

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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Thirst

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Thirst

Abstract

"The thirst here is for living water in the parched soul of someone who's wandering in a desert where there's nothing more than hot sand."

Posting about yearning for God from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/thirst/>

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Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

James Calvin Schaap

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 42](#)

[Isaiah 29:17-24](#)

[Acts 5:12-16](#)

| *“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.”*

I am not sure what I’m about to say is instructive or merely sensational, but one can die from thirst in four days, even if all you’re doing is praying.

At the end of my career, classrooms were strewn with water jugs in all shapes and sizes, some monstrous. Students toted them everywhere. Even in church, in the middle of a sermon, [millennials](#) of all ages take out bottle and grab a swig as if the numbers on their internal clocks tick dangerously close to 92 hours. I just don’t get it—but I’m not of their generation.

I’m guessing none of us—the heavy drinkers included—know the extremity of the opening line of Psalm 42, but then neither do I. I can’t remember a time in my life when. . .

Wait a minute. I used to bale hay. Just about every memory haying is *in the barn*, where, by noon, temperatures would soar in dusty, cob-webbed corners of ancient hay mows.

Today, close to sixty years later, I start buying lemonade come June. Often, I chug it, even though I haven’t bucked a bale in half a century. I remember baling hay whenever I drink lemonade. I remember slipping wet quart jars out of insulated paper bags, screeching off lids, and chugging cold lemonade right through a dozen ice cubes.

Still, only a few of us know the extremity of the simile here—of thirst that rages into outright panting. And I’m not among them. I’ll never forget pouring down ice cold lemonade in a hay mow, but I was nowhere near dying, even though at twelve I may have thought so and probably acted like it.

We don’t know that David wrote Psalm 42, but some believe he did; what’s more, some like to think he wrote it when his son, Absalom, was threatening his father’s life. Whether or not that’s true, the heft of the psalm’s opening simile has little to do with our not packing a thermos. Water jugs have nothing to do with Psalm 42.

What David is saying—if indeed he is the author—is that he passionately thirsts after God *because* God seems nowhere to be found. That’s the kind of thirst at issue.

On a particularly dark day for us not all that long ago, we took a walk around town. When we passed some houses of people we knew, I couldn’t help but recount the troubles each of those families were going through too. Maybe it was my problems that made me calculate tribulations—I don’t know. But I did, sadly. Racked up other people’s problems as if to take the edge off mine perhaps.

I’d just read a little from Calvin, specifically a line in Book I of the *Institutes*: “Without certainty of God’s providence life would be unbearable.”

Certainty is one fine blessing, but not everyone gets it. That night, I was a lot less confident than Calvin.

Psalm 42, long a favorite of many, is all about chugging certainty even in desperation, about knowing God is there, even when we're sure as heck he's not. That wonderful passage from Isaiah is a heavenly promise; the story from Acts does nothing but bring smiles. But Psalm 42 is the gut-wrenching plea of a man who finds himself without.

The thirst here is for nothing in a jug, for something a whole lot more than lemonade. The thirst here is for living water in the parched soul of someone who's wandering in a desert where there's nothing more than hot sand.

A lot of folks know that thirst, even David the King, David the poet, David the man closest to God's own heart. Even he knew what it meant to pant.

It's always nice to remember we aren't alone, isn't it? It seems to me that's the blessing of Psalm 42.