

Desiring God

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in the book of Psalms and Psalm 63.

Psalm 63, and we're going to look at the first half of the psalm, the first eight verses. But if we just read again from the beginning.

Psalm 63, from the beginning. A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. 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. O God, you are my God.

As you know, in the Bible, Christians are called and commissioned to follow the greatest commandment. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

[1 : 1 0] The greatest commandment is that we're to love the Lord with our entire being. Our heart, our mind, our will, our affections, our emotions, our body, and our soul.

We're to love the Lord with all that we are, because of all that he is, and all that he has done for us in Jesus Christ. But more than that, we're to love the Lord, and our love for the Lord, it should be defined and demonstrated by our desire to serve the Lord, and also to serve others.

As Jesus said, By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Therefore, our love for others should be what defines and even demonstrates our desire to love and serve the Lord.

And the thing is, the Bible calls us, as you know, to wholehearted commitment. My favorite word, commitment. The Bible calls us to wholehearted commitment, where we must seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Therefore, nothing should rival our love for the Lord, because he must be first and foremost. He must be number one in our lives. He must have the supremacy, and he must receive all the glory.

[2 : 3 3] And you know, that's what David is reminding us when we come to Psalm 63. Because in Psalm 63, David is desiring God. In Psalm 63, David is desiring God.

But what we need to understand about Psalm 63 is that David's desire for God has arisen due to dangerous circumstances. His desire for God has arisen due to dangerous circumstances.

Because as the title of the psalm suggests, it says that Psalm 63 was written when David was in the wilderness of Judah. And David was in the wilderness of Judah not because he was rallying the troops to fight, but because he was on the run from his son Absalom.

Absalom had formed a coup against the king. He had rebelled against King David, his father, and he was now threatening to kill him. And for that reason, David, he ran as far away as possible from the city of Jerusalem.

He ran far away and fled into the Judean wilderness to hide. To hide from his own son Absalom. But you know, what's remarkable is that even though the circumstances in David's life and even the situation that he was facing, even though it may have driven him away from Jerusalem and his home and his throne, even though it had driven him away from Jerusalem, it hadn't driven him away from the Lord.

[4 : 05] Because in the midst of all that David is going through, David is desiring God. David is desiring God. Which is why in these opening verses, David, he doesn't speak about self.

You'll actually notice he speaks about his soul. David doesn't speak about self. He speaks about his soul. And what David says about his soul is, he says, My soul is seeking.

My soul is singing. And my soul is satisfied. My soul is seeking. My soul is singing. And my soul is satisfied.

And there are headings this evening. So first of all, my soul is seeking. My soul is seeking. He says in verse 1, O God, you are my God. 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. So I have looked upon you in this sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

[5 : 07] Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live. In your name I will lift up my hands.

Now it's interesting to note that Psalms 61, 62, and 63, they were all written from the same context, where David is in the wilderness of Judah and he's on the run from his son Absalom.

In Psalm 61, which we sang earlier, Margaret Jones' favorite psalm, we heard there David's cry. O God, give ear unto my cry, unto my prayer attend. From the utmost corner of the land, which is the wilderness of Judah, from the utmost corner of the land, my cry to thee I'll send.

What time my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity, do thou me lead unto the rock that higher is than I. And then in Psalm 62, when you read through it, David's cry, it becomes David's confession, where he says, he only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he.

He only is my sure defense. I shall not moved be. But now in Psalm 63, David's cry and David's confession, they have now become David's compulsion.

[6 : 25] Because, you know, the love of God, it's now compelling David and constraining David. And it's calling David to seek the Lord with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength.

And that's how he begins the Psalm. Lord thee, my God, I'll early seek. My soul doth thirst for thee. My flesh longs in a dry parched land, wherein no waters be.

And you know, is that not how Paul described the love of Christ? The same way that David does here. Because when Paul described the love of Christ, Paul said, the love of Christ compels us.

The love of Christ constrains us. The love of Christ calls us to seek the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. The love of Christ compels us.

But as he said, what's remarkable about David is that even though the circumstances in his life and the situation he was facing, even though it had driven him far away from his home in Jerusalem, it hadn't driven him away from the Lord.

[7 : 35] In fact, the Lord had brought this painful providence into David's life. Not to drive him from the Lord, but to actually drive him to the Lord.

And that's what happened because David is, as we said, David is desiring God. David is desiring God. And you know, my friend, what this ought to remind and reassure us is that when we encounter and when we experience painful providences in our lives, when we encounter and experience painful providences of sin or sickness or suffering or even sorrow, when these things come into our experience, we need to remember and be reassured, first of all, that the Lord has put that there.

We might not understand why, maybe not until we leave this world, but they've been put there by the Lord. And it's there not to drive us away from the Lord.

It's always there to drive us to Him. It's never to drive us away from Him. Always to drive us to Him. They've been put there. That painful providence in our experience has been put there so that we'll be like David.

We'll seek the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. And that's what we see with David. Because even though his life was hanging in the balance, his soul was still seeking the Lord.

[9 : 01] In fact, verse 1, it describes the wilderness of Judah. Where David, he was hiding from his son Absalom and he says, he describes the wilderness that he's in and he says, it's a dry, weary land where there is no water.

It's a dry, weary land where there is no water. And you know, if you were to see pictures of the wilderness of Judah, you'd see that it's literally a dry, parched land where there is no water.

It's bare and barren. It's a barren wilderness. But you know, David's description of the wilderness of Judah, it's actually a reflection of his own soul. It's a mirror image of his own soul.

How he feels in seeking the Lord. He feels empty. He feels completely empty and he's describing his desire for God. He's describing the dehydration of his own soul and his longing after God.

David is saying, my soul thirsts for you. My soul longs for you. My soul yearns for you. My soul faints for you in this dry and weary wilderness. And you know, David, he's been compelled by the love of God, the love of Christ.

[10 : 16] He's been compelled to God but he feels so empty in and of himself. I don't know if you ever feel like that as a Christian. You feel drawn to the Lord but the reality of what's in your heart is that you feel completely empty.

And you know, that's how David felt. He was being compelled, constrained, called to come to the Lord and he's coming before the Lord and he's saying, O God, you are my God.

Earnestly, I seek you. Despite his painful providence, David's personal relationship with the Lord, that was his passion and that was his priority.

Despite how he felt in and of himself, David's painful providence, it was reminding him that his personal relationship with the Lord was his passion and his priority.

And that's why he says, O God, you are my God. O God, you are my God. There's this personal relationship with the Lord and that relationship is David's passion.

[11 : 21] That's what he wants more than anything else. That's his priority because David knows that every other relationship in this world, it will fail or it will fall apart if the Lord is not first and foremost.

David knows that all his plans and all his pursuits in life, they will all come to nothing. They will all be hay and stubble if the Lord is not his passion and his priority.

David knows that before anything else, before building his own earthly kingdom and empire, David knows that he must seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

David knows that he must conform to this greatest commandment, love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. My friend, the Lord had brought this painful providence into David's life, not to drive him away from the Lord, but always to drive him to the Lord.

Therefore, despite his painful providence, you know, David's personal relationship with the Lord, that was his passion. That was his priority.

[12 : 34] You know, his whole family circumstance had fallen apart. His own son wanted to kill him. And yet, David, he's seeking the Lord. His passion and priority is the Lord.

In fact, it's this painful providence that causes David to be desiring God because this painful providence in David's life, it's driving him to his knees in prayer.

It's bringing him back, you could say, to the Bible. It's causing him to search the Scriptures and to seek the Lord. And it's all there so that he'll love the Lord more deeply.

This painful providence in his experience is all so that he will love the Lord more deeply and walk with the Lord more closely and seek the Lord more earnestly and serve the Lord more faithfully.

And that's why David says he prays in verse 1, O God, you are my God. Earnestly, I seek you. Earnestly, I seek you.

[13 : 39] And as you know, the word earnestly is translated in other versions, even in the Scottish Psalter version as early or early in the morning. But what David is expressing here is that he would have the Lord as his passion and his priority in life.

And that he would desire and devote and dedicate himself to the Lord before anything or anyone else. David is saying that he wants his waking thought to be the Lord.

That when he wakes up early in the morning, he wants his passion and his priority to be not his plans and not his purposes for his life, but the Lord's plans and the Lord's purposes for his life.

And you know, my friend, this is so relevant for us as we live in such a fast-paced, up-to-the-minute, 24-7 world that's always putting demands and deadlines on our time and on our life.

But you know, David is reminding and reaffirming to us that our waking thought when we open our eyes to a new day, our waking thought when we open our eyes in the morning, it shouldn't be to check our phone for messages or emails.

[15 : 00] It shouldn't be to look on Facebook or Twitter and see what we've missed while we were asleep. It shouldn't be to put on the news or listen to the radio or the TV. No, it shouldn't even be to plan or prioritize our day.

No, my friend, our first port of call, our first port of call when we open our eyes in the morning should be to seek the Lord. We should thank the Lord for a new day, that his mercies are new each morning and that we have a renewed opportunity to speak to him.

You know, my friend, like it was for David, that our passion and priority in our lives should be our relationship with the Lord. Our passion and priority in our lives should be our relationship with the Lord where we search for him in the scriptures to hear his voice speak to us for that day and seek him in prayer asking for his help just to get through the day, just to get through another day and that whatever we encounter or experience or even enjoy throughout that day that we would be a faithful witness for the Lord.

You know, David, he's a Christ-like example for us of what our soul ought to be like because David, he doesn't speak about self here.

He speaks about his soul and he says, my soul is seeking. My soul is seeking the Lord. But then he says, my soul is singing.

[16 : 38] My soul is singing. So my soul is seeking and then secondly, my soul is singing. My soul is singing. Look at verse 2. He says, so I have looked upon you in this sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live. In your name, I will lift up my hands.

You know, everyone loves to sing, whether they love to sing in the shower where no one can hear them, or they love to sing while cooking or even cleaning. However, most people, they love to sing in church.

If you don't already sing in church, and I know it's been made more difficult with the masks and all these things that we have to wear, but if you don't already sing in church, I'd encourage you to sing and be in the habit of singing.

Now, you might not have the voice of Pavarotti or be able to carry a tune or hold a tune. These are some of the things I struggle with too. And yet the Bible, it exhorts us and encourages us to sing, to make a joyful noise to the Lord.

[17 : 48] Because the thing is, there's something healthy and happy about singing. There's something healthy and happy about singing. In fact, it's scientifically proven that singing is good for your mind, your body, and your soul.

Singing is good for your mind, your body, and your soul. I read an article recently which said that there are many benefits to singing because singing can relieve stress.

Singing can stimulate your immune system. Singing can increase your pain threshold. Singing is also said to help those suffering with dementia. And singing also helps those who are struggling with depression.

There was also a suggestion that singing helps with snoring, but I'm not sure that many wives or even husbands would agree. But as you know, singing, it's not only good for our mind and our body.

Singing is good for the soul because singing, it not only creates the sense of belonging, especially within the context of congregational singing. That's something we missed when we weren't able to sing.

[18 : 58] We missed singing. And now that we're able to sing, it creates a sense of belonging that we're gathering together for worship. But singing, it also lifts up, it also lifts up our voice and it also lifts up our heart to the Lord in praise.

Singing is good for the soul. Singing is good for the soul. And you know, if anyone knew that to be true, it was David. Because David, he confesses in Psalm 40 that when he had been taken from that fearful pit and from the miry clay and he had his feet set upon the rock that is Christ, what did he confess?

He said, well, he's put a new song in my mouth. And the new song in my mouth is for the purpose of praising and magnifying the Lord. And you know, the amazing thing about David is that the Lord taught David to sing.

And the Lord taught David to sing through every situation and circumstance in his life. The Lord taught David to sing about his shepherd, Psalm 23, about his saviour and also his salvation.

The Lord taught David to sing about his sins, Psalm 51, his sicknesses, his sufferings and his sorrows. The Lord taught David to sing about every painful providence in his life.

[20 : 19] That's why most of the psalms which we sing, they were written by this man, David. Because the Lord taught David to sing through every situation, and every circumstance in his life.

Because singing is good for the mind, the body and the soul. Singing is good for our soul. Therefore, whatever particular providence, whatever painful providence we are embracing or encountering this evening, whether it has left us joyful or joyless, happy or hopeless, delighted or despairing, singing or sorrowing, whatever particular providence it is, David is exhorting and encouraging you to sing the songs of Zion and praise the God of heaven.

Because, you know, when David speaks about his soul here, he says, my soul is singing. My soul is singing. And as we said, the Lord had brought this painful providence into David's experience.

And it was not to drive him away from the Lord, but always to drive him to the Lord. And that's what happened because, as we said, David's passion and David's priority was the Lord. David's desire, his devotion, his dedication was for the Lord.

And David's soul was now seeking and singing to the Lord. And the thing is, David is singing to the Lord because his sight is on the sanctuary of the Lord.

[21 : 47] David is singing to the Lord because his sight is on the sanctuary of the Lord. He says in verse 2, So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory because your steadfast love is better than life.

My lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live. In your name I will lift up my hands. So David, he's singing to the Lord because David's sight, it's not on self.

His sight is not on someone else. David's sight is on the sanctuary of the Lord. And you know, this is important because, well, David, he was in the wilderness of Judah. He was miles away from anyone.

He was miles away from the temple or the tabernacle in Jerusalem. And yet, his sight and his soul was focused and fixated upon Jerusalem.

Because Jerusalem, it was not only the capital city of Israel, it was also where David's throne was. It was where David's family was. But more than that, Jerusalem was where the Lord dwelt amongst his people.

[22 : 54] As you know, the city of Jerusalem was where the tabernacle was situated. That's where David brought the tabernacle. He brought it to the city of Jerusalem. And it was also where the temple was later built.

But in the tabernacle, you'll remember, in the Holy of Holies sat the Ark of the Covenant. And of course, the Ark of the Covenant was that symbol of the Lord's presence amongst his people.

It was the mercy seat of God. That's where the mercy seat was to be found. It's where the Lord sat enthroned with power and glory as the King of Kings.

And you know, the wonder of this throne of grace, I always find it fascinating when you think of the Old Testament. When you think of the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant and this mercy seat, this throne of grace, for years, it was overshadowed by the glory cloud of the Lord.

They always knew that the Lord was there because they saw his glory cloud. The glory cloud that had led the Israelites through the wilderness for 40 years where the Lord had been a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

[24 : 02] And it's that glory cloud, the Shekinah glory as the Jews called it, that's where David's sight, that's where David's soul is directed. He's focused and fixated on the glory of God.

And you know, although David may have felt distant and detached from the Lord because he was in the wilderness, although David may have felt far away from the Lord and the Lord's people because he was in the wilderness of Judah, although David wasn't able to be a worshiper and a witness in God's house, you know, the wonderful thing is his soul was still singing.

And even for those who are unable to come to church at present or unwilling to come at present, the wonderful thing is their soul is still singing. They might not be here with us in person, but their soul is still singing.

And for David, his soul was still singing because of the mercy seat of God. His soul was still singing because of the power and glory of God. His soul was still singing because David knows that when he came boldly to the throne of grace, he would find mercy and grace to help in time of need.

And you know, my friend, despite the painful providence in his life, David's soul was still singing. He was still singing, Since better is thy love than life, my lips thee pray shall give, I in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while I live.

[25 : 34] You know, for a man who was so far away and felt so distant and so detached, and yet he was still confessing. He's still at this testimony that God's unconditional, unchanging, steadfast covenant love is better than life itself.

His son was wanting to kill him and yet David is still saying, Since better is thy love than life. David's soul was singing.

And you know, is that not how the hymn writer also responded when he considered the greatness of God. He said that his soul was singing. He said, I'm sure you'll know the hymn, And when I think that God, his son not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in, that on the cross my burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin.

Then he says, Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee, how great thou art, how great thou art.

His soul was singing. And so in Psalm 63, we're seeing that David is desiring God. David is desiring God and he's a Christ-like example for us of what our soul ought to be like.

[26 : 57] Even as we go into a new week, we're to be desiring God. We're not to seek self, but we're to seek the good of our soul. And we're to be like David, saying, My soul is seeking. My soul is singing. And then lastly, My soul is satisfied. My soul is satisfied. So my soul is singing.

My soul is seeking. My soul is singing. And my soul is satisfied. My soul is satisfied. Look at verse 5. He says, My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food.

And my mouth will praise you with joyful lips when I remember you upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night. For you have been my help. And in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.

My soul clings to you. Your right hand upholds me. Now as we've said throughout this psalm, in Psalm 63, David is desiring God.

[28 : 03] And as many of you will know, desiring God is the name of a ministry that was set up by the American pastor, John Piper. And the purpose and passion of desiring God is that us broken people living broken lives in a broken world, the desire is that we'll come to know the deep and abiding joy of salvation through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

In fact, the mission statement of Desiring God Ministries, it states, you were created for something greater than yourself. Just think about that.

You were created for something greater than yourself. You were formed for something awesome and magnificent. You were made to know glory. God's glory.

And the deepest longings of the human heart can only be fully satisfied by pursuing that glory. And you know, the mission of Desiring God, it says, is to help people everywhere understand and embrace the truth that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. And you know, that certainly describes David's experience here because God was glorified in David when David was most satisfied in God.

[29 : 31] In fact, David describes the satisfaction of his soul when he says, my soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow, with fat and rich food.

And you know, the image and illustration that David uses, it's of this royal banquet. He's setting before us a royal banquet, a banqueting table where all the delight and delicacies, they're all prepared and they're all in place.

And you know, David, it would have been a familiar sight to David as the king in Israel because he would have hosted and held many royal banquets in the palace in Jerusalem.

But now as this fugitive on the run in the wilderness of Judah, this foreigner who's in a bare and barren wilderness, you know, the concept of feasting, it's very far from him.

And yet David, he knows that lasting satisfaction is not found in food for the stomach but food for the soul. David knows that his soul will be satisfied only with the gospel table.

[30 : 38] David knows that his soul will be satisfied with the marrow and fatness of the gospel banquet, which is the same gospel banquet that Isaiah calls us to in Isaiah 55.

Remember those words, you probably learned them in school. Those words in Isaiah 55, Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come. Come ye to the waters.

He that hath no money, come. Buy and eat. Yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. And Isaiah asks, why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?

And why do you labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me and eat what is good. Eat from the gospel table. Delight yourselves in this rich food.

Incline your ear and come to me here and your soul may live. You know, my friend, the gospel banquet is full and free.

[31 : 39] And it will provide lasting satisfaction for our soul. And that's why we need to keep coming back to it. That's why it's good for us to be together. That's why it's good for us to gather for worship because we need to keep coming back to this gospel banquet so that our soul will be satisfied with that marrow and fatness of the gospel table.

And the thing is, David needed lasting satisfaction for his soul. He needed lasting satisfaction because his painful providence, it wasn't going to go away overnight.

You know, his painful providence wasn't short-lived. In fact, David's painful providence lasted 13 years, which is why he knew that his soul needed to be seeking and singing and satisfied in the Lord both day and night.

And maybe for you in your painful providence, you might think, well, when is this going to end? And yet David is reminding us that we need to keep seeking. We need to keep singing.

We need to keep finding satisfaction in the Lord. We need to keep going to him. We're not being driven away from him. We're being driven to him. And as David says, whether waking early into the morning sunrise or lying upon his bed during the watches of the night, David knew that in order to grow in his personal relationship with the Lord and in order to learn from the Lord through all his painful providences, David knew that his soul needed to be seeking and singing and satisfied in the Lord both day and night.

[33 : 28] Does that describe you, my friend? Does that describe me? Am I seeking the Lord with my soul? Am I singing with my soul?

Am I satisfied in my soul? Because in Psalm 63, David is desiring God. And David is, he's a Christ-like example of what our soul ought to be like.

David doesn't speak about self in this Psalm. he speaks about his soul and he says, my soul is seeking. My soul is singing. My soul is satisfied.

He is desiring God. Do you desire God? Is that your waking thought? When you wake up in the morning, Lord, thee my God, I'll early seek.

My soul doth thirst for thee. Are you desiring God? Even as you go into a new week, is this your desire? Is this who you put first? Is this your primary focus and fixation?

[34 : 33] The Lord. Am I desiring God? And you know what David says about his soul in Psalm 63? It reminds me of that familiar hymn.

I'm always quoting hymns. But it's the hymn, Be Thou My Vision. I'm sure you know it quite well. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart. Not be all else to me, save that thou art.

Thou my best thought, by day or by night. Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light. May that be true of us as we go into another week.

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart. Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord our God, we confess to thee this evening that we are not what we want to be.

That we are not those who seek thee earnestly or even early in the morning. That thou, Lord, wouldst teach us. Teach us to have that earnest desire after God.

[35 : 45] That we would hunger and thirst after righteousness. Knowing that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, they will be filled. That we would find fullness and satisfaction in the gospel table.

Realizing that there is nowhere else to go. There's no one else to look to. That even in our painful providences, that the Lord is speaking to us and calling us to himself.

O Lord, speak to us then we pray. Bless us as we go into another week. A week that we do not know what is before us. And Lord, we give thanks that we don't know. But we also give thanks that thou are the one who does.

And the one, as Job said, who knows the way that we take. And that when thou hast tried us, we will come forth as gold. Bless us then we pray. Guide our hearts we ask.

Guard our minds we plead. For we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 63.

[36 : 50] That's Psalm we were looking at. Psalm 63. We're singing from the beginning. That's Psalm 63 in the Scottish Psalter. Is that right? Yeah? Just making sure.

And we're singing verses 1 to 5. Okay. So it's on page 295 in the Blue Psalm book. Psalm 63 from the beginning.

Lord, thee my God I'll early seek. My soul doth thirst for thee. My flesh longs in a dry parched land wherein no waters be. That I thy power may behold and brightness of thy face as I have seen thee heretofore within thy holy place.

We'll sing down to the verse marked 5 of Psalm 63 to God's praise. Psalm 63 For thee my God I let thee see My soul doth thirst for thee My flesh longs in a dry parched land Where no waters be that I thy power may be whole and brightness of thy face

As I have seen thee here to pour And then thy holy place Since better is I love thy life My lips be great shall give I am thy name Will lay my heart Son and suction

[39 : 42] God, my soul shall fill it be.

Then shall my mouth with joyfulness sing praises unto thee.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.