

The Pursuit of GOD Series

#3 - THE SEEKING HEART

by Pastor G. Grant Verdoold

Text: Psalm 42:

(Yearning for God in the Midst of Distresses - *To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of the sons of Korah.*

1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

3 My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where *is* your God?"

4 When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude;

I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And *why* are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him *For* the help of His countenance.

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me; Therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan,

And from the heights of Hermon, From the Hill Mizar.

7 Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me.

8 The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, And in the night His song *shall be* with me—

A prayer to the God of my life.

9 I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

10 As with a breaking of my bones, My enemies reproach me, While they say to me all day long,

"Where *is* your God?"

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

Let us focus today on verses 1 and 2: "As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"

The Hook:

We are entering the third instalment in this wonderful Series to excite our hearts towards the Pursuit of GOD! First we looked at "Seeking The LORD" (Psalm 34:10), Next we looked at "Seeking The WORD" (Psalm 19:7).

Now we will look at "The Seeking Heart" (Psalm 42: 1 & 2)

There is something to be lamented in this state of mind, or heart, for if the psalmist had maintained an unbroken fellowship with his GOD, he would not be panting after HIM, but rather he would have been enjoying HIM.

It is amazing that we who sometimes bask in the sunshine of GOD's wonderful countenance ("The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace." Numbers 6: 25 & 26) cannot always live so as to enjoy it. Why is that?

Why do we wonder? Why do we grieve The Holy Spirit? "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Ephesians 4: 30 Why do we turn aside from GOD who is our exceeding joy? "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God." Psalm 43: 4 Why do we provoke GOD to jealousy? Why do we cause GOD to make us grope in the darkness and sigh out of a lonely and desolate heart?

There is much of an evil heart of unbelief in these departings from the Living GOD. If therefore, we can join in the language of this text and join in the contemplations of the sons of Korah, we must not congratulate ourselves too much. Though it may be a sign of grace to pant after GOD as the deer pants after the water brooks, yet it is an equally certain sign of a want of more grace, and the loss of privilege which we should strive always to possess.

Oh friends. we live as paupers when the delights of the kingdom are there for us!!

Our Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills ("For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills." Psalm 50: 10), the hairs on our heads are counted ("But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." Luke 12: 7) ("But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Matthew 10: 30), and David even reminds us that our cup can overflow! "You

prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over." Psalm 23: 5.

Now, I still find something that is commendable in the desire expressed in the text. The insatiable desire which burned in the psalmist's heart is a heavenly flame kindles from Above.

If I do not have my LORD in "near and dear" communion, it is the next best thing to be wretched until I find HIM!

It is fitting that we are reminded of Jesus' words when HE said, "**Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.**" Matthew 5: 4 It is here that the psalmist cries as none but a saint can do!! He is real, sincere and open, and cries out to his GOD!!

I hope that this is our cry today!! So pants my soul for YOU, O, my GOD!!! (Psalm 42: 1)!!

My soul thirsts for GOD, for the Living GOD!!! (Psalm 42: 1 & 2)

The Book 1: The Desire and It's Object

The deer pants after the water brooks, and the psalmist pants after his GOD, the Living God. ("But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation. " Jeremiah 10: 10)

I do not find him expressing a single word of regret as to his absence from his throne. He does not say, "My soul pants after my royalties and the splendour of the kingdom of Judah. There is actually not one word about it!

Friends, he lets his baubles go, he gives up the pomp and ceremonies, and is content to let all go forever, if only he may find his GOD!!

Going on, I don't find a word concerning his palace, his gardens, or his treasures! Not even for his children does he spare a sigh!!

To the psalmist, his dwelling place was in The LORD, and dwelling in the secret place of The Most High his joys were all complete!! ("He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. " Psalm 91: 1)

There is not even one mention of his much loved country. He sighs not for Jerusalem, nor does he pine for the wells of Bethlehem, nor the roses of Sharon, nor do the lilies of the valley command his attention. ("The Bride: I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valley. *The Groom*: Like a lily among the thorns is my darling among the maidens." Song of Solomon 2: 1 & 2). For the excellency of Mount Carmel, or the glory of Lebanon, he utters no cry of desire, but his one and only great sigh is for his GOD, The GOD of his life, his exceeding joy. (Psalm 43: 4)

When shall he come and appear before his GOD? (verse 2). When shall he join in the wonderful assembly and keep the Holy Sabbath Day? (verse 4).

The psalmist tells us his tears have been his food day and night, (verse 3). His one pulsing desire is, just as a huge mountain torrent sweeps away all minor streams and absorbs them into one mass rush and volume, or like an avalanche which binds all the snow masses to itself as it descends the mountain, so is his one desire concentrated like all the force and vehemence of nature!

His GOD, his GOD, he can not live without his GOD! He cries out for HIM as a lost child cries for it's mother, or a bleating lamb will not be content until it finds it's parent.

The psalmist pined for permission to enjoy the means of grace. He longed to go up to the tabernacle once again to see the priest's offering the sacrifices, and go himself to the altar of GOD, but OBSERVE! Beloved, he passes by them all as the priests of old passed through the outer court, only the innermost court will satisfy him!

He penetrates through the shell and desires the inward kernel, the outward ordinances can not content him. He must have the spiritual life and substance!

He does not so much pine for the sacrifices as much as for his GOD. Not desiring the priest, nor the altar, nor the tabernacle, but only desiring his GOD, for beloved, he learned what modern professors have not learned, that the outward is nothing, and the inward is everything!!

To taste and see ("Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" Psalm 34:8) is the Psalmist's cry.

It was Canon Holmes of India who, more than 60 years ago in 1923, called attention to the average man's faith in GOD. To most people GOD is an inference, not a reality! GOD remains personally unknown to the individual. Many others do not go so far as even this, for they know GOD only by hear-say. May it not be so with us!!!!

The psalmist's greatest longing was for GOD alone, not his throne, nor his house, nor even his country, he panted after his GOD alone! This was his cry, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" Psalm 42: 2. The great object of his heart was GOD, and he would not let that desire go.

The Book 2: The Desire and Its Characteristics

Now abiding fellowship with GOD ought to be our daily life. The enjoyment of GOD's love ought not to be a thing of yesterday, nor of today, but for all of our days!!

Here we are to see some of the characteristics of his desire. These characteristics are brought out by means of metaphors.

The psalmist compares himself to a deer when it is tormented by thirst.

First, it brings out the directness. The deer pants for what? It pants for water! I hope everybody can see by it's uplifted head, it's palpitating heart, it's rolling eyes and thrust out tongue that it is panting for the water brooks. So it is with the psalmist, inn a torrent of desire, and says, "So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." (verses 1 & 2)

He knows where he is at, and there is no beating around the bush! He directs his arrow straight at the centre of the target. My soul thirsts for GOD, the living GOD! (verse 2)

Beloved, it is a great mercy when you and I know what we want, for the ungodly do not know. They thirst, they long and they pant, and their question is, "Who will show us any good?" ("There are many who say, "Who will show us any good?" Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us." Psalm 4: 6) ("How long, O you sons of men, Will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness And seek falsehood? Selah" Psalm 4: 2)

But, you and I know that our great need is the light of GOD's wonderful countenance.

"The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace." Numbers 6: 26

"You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance." Psalm 90: 8

"Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance." Psalm 89: 15

"For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, Nor did their own arm save them; But it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, Because You favoured them." Psalm 44: 3

"For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." Psalm 21: 6

"For You have made him most blessed forever; You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence." Psalm 42: 5

Actually, as well, the church's great need is the light of GOD, the light of GOD's glorious face shining on us, the face that makes the angels sing, and all heaven lit with HIS glorious presence. "There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever." Revelations 22: 5

Notice next, the unity of the psalmists desire. The deer longs after nothing else but the water brooks.(verse 1) There may have been other times when the deer had other desires, like a grassy plain or shady wood, but now, wearied, steaming and panting, it must drink or die! It has only one thought, the water brooks where the cool refreshing waters pooled.

Notice how the psalmist gathered up all his affections into one!! Notice how he made no conditions, he made no stipulations with HIM.

Friends, this is the way for us too!! We must have a desire that out-paces all the others! Fellowship with Jesus, whatever may come! I must have fellowship with HIM!!

Let others look for the bursting wine vats, or barns overflowing with corn, but for you and for me it will be enough if I have my Beloved GOD!! All I want is to hold HIM, and not let HIM go!! This must be the one and only all-absorbing longing desire of our hungering and thirsting spirit, that you may find your GOD and be comforted with HIS eternal love and presence. Strip me of my cares, LORD! Liberate me from my unbelief! Unbind me from carnal corruptions!! I must have Christ, and Christ alone I must have!!!

Further into our text we discover the characteristic of vitality.

As we have already said, thirst is connected with the very springs of Life. Men and women alike must all drink or die!!! So the Christian should come to feel it is not a luxury to walk with GOD, a luxury he/she may perhaps dispense with, but it is an absolute necessity for her/his spirit.

Consider all this, and make it a point to return.

My friend, if you are dry and feeling shallow, take Jesus' counsel. Hear HIS voice and open the door and HE will enter and dine with you. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God." Revelations 3: 2

The Took:

Is it your desire? That's the question today.

He that has never eaten manna may be satisfied with gluten-free bread, but Heavenly manna is a hunger-making!! If you once get the flavour in your mouth, you will never again be content unless you have it always there!!!

It would be a tragedy, a truly awful thing, for a person who has once tasted and known spiritual life to then treat it with disregard.

The Bible assumes as a self-evident fact that men can know GOD with at least the same certainty as they know any other person or thing that comes within the field of

their experience. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord *is* good; Blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!" Psalm 34:8

"All Your garments *are scented* with myrrh and aloes *and* cassia, Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad." Psalm 45: 8

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." John 10: 27 & 28

"Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5: 3

At the root of the Christian life lies a belief in the invisible. ""Hebrews 11: 1

"But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11: 6

The object of the Christian's faith is the unseen reality of GOD!!!

"Who *is* a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights *in* mercy." Micah 7: 18 & 19

"For the Lord God *is* a sun and shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; No good *thing* will He withhold From those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, Blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!" Psalm 84: 11 & 12

"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God." Revelations 21: 3

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3: 16

"He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless." Isaiah 40: 23

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." James 1: 17

"Let the heavens declare His righteousness, For God Himself *is* Judge. *Selah* " Psalm 50: 6

"Gracious *is* the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God *is* merciful." Psalm 116: 5

HE is the Great ALL in ALL!

"God *is* not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? " Numbers 23: 19

"As for God, His way *is* perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him." Psalm 18: 30

"God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4: 24

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." 1 John 1: 5

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1: 1

HE is immortal and incorruptible GOD of All.

"who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power." 1 Timothy 6: 16

"They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* alone *are* holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested." Revelations 15: 3 & 4

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last."
"Revelations 22: 13

"And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things." Revelations 16: 5

Friends, lay hold of eternal things. Ask for acute spiritual perception.

Make Heaven more real to me than any earthly thing!! I desire YOU, LORD!!!

May the Holy Spirit give you that desire, and thank HIM for it. This desire is a gift!
Accept it gratefully!!!

Friends, if you have wandered from GOD, HE is VERY willing to forgive you.

"Who *is* a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights *in* mercy. He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea." Micah 7: 18 & 19

Remember, HE said to the dark earth, "Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light" Genesis 1: 3

This afternoon, may you become the happiest of HIS people! Praise HIM and thank HIM!