that are thirsty. You show me people that have a sense: I've got to find God. There's a longing. The world doesn't satisfy this. The stuff out here doesn't do it. The money of this world doesn't do it and the pleasures don't do it. There's an ache in here and I need something. God has let me taste of Him and I'm not satisfied now to be without Him.

You show me a church where you've got people desperate, where people are thirsty, and you know what's connected to it? What's connected to the thirst? This earnest seeking. They go hand-in-hand. Because you show me a person, you show me a person that's been out in the desert for two days, and they haven't drank. Do you know what they're going to do? They're going to be desperate to find out where the water is. They're going to go to where it is. They're going to try to dig in the ground. If they see a mirage out there, they're going to go after it even if it turns out not to be the right thing. Why? Because in the end, there's something burning and compelling them. Thirst compels us to seek. And the promise of James is that if we seek Him and we draw near to Him, He's coming. We're going to find Him.

And you know what it says down there in Psalm 63:8? You look down a little. "My soul clings to You." You know how that's said in the King James Version? "My soul followeth hard after God." Maybe a lot of you have heard that before. Following hard after God. You see the connection? I earnestly seek You. I follow hard after God. My soul faints for You. There's this thirst.

I can't emphasize enough how important soul thirst is to us. Why? Because people will desperately pursue the Lord when there's a soul thirst. Unquenched. It moves a man in the right direction. "Come, everyone who thirsts." This is how Scripture speaks. Or Scripture says, "On the last day..." "On the last day of the feast..." you know this. You know these texts. There's Jesus. The last day, the great day. He stands up and He says again: If you thirst, if anyone thirsts, "let him come to Me and drink." And that's how our Bibles end in Revelation 22. "The one who is thirsty, come. Let the one who desires, take the water of life without price." You see, the reality is this, even when it comes to salvation at the beginning, Jesus recognizes this. You won't come and take it unless you're thirsting for it.

Thirst. The thing that I would fear most is if we had a church full of people that are content. You see, thirst is the opposite of content. There is a contentment in Scripture that is righteous, good, and holy. But there is a contentment in Scripture that is not good. You see, thirst never leaves a man content. To be content to not have God is destructive, it's deadly.

I know thirst is not the same thing as taking a deep draught of God, but thirst motivates. It drives us. Yes, it's one thing to thirst. It's another thing to actually drink of the thing that we're thirsty for, but the thirst itself drives us to drink. And so, in this series, I see it. I see thirst. It comes up in the Old Testament. It comes up in the New Testament. Thirst is good.

So, brethren, I recognize this. I recognize that there are people who "do" Christianity. It's willpower religion. I'm going to become a Christian. I'm going to attend church. I'm going to own a Bible. I'm going to force myself to read it. Thirsty Christians put an end to all that. Thirsty people are different than just willpower kind of Christians that they see Christianity as kind of a duty. You know, we've got to do this thing. Why? Because I'm going to lose my soul in the end, so I've got to make sure that I go through the motions. But this is entirely different. And this kind of thirst, it drives us.

You see, the duty-minded "religionist," he hears "draw near to God." And so, it becomes more of a duty. It becomes more of a: give me the list. How do I do this? But you know, when you've got a thirsty person, you don't have to give a thirsty person a list of steps on how to find water. They're looking for it. You know what? Thirsty people, they come into the meeting and they want to hear from God. God, come. I need You! I need help! I need You to draw close. You come into the prayer meeting. We need to be heard. We need to get through. We need to have some kind of ability, an unction with God. That's what happens. Lord, I'm going to fast, not like the hypocrite, not just to put the notch on my belt that I fast twice in a week. Lord, I need You! There's some longing in my heart. You see, this is the psalmist. I thirst. I feel it. I'm in a parched place. I'm in this dry place. Lord, there's a panting in my soul. I'm not satisfied. Oh brethren, you have a church full of people like that, that'll turn the world upside down. That's the difference.

Because what happens? You know what happens? What happens? You've got this. "Draw near to Me and I will draw near to you." Oh, you know what happens? When you've got thirsty people, how do you have to convince a thirsty person to draw near to the water? You've got a thirsty person over here. You just set it there. It's not like I even have to say: Now this is water. And you should walk that straight line. Put one foot in front of the other. He doesn't need that. He sees what he's longing for and he's going to come to it.

And I recognize this, the promise of James 4 is going to come to life when you have a thirsty people. Why? Because they're looking for God. They're looking to draw near to God. They're looking to find God. And you know what happens? They're looking. They're looking for Him. They're trying to draw near. They're trying to press in. They're thirsty people. They're looking for the water. And God's promise then comes into play. Oh, you thirst for Me and you come seeking My face? You'll find Me. And I'll give Myself to you. And what happens then? Then we're full of glory. Then we're full of joy. And you remember how it's said. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." That's the reality.

When we find God, you know what happens? It infuses us with a mighty unction to sacrifice and to run. We heard those two letters: G O. Brethren, when you've got a people that are thirsty for God and they find God, you come across such glory it's like I want to tell people!

They're standing before the Sanhedrin. They're getting beat for it. They're getting imprisoned for it. And they're rejoicing. That's what people do when they're hungry for God and they found God and it's glorious to them. And suddenly, all you have to do is open the door. And you can let a person like that out into the world and watch what they do. Those are the kind of people that turn the world upside down. Not the duty religionists. Not the willpower religionists where it's just all I've got to go through the motions.

And listen, if you can't tell the difference between what I'm talking about right now, then you're not in a good place. Because this is what true Christianity is all about. Don't we look at Christianity, conversion as this exchange of desires. Our desires become altogether new. Isn't that what happens? Brethren, when we find God it infuses us with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. And you fill a people full of joy and the joy of the Lord is our strength, and suddenly we're strengthened to do all sorts of things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know how it was said of the Lord Himself? "Because of the joy that was set before Him" what happened? He endured the cross. What does it take for a people to endure suffering and endure sacrifice and cross-carrying and dying daily? Just infuse them full of a glory of the joy of finding God. Come out of the holy place having this glory manifest to them. And you know what? Unleash a people like that. This isn't mechanical and cold and stale. People like that don't sit around all content, just be happy, and stare at each other. No way. Brethren, this is it.

God give us eyes to see. This is where the motivation comes to break... oh, we need this. I have mentioned this before. I feel it. We need the motivation to break from all the Western pleasures and softness and impel us to the kind of sacrifice and mercy and missions and daily dying. I mean, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies... That's not just a picture of Christ. That's a picture of all of us. Where is all this going to come from? It comes from this joyful reality of God. God coming, God being real to us. Is God real? Do you sit on your sofa? Do you go home? Can you sit at the kitchen table? Do you feel this longing? Do you pour yourself a cup of coffee in the morning? Do you come to the Word of God and it's like God, I've got to find You. I want You. Are you feeling this? Do you go out and pray and then sometimes you don't stop praying because it's like I've got to find God. This isn't enough. This duty stuff... I can't just go through the motions. Lord, I've got to find You. I need the reward of the Father. I need You, Lord, to draw near.

We'll not be compelled to desperately seek Him if what? If our heart doesn't feel anything. Thirst is a sense of need. But if we don't sense anything, if we don't feel it, there's no inner soul thirst that's been awakened inside us to make me desperate to need to drink of God that's going to catapult me forward into the kind of life that's spelled out for me in Scripture?

Brethren, I'll tell you this, thirst is a desire. You show me a church full of people with burdens and desires and passions and anguish of soul and panting and desperate thirst, that's good. People without those things, but just a contentment, brethren, it's the other. They turn the world upside down.

So I would say this, this is really the objective of this sermon. Protect your thirst. That may seem like a strange thing to say. Protect my thirst. Yes, protect the ache. Protect the longing to know the Lord, that yearning to have fellowship with Him. Protect the thirst, that longing to draw near to Him.

I would say getting back to Hebrews, Esau despised his birthright. And I was thinking about this. Don't despise your birthright. Do you know thirst is one of your birthrights? You say how do you figure that? Because of this: The Holy Spirit is a birthright. And He's the thirst-maker. And He indwells you. Every true Christian feels this thirst. You have it by birth. Just as we are born into the physical realm to physical thirst, so we are born into the spiritual to a spiritual thirst. Every Christian knows something of this thirst. But we can despise this and we can neglect this. And we can seek to not protect it. And that's what I'm emphasizing.

Psalms 143, "I stretch out my hands to You. My soul thirsts for You like a parched land." Now look, the child of God can say this. The child of God knows. He's tasted of the world. The child of God feels something of the emptiness of the broken cisterns of this world. We feel this because the Spirit of God causes us. You know one of the things that the Spirit said is He's going to glorify Christ. One of the ways He glorifies Christ, you remember what Christ said? Nobody comes unto Me unless what? (from the room) The Father draws him. Tim: And how does the Father draw? The Father draws using the Spirit of God. There's a drawing. See, drawing. What's that look like? With cords of what? (from the room) Love. Tim: Well, it's going to come down to some thirst. There's a desire in the soul. Brethren, we all know something of this. But we need to protect it. We need to watch out. There's something hollow in all the world.

You know what it was with Moses. It's like as much as he had, it was not enough. Finally, just Lord, show me Your glory. I want to see more. You've brought me close. You've brought me up on the mountain. You've talked to me here in the tabernacle. Lord, I want more. Show it all to me. There was a thirst in his soul. Show me Your glory. Oh, to be in the presence of God. There's nothing comparable to this.

But here's the thing, here's the thing I would ask you. Who can make himself thirsty? I mean, you hear, "My soul thirsts for You." It's not a commandment. It's not a demand. It's not even an encouragement really other than the fact that here's a godly man - a man after God's own heart and he's experiencing this. That in itself probably ought to be an encouragement.

But you know, in the Old Testament, it's just matters of fact. Here's a man - David - and he's thirsty. Isaiah 55? "Whoever thirsts..." John 7, Revelation 22 - 21 and 22. It's kind of this recognition that there are people that thirst. That's how Scripture presents it. But what these invitations do: "if you're thirsty, come," - they assume thirsty people. But it doesn't command it, doesn't demand it, doesn't encourage it, just supposes that there's a reality. Brethren, the truth about thirst is this: You know this, even if it's thirst for water - oh, we know maybe what we could be about that might produce a thirst. One of the things that produces a thirst is just don't drink for a long enough time. But we can't produce it. I mean, even in a physical sense. Who knows where the springs of thirst come from?

But here's the thing that I would say, I would say, Christian, pursue thirst. How? I encourage you to do this. I encourage you to fight for thirst. Yet, thirst is a gift from God. God works in us. Doesn't God work in us to will and to do? He works in us to desire. He works in us to thirst. God works in us to be able to pant after Him. Natural man doesn't pant after Him. "Unless My Father draws you, you don't come." "Draw us and we will run after You." Song of Solomon. We don't produce that. God does. And we want to embrace that truth. We want to embrace that reality. That prevents us from thinking that the thirst that we ought to fight for is ultimately something that's due to our achievement. And yet, I would say this, fight for it.

The question comes up: How? How do we fight for it? You know, over the years, there's a text that I find very helpful and also marvelous. This text comes from 1 Peter 2. I want you all to look at it. This verse will help us. 1 Peter 2:2. Maybe you know it. Maybe you're familiar with this. "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into salvation." Now, here's the thing. You've got milk. I know it's spiritual milk, but what is a longing for a liquid? Thirst. That's what we have here. We have spiritual thirst. You can say, yeah, but it says the spiritual milk. And in the context, it's probably speaking about the Word of God. Well, I recognize, but listen, why in the world would God want you to desire His Word except to find Him and a knowledge of Him. And Christ said "they speak of Me." You don't really want to separate, but you know, even if you did and however you want to sort that out, you still have to come back to this reality. God is commanding us to have a spiritual thirst. Don't you love that? I love that.

You know what fatalism is? What is it? What's going to happen is going to happen. It's just the way it is. It's resigning yourself basically to a certain fate, to a certain destiny. It's already been determined. I can't do anything about it. There's no way to change it. And if there is a verse in all your Bible to help throw fatalism to the wind it is this. Fatalism says: I can't make myself thirst. The amount of thirst I have - remember? We sang about a sovereign God, did we not? Is God sovereign? Okay, so, fatalism says - and fatalism loves the sovereignty of God, by the way. It feasts on it. "Well, God created me this way." If I'm this way and I have a certain amount of spiritual thirst and spiritual desire, well, what can I do to change it? Because after all, where is that at? Where do I find the root springs of all that? How can I touch that? How can I change that? If God wants me this way, then this is the way I'm going to be. And if God wants to change me, then God will change me. I mean, the level of spiritual intensity and spiritual passion that I have in my life, well, maybe I'm not like that brother over there, but if that brother over there's different than me, it's because God made him that way and God made me this way. And yes, others may have these strong desires and this excitement in God, but I can't change things. And you know what? That kind of fatalism is destructive and tragic and deadening to the church of God. Don't fall for it. Brethren, don't fall for it. Because what you have right here is a text that says: Christian, you can be commanded to thirst. It's right here and you see it.

So you know what? A good place to start is to let our faith soak that in, to really believe, oh yeah, I see that. It's there. You know what happens? Fatalism. It leaves people stuck. Well, I am the way I am. I don't see a whole lot of potential to get out of this. You know, it destroys the hopes and the dreams of becoming something more. Don't you want to be more? Don't you want to be closer to God? Don't you want to have greater longings and greater thirsts? Greater desperation? I do! I want to find Him more. And I know if I've got a thirst that drives me to find Him more, I will find Him more because James 4:8 tells me that I will. And so I want that drive. I want that. People don't feel desperate longings for God, and they say, well, that's just the way I am. No! No, no, no!

So people without much passion for God, zeal for His name, you know what can happen? What happens in the church? They just settle in. Oh, God, help us! Spare us! No. I want to look off this pulpit and see those wild spiraling eyes that they caricatured in the cartoons that show you somebody that's crazy. Give me crazy spiral eyes. I've got to find God! Don't you want that? I want that! We need that!

And you know what? It's possible because David, he said, "I pant after You." This is a guy made of the same stuff. Look, don't you love that about the psalms? They're just brutally honest. They just pour it out there. And you know what, for all the times this guy might have been backward and fallen and he's got to have his psalms of repentance, and other times he's got to bemoan the fact that he did this or did that or the other thing, and yet, here he is made of the flesh and blood we are. And he can say, "Oh, I earnestly seek You." Why, David? Why? Because there's a thirst. There's a soul thirst in me and it's burning. I can't get away from it. I'm not satisfied unless I find God. Brethren, what happens is this fatalism, it just quenches the excitement. We hear about life and life more abundantly. Fatalism doesn't lead to that. Not more abundance. Not at all.

Peter won't let us do this. This passage does not let us just settle into this kind of fatalism. What's so glorious is that God commands thirst. "Long for the pure spiritual milk." You know what God's doing there? He's commanding us not to be a spiritual fatalist. Don't just settle in. He's saying long for something that maybe you don't long for right now. Thirst for something maybe you don't thirst for as much as you ought to. Look, I know this is dealing with pure spiritual milk. But you've got to see that it's just simply, it's a spiritual thirst and it's being commanded. You go to Scripture. Why? Why does God want you to thirst for this book? To find Him! That's what's behind all that. This God-thirst. This text gives us warrant to believe that we don't have to be stuck in low levels of thirst. I love this. A command to desire. A command to feel longings I maybe don't feel. A command to feel thirst that maybe I don't have. Is anything more contrary to spiritual fatalism than this? Fatalism says I can't create a thirst for God. I can't do that. If it's not there, it's not there. If I don't feel things the way the psalmist does when he says "as a deer pants for the flowing streams," if that's not true, if I don't feel that way, that's that.

But how can God command me to have this desire? What can I do to obey such a commandment as that? How do I just produce desire? How do I wake up one day and say: I want to be thirsty for God. I want to be more thirsty. I want to be twice as thirsty as I am. Where's the multiplier in my life? There's something I can drink? Is there a switch I can throw? What do we do? I'll tell you this, a good place to start is just to trust the Lord. You say what do you mean? Just this, if we have a God who commands us to thirst, you can trust Him that He gives the grace and He gives the ability to do what He commands. So you can start by trusting Him and say I don't have to be stuck.

But then, okay, that's good. We start there. Okay, I believe God can make me more thirsty. So what do I do? I'll not settle. And I would say this, don't be willing to settle for less than God shows in His Word to be good and necessary. If God's inspired this book and preserved these psalms for us to show us a man thirsty, don't settle for less than that. Don't look at that and say: that's him and I'm okay not being that. Don't.

I'll tell you this, one of the starting places that I would take you to is right there. Pray. Because if you remember back to James 4, "You don't have because you don't ask." I hope you can go to Psalm 143 and Psalm 63 and Psalm 42 and say, Lord, I'm not content, because I see a thirst in a man. And I'm not going to say that that thirst level was constant in David's life. I don't know. I didn't walk with him every day of his life. Probably the day that he called Bathsheba over something was desperately wrong. But Lord, You preserved a man who thirsted for You this

way. Lord, You've commanded us to have spiritual desires. Give me what David had. Ask Him. Brethren, ask right now. Ask Him. I want more. Cause me to thirst more. I want to thirst like that. I want to feel a desperation. I want to be unsettled. I want to lay awake at night panting after You. I want You more than sleep. And if I don't, if I know I like my sleep better than I like spending time with You, Lord, make that different. Wake me up in the night. Wake me up at 2 a.m. Cause me to be so thirsty that I'll spend time right there whether I lay on my back or go out the door or wherever. Lord, do this. Make this happen. Do you have longing? Do you lack longing? Get the longing. That's what Peter says. Get it. You don't have it? Get it. Well, the first thing you want to do: Lord, please, give it. Give it.

Brethren, remember the Gospel. Remember when Christ came to us in the first place. We were altogether wretched. We were like the Ezekiel 16 picture. We were in our blood. We were an ugly mess. And you know what? If you're a Christian now, but you're dealing with some kind of soul sickness because the soul thirst just isn't there - and that is a sickness. When God's people are not loving and longing after the Lord like they ought to, that's a sickness. That's often worldliness creeping in. That is a horrible contentment that's like a plague, a disease that comes upon us. But you remember this. You remember the Gospel. You remember what it's all about. He came to us when we were in worse shape. And is He going to cast you off now?

Brethren, let me ask you this. If your child gets sick, are you going to put him out the door? Well, I don't want anything to do with you. In fact, if you have a child that's so desperately sick they're on their deathbed and some of their last cries, that's the kind of thing that's going to pierce a mother's heart. And yet God says a mother may forget her child. God says I'm not going to forget you. Okay, we've got us a God that's not going to forget us. Lord, please, I'm asking You. I mean, you talk about asking for something that's good. Asking for something that's absolutely according to His will, something that absolutely has everything to do with your relationship with God and your closeness to Him. Lord, cause me, cause me to thirst after You. Give me what David has. Plead with Him for it.

The second thing I would say is this just in ending here. The truth is I don't even know if I needed to give you anything practical. Maybe just talking about the thirst is enough for the Spirit of God to create a longing in your souls. But I would say the second thing is this. There are many thirst killers, but one of them is when the Spirit intensifies that thirst and you resist it. You say what do you mean? It's like you feel it. You need to go pray right now. You need to get in the Word. Yeah, I've got to do this thing over here first. And then you know what? It's like the Song of Solomon 5. By the time you get to the door, He's gone.

Don't do that. When He bids you come, go. If you feel Him moving you to pray, run to the place of prayer. If you feel Him, go to the Word. Get in the Psalms or wherever it is, get in the Gospels. Don't resist it. You say, well, you know, what if I've got to take care of my children? What if I'm in the office? Look, He obviously understands those things. But I'm saying this, you know this full well, how often would we have to hang our heads in shame at the times we did feel some bidding, some burden, and like a cold glass of water working the opposite way, we poured it on the fire? That's one thing you don't want to do with water as you're thinking about what it portrays. Water can also be a fire quencher.

Brethren, train your ear because that Song of Solomon, there's reality. "Come, My love, My dove. Come away." Your Savior calls you to that if you've got an ear to hear. And sometimes

we've got so much noise or His voice even penetrates the noise, but we're distracted by the cares and the concerns. We mean to get there and we do, but you know what? The preciousness we would have had and the increase of thirst that would have attended our lives, it's gone. And we get to the door. Where is my Beloved? He's not there. And now I have to spend a lot of time looking for Him. You can think this graphic, but that picture, He was wanting to make love to your soul and your feet were [clean] and you were already in bed. Don't. This is two of the ways to encourage this thirst.

Father, make us a thirsty people to turn the world upside down. Lord, but not just for that, make us a thirsty people that we may find You and know You and enjoy You more than anything else. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.