

Psalms Vol 2

Table Of Contents

Lesson 1	2
Lesson 2	5
Lesson 3	9
Lesson 4	14
Lesson 5	19
Lesson 6	24
Lesson 7	29
Lesson 8	34
Lesson 9	40
Lesson 10	45
Lesson 11	50

LESSON 1

WHY WE LOVE THE PSALMS BY ROBERT GODFREY

The first is the beauty of the language and the poetic expression of the great truths of the faith. Consider the simple words, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1). How much comfort they have brought to many, many souls in distress. Or think of the promises of God’s redemption in Psalm 103: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (vv. 2–5). Or ponder the poignant picture of God’s remembrance of our suffering: “Put thou my tears into thy bottle” (Ps. 56:8 KJV).

The second attraction is the discovery that the more you dig into the Psalter, the more you discover. Like all great poetry, the Psalms are like a mine with ever new depths to reach and ever more gold to find. They reward abundantly whatever effort we make to know them better.

Third, there are psalms for all occasions and they mark all the important spiritual moments and emotions in the lives of the people of God. As John Calvin said, “I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, ‘An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul;’ for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.” The Psalms teach us how to express our emotions to God in all the circumstances of our lives.

Fourth, the Psalms are full of Christ. They not only explicitly prophesy the coming of Christ (e.g., Pss. 2; 22; 110), but the message of the Psalms always pulls the soul to Christ and His great saving work. As was said in the ancient church, “Always a psalm in the mouth, always Christ in the heart” (*semper in ore psalmus, semper in corde Christus*). The Psalms intensify our fellowship with Christ. Throughout history, the book of Psalms has been treasured by many Christians. The great Athanasius (296–373) said, “I believe that a man can find nothing more glorious than these Psalms; for they embrace the whole life of man, the affections of his mind, and the motions of his soul. To praise and glorify God, he can select a psalm suited to every occasion, and thus will find that they were written for him.” In the Reformation, the recovery of the Bible for all in the church meant also a recovery of the Psalms. Luther had learned the Psalms early as a monk and continued to love them. He called the Psalter “a little Bible,” saying, “The Psalter ought to be a precious and beloved book, if for no other reason than this: it promises Christ’s death and resurrection so clearly—and pictures his kingdom and the condition and nature of all Christendom—that it might well be called a little Bible.”

Among the Reformed, the Psalms were versified and sung as the songbook of the church. John Calvin, who supervised the versification of the whole Psalter for singing, expressed his enthusiasm for the Psalms in these words: “As calling upon God is one of the principal means of securing our safety, and as a better and more unerring rule for guiding us in this exercise [of prayer] cannot be found elsewhere than in the Psalms, it follows, that in proportion to the proficiency which a man shall have attained in understanding them, will be his knowledge of the most important part of celestial doctrine.”

PSALMS 32

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.”

HAPPY ARE THE FORGIVEN

Ps.32:1,2 – “How happy and fulfilled are those whose rebellion has been forgiven, those whose sins are covered by blood. How blessed and relieved are those who have confessed their corruption to God! For he wipes their slates clean and removes hypocrisy from their hearts”
“The Greek signifies, "I was be-mercied;" he who is pardoned, is all bestrewed with mercy.”
Thomas Watson

"When I kept silence. When through neglect I failed to confess, or through despair dared not to do so, "my bones," those solid pillars of my frame, the strongest portions of my bodily constitution, "waxed old," began to decay with weakness, for my grief was so intense as to sap my health and destroy my vital energy. What a killing thing is sin! It is a pestilent disease! A fire in the bones! While we smother our sin it rages within, and like a gathering wound swells horribly and torments terribly." Spurgeon

Forgiveness is a huge part of our Christian experience. The most interesting thing about forgiveness to me is this, you must acknowledge your sin. That is huge!!! Most of us spend so much of our time justifying ourselves or blaming others for our sins. Conviction of sin and bringing us to a place of repentance is the first work of the Holy Spirit. Coming clean before the Lord is where we begin to experience recovery and favor from the Lord. Here are some comments from the Passion Notes on this passage.

“David wrote this psalm after he seduced the wife of his most loyal soldier, then had him killed to try to keep her pregnancy a secret. This sin with Bathsheba brought great disgrace to David, yet he finds complete forgiveness in God’s mercy. The apostle Paul chose the first two verses of Ps. 32 to support the important doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. ...This was Saint Augustine’s favorite psalm. He had it written on the wall near his bed before he died so he could meditate upon it.”

There are some serious people included in those comments. From David, to the Apostle Paul, and Augustine; all recognize the role of repentance and forgiveness in our walk with God.

Augustine lived off of this passage in his last days on earth, he recognized the power and blessing of forgiveness.

One of the blessings of forgiveness is protection in the storms of life seen in Psalm 32:6,7.

This is what I've learned through it all:

All believers should confess their sins to God;
do it every time God has uncovered you
in the time of exposing.

For if you do this, when sudden storms of life overwhelm,
you'll be kept safe.

Lord, you are my secret hiding place,
protecting me from these troubles,
surrounding me with songs of gladness!

Your joyous shouts of rescue release my breakthrough.

Becoming honest about our sins and confessing them to the Lord is healing for the soul and for the body. David says that forgiveness also brings us into a place of safety that we will not be overwhelmed by the storms of life. Happy is the one whose sins are forgiven and who is cleansed in the blood of the Lamb.

“The Lord is the great overseer, whose eye in providence overlooks everything.” Spurgeon

In these verses four evils are mentioned: 1. Transgression, פֶּשַׁע pasha. 2. Sin, חַטָּאת chataah. 3. Iniquity, עוֹן avon. 4. Guile, דְּמוּיָה remiyah.

The first signifies the passing over a boundary, doing what is prohibited.

The second signifies the missing of a mark, not doing what was commanded; but it is often taken to express sinfulness, or sin in the nature, producing transgression in the life.

The third signifies what is turned out of its proper course or situation; anything morally distorted or perverted. Iniquity, what is contrary to equity or justice.

The fourth signifies fraud, deceit, guile, etc. To remove these evils, three acts are mentioned: forgiving, covering, and not imputing. In whose spirit there is no guile. The man whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is hidden, God having cast it as a millstone into the depths of the sea; whose iniquity and perversion is not reckoned to his account; and whose guile, the deceitful and desperately wicked heart, is annihilated, being emptied of sin, and filled with righteousness, is necessarily a happy man. - Adam Clarke.

DISCUSSION:

1. When was the last time you personally ask forgiveness from the Lord?
2. Making amends-how important in this in our life?
3. According to Adam Clarke who is the happy man?

LESSON 2

SURROUNDED BY SONG

Ps.32:7 – You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah

David is probably best known for his songs. Apparently, music had been part of David's life from his childhood. He probably developed his singing, harp playing, and songwriting skills while watching his father's sheep. That really is appropriate in light of his most famous song of all, Psalm 23 which was written for his Heavenly Father's sheep. The words of that Psalm have effected millions of lives over the years, "the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want". Everything I have ever needed or even wanted has been found in the Lord. In today's verse David is describing the supernatural nature of these spiritual songs. He says that he is surrounded with songs of deliverance or victory. Our songs to the Lord are filled with power, actually they are filled with God Himself. The Lord is the One who surrounds us in our songs. I hide myself in Him, my hiding place and I am surrounded with the power of God. Here is how Spurgeon described this verse.

"What a golden sentence! The man is encircled in song, surrounded by dancing mercies, all of them proclaiming the triumphs of grace. There is no breach in the circle, it completely rings him round; on all sides he hears music. Before him hope sounds the cymbals, and behind him gratitude beats the timbrel. Right and left, above and beneath, the air resounds with joy, and all this for the very man who, a few weeks ago, was roaring all the day long. How great a change! What wonders grace has done and still can do! Selah. There was a need of a pause, for love so amazing needs to be pondered, and joy so great demands quiet contemplation, since language fails to express it."

David's songs are so powerful because they are forged in the fires of adversity and in the very fire of God. David lived his life surrounded by trouble. He was chased by lions, bears, a Philistine giant, armies of Philistines, King Saul, and his son Absalon. In his adversity he found his place of safety, his hiding place. He is not talking about the physical caves that he hid away in but the very presence of God that would hide him away. The hiding place is closely related to David's songs. David would worship, God would come down, and everything just seemed to fall in place.

DISCUSSION:

1. Why do you think the words hiding place and songs of deliverance are mentioned together?
2. How can we create our own hiding places?

FAVOR EVERYWHERE

Psalm 32:10 ¶ "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD"

Have you ever felt like you are surrounded? I'm not talking about being surrounded by your troubles, I'm talking about being surrounded by God's love. That's exactly what today's verse describes, being surrounded by the steadfast love of God. Actually you don't have to go by your feelings or even take my word for it; you can take God's word. The wicked person's life is filled with sorrow, those who fear the Lord are surrounded by love. Here is how Spurgeon describes it:

“Faith is here placed as the opposite of wickedness, since it is the source of virtue. Faith in God is the great charmer of life's cares, and he who possesses it, dwells in an atmosphere of grace, surrounded with the bodyguard of mercies. May it be given to us of the Lord at all times to believe in the mercy of God, even when we cannot see traces of its working, for to the believer, mercy is as all surrounding as omniscience, and every thought and act of God is perfumed with it. The wicked have a hive of wasps around them, many sorrows; but we have a swarm of bees storing honey for us.”

We all choose to live in some kind of environment or atmosphere. The atmosphere created by an ungodly lifestyle results in sorrow and disappointment. For the Christian, even his toughest battles are saturated with the love of God. We never go into anything by ourselves, He is our constant companion and His love never leaves us. Albert Barnes describes this kind of life as if it the very environment that we live in, here are his thoughts on today's verse.

“Mercy shall compass him about. He shall be surrounded with mercy—as one is surrounded by the air, or by the sunlight. He shall find mercy and favour everywhere—at home, abroad; by day, by night; in society, in solitude; in sickness, in health; in life, in death; in time, in eternity. He shall walk amidst mercies; he shall die amidst mercies; he shall live in a better world in the midst of eternal mercies.”

While you are sleeping or when you are awake, His love is steadfast and tangible. He is not far off but is nearer than our breath or even our skin. You can put on His love like a coat and stay wrapped in His warmth through everything that today will bring. Don't leave home without it.

DISCUSSION:

1. Anxiety and stress is something that is prevalent in today's society. This would be a good time to reevaluate how you are dealing with stress. The wicked live this way and have sorrow. Discuss the steps this blog talks about to avoid these pitfalls.
2. Carrying around offense is also something the wicked does and has many a sorrow. What kind of atmosphere does the righteous learn to have?

PSALM 33

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise. For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to

nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

GETTING ALL DRESSED UP!

“Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.” Ps.33:1

The Lord must have a full octave, for all notes are his, and all music belongs to him. Where several pieces of music are mentioned, we are taught to praise God with all the powers which we possess

“Praise comely. What? Vocal, meditative, habitual praise. Why? It is comely as wings to an angel, we mount with it; as flowers to a tree, it is our fruit; as a robe to a priest, it is our office; as long hair to a woman, it our beauty; as a crown to a king, it is our highest honour. When? Evermore, but chiefly amid blasphemy, persecution, sickness, poverty, death. Whom? Not from the ungodly, hypocritical, or thoughtless. To be without praise is to miss our comeliest adornment”

So many things have happened in the revival years of 1994 to present. One of the constant remarks people would say to me was how young I looked, like years rolled off of me. Joy does that don't you know? Takes off the heavy burdens we have been unconsciously carrying over the years, the bitterness that seems to ebb away at our strength. I had no idea how much weight I had been carrying around! Then the mighty wind blows and our youth is returned like the eagles! Our marriages are restored, missionaries pour into the mission fields and joy becomes us! Learning to live daily in revival is our quest. In other words never letting go of our praise. It has been years since that first joy broke out in our church taking us all by surprise and ripping off the masks, we try so hard to hold onto. Today while in worship with our precious church, I looked around and saw so many people deep in worship. Their facial expression changed from hardness to being softer. My heart goes out to so many that have resorted to the “church in their house mentality”. Somewhere in time they became offended and started their journey back into seclusion, carrying their bitterness and burden.

The Expositors Bible says, “Praise fits and adorns the lips of the upright. Praise gilds the gold of purity and adds grace even to the beauty of holiness. The psalm has no trace of special recent mercies, but to the devout soul the old deeds are never antiquated, and each new meditation on them breaks into new praise. So inexhaustible is the theme that all generations take it up in turn, and find “songs unheard” and “sweeter” with which to celebrate it. There is always room for a

fresh voice to praise the old gospel, the old creation, the old providence. This new song is saturated with reminiscences of old ones, and deals with familiar thoughts which have come to the psalmist with fresh power.”

“Praise is not comely for any but the godly. A profane man stuck with God's praise is like a dunghill stuck with flowers.” Thomas Watson

How much praise, you ask? Let's roll off the years of hurt, pain, and sorrow by allowing our praise to be vocal, mediative and habitual. It adorns us like priestly garments, like the wings of an angel, it becomes us like our kingly crowns for it is our highest honor. I believe it to be the best face lift ever! For to be without praise is to miss our comeliest adornment. I pray you too take up “the new song” while we in this generation take our place in the great hall of praise.

DISCUSSION:

1. How much do you worship?
2. Name some hindrances to worship?

LESSON 3

SPIRIT AND WIND

Ps. 33:6,7 –“ All he had to do was speak by his Spirit-wind command, and God created the heavenlies. Filled with galaxies and stars, the vast cosmos he wonderfully made. His voice scooped out the seas. The ocean depths he poured into vast reservoirs”

The Lord gives us a look into the Godhead and His creative genius in the first verses of the book of Genesis. We see the word of God spoken and the Spirit-wind hovering, vibrating, or incubating over the primitive creation. This Spirit-wind is the very breath of God. The Lord formed man with His own hands and breathed His Spirit-wind into Adam’s nostrils. Man was created and became a living soul. The Word and the Spirit, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are always working in tandem, creating God’s beautiful masterpiece of redemption. Here is how Spurgeon describes it.

“It is interesting to note the mention of the Spirit in the next clause, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth; the breath is the same as is elsewhere rendered Spirit. Thus the three persons of the Godhead unite in creating all things. How easy for the Lord to make the most ponderous orbs, and the most glorious angels! A word, a breath could do it. It is as easy for God to create the universe as for a man to breathe, nay, far easier, for man breathes not independently, but borrows the breath in his nostrils from his Maker. It may be gathered from this verse that the constitution of all things is from the infinite wisdom, for his word may mean his appointment and determination. A wise and merciful Word has arranged, and a living Spirit sustains all the creation of Jehovah.”

God’s creation unveils who God is. We see His creative genius in the intricacies of all He does. From the complexity of an eye with the concept and creation of light to the depths of the sea and the expanse of space; He is more than amazing. His work of redemption, the restoration of fallen man, is the greatest work of the trinity. The Father loved the world and sent His Son, the Son entered creation and paid the ultimate price to claim our souls, the Holy Spirit functions as the great orchestra conductor coordinating the purchase of the Lord’s beautiful bride.

“For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” Ps. 33:9

The book of Genesis was also a new beginning. Where earth became our home and we saw glimpses of a Savior sent to mankind. God had a plan and it is wonderful. There is a purpose in all that he does, and, allowing yourself to be penetrated by His Spirit you too can participate in his purpose through you and in you. Each time God spoke, he spoke creation into existence and he hasn’t stopped speaking.

McClarens says, “When we read even the rudiments of what astronomers have discovered regarding the inconceivable vastness of the universe, the huge dimensions of the heavenly bodies, and the grand scale on which everything is framed, we find rising to our lips, and with tenfold reason, the words of David: “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers: the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the

son of man that Thou visitest him?" One can hardly estimate the grandeur the emancipating power of the uniting force of that utterance."

Reading the word will bring direction and blessing into your life-without the word you will be lost, and lose your moorings. Praise is something to adorn yourself with on a daily basis, knowing he will continue and finish the work in our lives and his plan for redemption. Last, make an impact in your world, don't be a taker but a giver....the more you unload his graces onto others he will load you up with more of his benefits.

"Our soul, our life, must hang upon God; we are not to trust him with a few gewgaws, but with all we have and are." Spurgeon

"The saints who were tuning here their Psalms, are now singing their hallelujahs in a louder strain, and articulating their joys, which here they could not express to their perfect satisfaction; here they laboured with drowsy hearts, and faltering tongues; but in glory these impediments are removed, and nothing is left to jar their joyous celebration." - John Wells

DISCUSSION:

1. How is your bible reading? What are the benefits of having a bible plan? How much do you study the Pauline Epistles? Why is this important?

PSALMS 34

"I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

MEETING HIM IN THE PAGES

Ps.34:8 - Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

“Meditation is like the lawyer's studying the case in order to his pleading at the bar: when, therefore, thou hast viewed the promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then fly thee to the throne of grace, and spread it before the Lord” - William Gurnall.

Far too often the Bible is read and even studied for the wrong reasons. One of the common mistakes is using the Bible as a sort of “roadmap for life”. Of course we can find direction for our life in the Bible but that is not the point. The Bible is God’s word and is a revelation of God. Think of it like this, Jesus said “if you have seen Me you have seen the Father”. Jesus became a man so we can see the glory of God. Jesus is also the Word of God. When we search the scriptures we are touching God Himself. This is one of the ways we “taste and see”. We read the scripture and hear His voice. The point of reading scripture is not to find a way to live, it is to meet with the Lord. Here is Dane Ortlund describing Jonathan Edwards' approach to God’s word.

“Edwards distinguishes between two different kinds of knowledge of Scripture. One “remains only in the head,” while the other “rests not entirely in the head or in the speculative ideas of things; but the heart is concerned in it.” Consequently, Edwards suggests, this latter kind of knowledge “may not only be called seeing, but feeling or tasting.” The crucial question is not whether we can explain what is in the Bible, but whether we can enjoy it. Like a chef who has mastered an elaborate recipe yet does not enjoy eating it, Christians can master what is in the Bible yet not taste the succulence of it. This is not to say we should shun knowing what is in the Bible. We must know the recipe if we are to enjoy the dish. “Such is the nature of man, that nothing can come at the heart but through the door of the understanding.” But the dish is not made to be dissected and scrutinized. It is made to be eaten. In short, God must give us eyes to see the beauty of God that is before us in Scripture.”

Touching the Bible is touching the beauty of God. In it we see His kindness, His nearness, His power, and His wisdom. Most of all we see His love for us. Reading the scripture becomes personal when the Lord actually meets us in the pages.

“The church not only goes into the vineyard and sees the wine, but also goes into the wine cellar, and tastes the wine” - Thomas Playfere.

“O taste the Lord, and see how sweet He is,
The man that trusts in him lives still in bliss.”
Sir John Davies, 1569-1626.

PSALM 34:8, PSALM 34:9, PSALM 34:10

“All these verses are beautiful representations of the fulness, suitableness, completeness, and all-sufficiency of God in Christ to answer all the wants of his people. And is there not a vast elegance in the comparison taken from the hunger and rapacity of the lion, even the impetuosity of the young lion, to that of the patience and silent waiting of the faithful believer? A life of faith will find food in everything, because it is all founded in Christ. The young lions may, and will lack, because nothing will supply their voracious appetites but that which is carnal. - Robert Hawker.

"O taste and see." "Make a trial, an inward, experimental trial of the goodness of God. You cannot see except by tasting for yourself; but if you taste you shall see, for this, like Jonathan's honey, enlightens the eyes. "That the Lord is good." You can only know this really and personally by experience. There is the banquet with its oxen and fatlings; its fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined; but their sweetness will be all unknown to you except you make the blessings of grace your own, by a living, inward, vital participation in them. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Faith is the soul's taste; they who test the Lord by their confidence always find him good, and they become themselves blessed." CHS

DISCUSSION:

1. Why does Edwards mean when he says; "One "remains only in the head," while the other "rests not entirely in the head or in the speculative ideas of things; but the heart is concerned in it." Consequently, Edwards suggests, this latter kind of knowledge "may not only be called seeing but feeling or tasting."
2. Why does Christianity have to be so personal?

SHALOM

Ps. 34:12-14 – Do you want to live a long, good life, enjoying the beauty that fills each day? Then never speak a lie or allow wicked words to come from your mouth. Keep turning your back on every sin and make "peace" your life motto. Practice being at peace with everyone. Shalom is used as a greeting or a goodbye in modern day Israel. It is a beautiful Bible word that has many shades of meaning and various applications. It means peace, wholeness, prosperity, and health. It encompasses the well-being of our whole being; spirit, soul, and body. In this Psalm David is rejoicing in his deliverance from King Saul. He attributes his shalom to his unwillingness to speak or act against Saul. The Lord delivered David from certain death, provided his needs for years while he was in exile, and kept him so that he could fulfill God's purposes and plans for his life. Here are the comments from the Passion Notes on this verse.

"Twice the Hebrew uses the word shalom. This word means much more than peace. It means wholeness, wellness, well-being, safe, happy, friendly, favor, completeness, to make peace, peace offering, secure, to prosper, to be victorious, to be content, tranquil, quiet, and restful. The pictographic symbols for the word shalom (shin, lamed, vav, mem) read "Destroy the authority that binds to chaos." The noun shalom is derived from the verbal root shalam, which means "to restore," in the sense of replacing or providing what is needed in order to make someone or something whole and complete. So shalom is used to describe those of us who have been provided all that is needed to be whole and complete and break off all authority that would attempt to bind us to chaos."

This is a great word for us in this season. He is wholeness and wellness when sickness threatens us. He is our security when we feel so vulnerable. He is our happiness when depression knocks on our door. He is our favor even when the financial future appears bleak. He is our peace when the world is in turmoil. He is our contentedness when everyone around us is frustrated with their present circumstances. Jesus is our Shalom. In the world there is trouble but our Shalom has overcome the world.

“No substantial injury occurs to the saints. Eternity will heal all their wounds. Their real self is safe; they may have flesh-wounds, but no part of the essential fabric of their being shall be broken. This verse may refer to frequent providential protections vouchsafed to the saints; but as good men have had broken limbs as well as others, it cannot absolutely be applied to bodily preservations; but must, it seems to me, be spiritually applied to great injuries of soul, which are forever prevented by divine love. Not a bone of the mystical body of Christ shall be broken, even as his corporeal frame was preserved intact. Divine love watches over every believer as it did over Jesus; no fatal injury shall happen to us, we shall neither be halt nor maimed in the kingdom, but shall be presented after life's trials are over without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, being preserved in Christ Jesus, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” CHS

DISCUSSION:

1. Isn't it awesome to have the word of God to anchor you back once again into the world of peace! Take this time to meditate on shalom in your world of chaos. Discuss the various meanings of peace. Let this time be uplifting and inspirational!

LESSON 4

PSALM 36

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good. He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil. Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light. O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me. There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

SCRATCHING FOR CRUMBS

Psa. 36:7 How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

Have you had the privilege of catching a glimpse behind the veil? Obviously, that veil in the temple pictures human flesh and everything in this life that blocks the striking view of the glory of the Lord. The veil has been torn by the death of Christ, giving us access into this glory; but there remains a problem. Only faith can gain entrance into this amazing place. Many Christians spend their entire lives outside the veil, never enjoying the very thing that has been purchased by the redeeming blood of Jesus. Looking at principles and precepts thinking that the best they can do is somehow improve their earthly life, not knowing that another world lies just behind the veil. Many think that faith is about self-improvement rather than access into the holiest of all. Here are some thoughts from Spurgeon on today's verse.

“Here we enter into the Holy of Holies. Benevolence, and mercy, and justice, are everywhere, but the excellence of that mercy only those have known whose faith has lifted the veil and passed into the brighter presence of the Lord; these behold the excellency of the Lord's mercy. The word translated excellent may be rendered “precious; “no gem or pearl can ever equal in value a sense of the Lord's love. This is such a brilliant as angels wear. King's regalia are a beggarly collection of worthless pebbles when compared with the tender mercies of Jehovah. David could not estimate it, and therefore, after putting a note of admiration, he left our hearts and imagination, and, better still, our experience, to fill up the rest. He writes how excellent! because he cannot tell us the half of it.”

If you pay careful attention to David's words and the words of Spurgeon, you begin to realize they both share a common experience. Both of them have seen something more precious than anything this world offers. They have not only seen this precious life; they have entered into it

and embraced it. From the moment that this other life became theirs, a new purpose gripped their souls. What was that new passion? It was to tell as many others as possible this new life that is available now. Don't settle for a beggarly life (Spurgeon's word) scratching around for crumbs when this amazing new life is right under your nose.

Perspective of the Lord

Having a God entranced Vision.....

DISCUSSION:

1. How does our purpose change when our vision of the world change?
2. Where does having your best life now fit in?

DRINKING AND THE ANOINTING

Ps.36:7- O God, how extravagant is your cherishing love!

All mankind can find a hiding place

under the shadow of your wings.

All may drink of the anointing from the abundance of your house.

All may drink their fill from the delightful springs of Eden.

To know you is to experience a flowing fountain,

drinking in your life, springing up to satisfy.

In your light we receive the light of revelation”.

The anointing is probably the most ignored element of our Christian faith. Many churches have set up their services where it would actually be impossible for the presence of God to manifest in any significant way. The tragedy of course is this; the purpose of the church according to Paul is to be the habitation of the Spirit. It is not to be just a habitation of some idea or belief about the Spirit, but actually the place He is welcomed and sought. It is the local church that is intended to be the main place the glory of God is on display to the world. The worship services should be the place where the corporate anointing, which is specific for each house, is nurtured. Actually the alternate translation for verse Ps.36:7 is this, “They will be satisfied [or watered] in the abundance of your house.” So it is in the house of God that we are watered or are intended to drink of the anointing.

In verse 8, David talked about the abundance of God's house. The abundance he is speaking of is the abundance of the anointing. Here is how the Passion Translation Notes describe this.

“The Hebrew word for “abundance” is actually butterfat or oil. It is a symbol of the anointing of the Holy Spirit.”

One of the shocking characteristics of the anointing is clearly seen in this verse. Drinking His anointing is the place where we experience God's supernatural joy. This verse actually describes this place with the Hebrew word Eden. Here are the comments from the Passion Notes.

“Eden's rivers of pleasure.” The garden of Eden had flowing rivers of delight. Eden means “pleasure.” The Hebrew word used here is the plural form of Eden, Edens.”

Putting these two ideas together we have to draw certain conclusions. The anointing is intended to be on display at church. When that is the case the church become the place of exceeding supernatural joy.

DISCUSSION:

1. Share examples of the anointing and how it has affected your life. How can we live in the anointing?

DRINK FROM THE FOUNTAINHEAD

Ps.36:8 - They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.

Have you ever pondered the thought that God Himself created pleasure. We may have a hard time seeing that clearly, looking through the lens of our fallen nature, but God Himself is the inventor of enjoyment. Who is the One who conceived of honey, watermelons, and bananas? Not only did He create a world filled with savory pleasures, He also invented tastebuds to enjoy them. What about mountain streams and cascading waterfalls, lush tropical forests and arctic tundras? Not to forget sunflowers, roses, and lilies. Then He had to create light, eyes (with all their complications), and a brain to process and enjoy the magnificent beauty all around us. All of these creations point to their source, the fountainhead of everything Who is God Himself. All of the pleasure that we see and enjoy in this life are only signposts pointing to Beauty Himself. As Solomon said, He is altogether lovely. Here are some thoughts on pleasure from C. S. Lewis.

“And in there, beyond Nature, we shall eat of the tree of life. At present, if we are reborn in Christ, the spirit in us lives directly on God; but the mind and, still more, the body receives life from Him at a thousand removes—through our ancestors, through our food, through the elements. The faint, far-off results of those energies which God’s creative rapture implanted in matter when He made the worlds are what we now call physical pleasures; and even thus filtered, they are too much for our present management. What would it be to taste at the fountainhead that stream of which even these lower reaches prove so intoxicating? Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy. As St. Augustine said, the rapture of the saved soul will “flow over” into the glorified body. In the light of our present specialized and depraved appetites, we cannot imagine this torrens voluptatis, and I warn everyone most seriously not to try.”

So if there is a Creator and He made us with this thirst for pleasure, maybe just maybe we should stop trying to limit our pleasures in this life and call that spiritual. Maybe what we are looking for is pleasure Himself. Maybe all these earthly pleasures are just pointing to the abundance of joy found in the presence of the Lord.

DISCUSSION:

1. Share stories of His glory, of joy unspeakable.

FISH AND BREAD

Ps.36:8 - They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.

“They shall be abundantly satisfied - they shall be saturated, as a thirsty field is by showers from heaven....they shall be inebriated.” — Vulgate

One of my favorite miracles in the ministry of Jesus is the Feeding of the Multitudes. Every part of this miracle is rich with spiritual implications. Each part has something to say to us in our day to day life. After the Lord had multiplied the little boy's lunch and everyone had been fed, the eyewitness, Matthew, gives us a glimpse into the scene. This is what he said, "So they all ate and were filled". Think about this, they ate that supernatural meal and they were filled. This was more than just food for the belly, this was food for their souls. In today's verse, David aptly describes this spiritual meal. He said that we are abundantly satisfied by the fullness of our Father's house. Don't you get it? The Lord had spread a table in the wilderness, they were eating heavenly food at the Father's table that day, not just fish and bread. The crazy thing about this story is that it tells us a lot about man's spiritual condition. The overwhelming majority of the crowd missed the whole point. They proceeded to try and make Jesus their earthly king.

"This is great!", they imagined. We have a king who will drive out the Romans, and provide our temporal needs. That's why the next day when the Lord began to talk about His body and blood, the crowds were appalled. As a matter of fact, the crowds were gone. They weren't interested in a heavenly kingdom. They wanted their best life now. Sound familiar?

Jesus proceeded to ask His disciples if they were going to leave too. Thankfully Peter finally got it right. His answer? "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Even though the large crowds were gone from the ministry of Jesus, His course had been set that day. He had come to set up a kingdom, just not the kind the crowds were looking for. So in our modern world we have to ask ourselves the question, "Why am I following Jesus?" Is it for an earthly free ride or is there more to it than just fish and bread? The dangers of wanting a king now!

"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house." Those who learn to put their trust in God shall be received into his house and shall share in the provision laid up therein. The dwelling-place of the Lord is not confined to any place, and hence reside where we may, we may regard our dwelling, if we be believers, as one room in the Lord's great house; and we shall, both in providence and grace, find a soul-contenting store supplied to us as the result of living by faith in nearness to the Lord. If we regard the assembly of the saints as being peculiarly the house of God, believers shall, indeed, find in sacred worship the richest spiritual food. Happy is the soul that can drink in the sumptuous dainties of the gospel - nothing can so completely fill the soul.

"And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." As they have the fruits of Eden to feed on, so shall they have the river of Paradise to drink from. God's everlasting love bears to us a constant and ample comfort, of which grace makes us to drink by faith, and then our pleasure is of the richest kind. The Lord not only brings us to this river, but makes us drink: herein we see the condescension of divine love. Heaven will, in the fullest sense, fulfil these words; but they who trust in the Lord enjoy the antepast even here. The happiness given to the faithful is that of God himself; purified spirits joy with the same joy as the Lord himself. "That my joy may be in you, that your joy may be full." -Spurgeon

RIVER OF PLEASURE

Ps. 36:8 – “They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.”

“Art thou able to put the whole earth, and all the waters of the sea, into a little pot? Canst thou measure the waters in thy fist, and mete out heaven with thy span, or weigh the mountains in scales, or the hills in a balance? If not, no more is it possible that thy understanding should comprehend the least of the joys of heaven; and certainly the least of the joys of heaven are inconceivable and unexpressible.” - Thomas Brooks.

All of us have a huge thirst for pleasure. That is part of being created in the image of God. Obviously, the Lord Himself has an infinite thirst for pleasure. With Him, there is a total contentment in Himself which is quite interesting. How can someone be satisfied yet at the same time long for more? That is the unusual characteristic of spiritual thirst. We too are ever thirsting even as we are totally satisfied in Christ alone. In this verse David sang of a river of pleasure. Ezekiel swam in it, John had a vision of it, and Jesus prophesied about it. David connected this river to the house of God. That is quite amazing. Today, that is exactly where this river is flowing. Churches, the house of God, is the place where this river can be found. Here is how Charles Spurgeon describes this verse.

“And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. As they have the fruits of Eden to feed on, so shall they have the river of Paradise to drink from. God’s everlasting love bears to us a constant and ample comfort, of which grace makes us to drink by faith, and then our pleasure is of the richest kind. The Lord not only brings us to this river, but makes us drink: herein we see the condescension of divine love. Heaven will, in the fullest sense, fulfill these words; but they who trust in the Lord enjoy the ante-past even here. The happiness given to the faithful is that of God himself; purified spirits joy with the same joy as the Lord himself. “That my joy may be in you, that your joy may be full.”

Spurgeon used an interesting phrase in his commentary, ante-past. This is a foretaste of the coming feast. In this life, we drink as the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us. In the coming kingdom, we will actually live in the river of His presence. If the foretaste is so satisfying and attractive, how much more when the fullness comes? David spoke of something more than casual satisfaction. The word he used could be translated soak, satiate, or intoxicate. David is describing an excessive encounter. If that is available in this life, imagine the unbridled joy in heaven!

DISCUSSION:

1. What happens when we are seeking earthly kingdoms and pleasure?

LESSON 5

THE BALANCE OF GOD

Ps 36:8 They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.

The Lord has a way of taking care of our whole life. The spiritual and the natural are covered by the blessing of the Lord. David spoke here of the blessing of his Father's house. I am sure he had his father Jesse's house as well as his heavenly Father's house in mind. David came from a prominent family in Bethlehem. He had great memories of his father's house. I can remember having those feelings, especially when I was struggling to make ends meet with my young family. My father's house was like a refuge, a place of blessing and abundance. Parris and I would load the kids into the van and head to my father's house where we knew the fridge would be full. David was also thinking of the abundance of his heavenly Father's house. The spiritual blessings flow like a river, a river of life that never runs dry. Here are some thoughts from John Calvin on the blessings of the Father's house.

"I have no doubt that by the fatness of God's house the prophet means the abundance of good things which is not designed for all men indiscriminately but is laid up in store for the children of God who commit themselves wholly to his protection. Some restrict the expression to spiritual graces; but to me it seems more likely, that under it are comprehended all the blessings that are necessary to the happiness and comfort of the present life, as well as those which pertain to eternal and heavenly blessedness. It ought, however, to be observed, that in the style of speaking which the prophet here employs, the use of earthly blessings is connected with the gracious experience of faith, in the exercise of which we can alone enjoy them rightfully and lawfully to our own welfare. When the ungodly glut themselves with the abundance of God's benefits, their bodies indeed grow fat like the flesh of cattle or swine, but their souls are always empty and famished. It is the faithful alone, as I have said, who are satisfied with the goodness of God towards them, because it is to them a pledge of his fatherly love."

There is a carnal 'fatness' that comes from carnal indulgence. There is also a spiritual 'fatness' that comes from delighting in the abundance of our Father's house. What kind of 'fat' are you? He is glorified when we are satisfied with him.

"But mark, reader, secondly, the plenty as well as the excellency of this provision. Here is fatness in the abstract, a "river of pleasure;" and so much as that they who enjoy it shall be satisfied, and abundantly satisfied. A river is overflowing and ever flowing; it communicates its water and yet is never empty. It is fed with springs and fountains, and therefore it is no wonder if it always be full. They that are at such a well need not complain of want; but here are not only rivers and fatness, but of God's people it is said, "they shall be abundantly satisfied." In the original it is inebriated. They shall have not only a sufficiency, but a redundancy of spiritual delights. The vessels of their souls shall be filled to the brim out of that river whose streams make glad the city of God. Surely, then, they who may have bread in such abundance, enough and to spare, in their Father's house, made of the kidneys of the wheat, of the finest flour, need not hanker after the

world's homely fare. Our heavenly Father doth not keep so starveling a house that the world's scraps should go down with us.” - George Swinnock.

DISCUSSION:

1. Describe the two kinds of fatness.
2. Jesus describes in detail about the rich man that built bigger barns. How does this relate to this passage?

SEEING THE WORLD BY A WHOLE NEW LIGHT

Ps.36:9 - For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.

I see the world differently than I used to. The light that revealed Christ to me has literally changed my view of everything. Things like marriage and money and football; my way of looking at all of those things has changed. I can't even go for a drive or a walk in the neighborhood without being taken back by this glorious world of light. You see, when Christ turned the light on in my life, He lit up the whole world. Just think about it, when blind Bartimaeus was first awakened from his sleep he not only saw Christ, he saw his whole world differently. He had never been able to see children or waterfalls, he never saw an apple or a butterfly, he had never gazed into the sky or had seen the blazing glory of the sun; now his whole world was lit up. This is a great description of what happens to all people who are born again. Their world which was once dark is now ablaze with light. Everything is different now; church is different, the Bible is beaming with light, even our everyday ordinary stuff carries a new shimmer of life. Christ has lit up our world. Here is how C.S. Lewis describes this.

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

That pretty much tells the story. I now see everything else by this light that has awakened my soul. I can never look at my world in the same way that I used to. Before I was feeling my way through life, now it is alive with the glory of the Lord. That is the funny thing about being awakened from the slumber of spiritual darkness; we are blind and dysfunctional and don't realize it. We think we are doing okay when we don't even have a clue what real life is even like. We are stuck on survival in this physical world when the unseen world is just under our noses. Bartimaeus would never go back to those long dark days again; neither will I. He was too busy enjoying and exploring this world of light; like Bartimaeus, we live in a different world now.

IN YOUR LIGHT

Ps.36:9 - For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

Light is one of those things we take for granted until we don't have it. Recently, we went through a long bad patch of weather. It was brutally cold and the sun hardly peeked out of the cloud bank for two weeks. When the sun and warmth reappeared, it was like the beginning of a brand new day. In this passage, David was singing about the love of God and delighting in His presence. In today's verse, he describes the effect of the brilliant light that flows out from God. Not only do

we see the Lord in this light, we see everything else from an entirely different perspective; “In your light we see light”. Here is how Charles Spurgeon describes the radiant light of God.

“Light is the glory of life. Life in the dark is misery, and rather death than life. The Lord alone can give natural, intellectual, and spiritual life; he alone can make life bright and lustrous. In spiritual things the knowledge of God sheds a light on all other subjects. We need no candle to see the sun, we see it by its own radiance, and then see everything else by the same luster. We never see Jesus by the light of self, but self in the light of Jesus. No inward intelligence of ours leads us to receive the Spirit’s light, but rather, it often helps to quench the sacred beam; purely and only by his own illumination, the Holy Ghost lights up the dark recesses of our heart’s ungodliness. Vain are they who look to learning and human wit, one ray from the throne of God is better than the noonday splendor of created wisdom. Lord, give me the sun, and let those who will delight in the wax candles of superstition and the phosphorescence of corrupt philosophy. Faith derives both light and life from God, and hence she neither dies nor darkens.”

Like everyone else, I had no idea I was wandering around in the dark before I met Christ. When His light shone into my heart for the first time, I saw the beauty of Christ for myself. This light that flows out from Him also enlightened the rest of my world. I saw my sinfulness and His graciousness; I saw the beauty and power of His word, and I saw the magnificence of His church - the redeemed of the earth. As we drink of His goodness, we are filled with His fountain of light.

DISCUSSION:

1. How important is walking in the light? Read passages where Jesus talks about the light.

DELIGHTING

Psalms 37- “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the Lord upholdeth the righteous. The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. The

wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.”

GIVER OF ALL THINGS

Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

God is a giver. That's His nature, He is the source and sustainer of all things. When we think of the Christmas story, inevitably our thoughts turn to the wise men and their gifts. The funny thing about that story is that the greater gift was right in front of everybody. God's gift, the gift of His only begotten Son, is infinitely greater than any gift that any human could afford. The wise men recognized this (why else would they leave everything and travel hundreds of miles on camels?) Their offerings of gold, incense, and myrrh flowed out of God's giving to them. Our giving is just a response to the giving of our Father. If He wouldn't withhold His Son from us, there is no good thing He will not give us. Trust Him today. I mean really trust Him. You will never be disappointed. Here are some thoughts from Louie Giglio on today's scripture verse.

“Often, we feel like everybody else is getting ahead, getting what they want, or worse, getting what we want! But God’s gifts for you will come at just the right time. If you’re truly waiting on God, you won’t miss anything. When you walk with God, you always arrive on time. God is the giver of life and breath. And with these God gives to every creature what they need. A tiny sparrow does not fall from the sky without Him noticing. And He clothes the hillside with an array of beauty and vibrant color. You are His beloved—His son or daughter by faith in Christ. Trust your perfect Father’s heart. He will give you exactly what you need, and as you seek Him, He will even give you the “desires of your heart.”

That “desires of your heart” thing can be quite tricky. You start off thinking you "desire" certain things. Once you really begin to delight in the Lord Himself your desires begin to change. You

came into this Christian thing thinking you wanted one thing. As the Lord became your priority in life, you stopped wanting the things that were once huge parts of your life and you began wanting other things. Actually, you began wanting one thing. Like the wise men in Bethlehem, everything changed when you found yourself in His presence; like them, you are still going home, you are just returning another way.

“How much grace and love breathes in these words, "Delight thyself also in the Lord!" Trust in him was recommended before, and now, this being added also, how plain is it that your ease and rest is the thing designed! Is it fit to receive so much kindness with neglect? Again, he delights in you; I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said, "His delights were with the sons of men," Proverbs 8:31. Think what he is, and what you are; and at once, both wonder and yield. And what else have you to delight in? what thing will you name that shall supply the place of GOD, or be to you in the stead of him? Moreover, who should delight in him but you - his friends, his sons, those of his own house? Think what life and vigor it will infuse into you, and that "the joy of the Lord will be your strength," Nehemiah 8:10. How pleasantly will you hold on to your course, and discharge all other duties of this, your present state! You must serve him. Dare you think of throwing off his yoke? How desirable is it then to take delight in him whom I must serve; which only makes that service acceptable to him, and easy to myself! Further, this is a pleasure none can rob you of; a joy that cannot be taken from you. Other objects of your delight are vanishing daily. Neither men nor devils can ever hinder you delighting in God, if your hearts be so inclined. And were you never brought to take pleasure in any person or thing to which you had a former aversion? One that had wronged you might yet possibly win you by after kindness. Give a reason why you should be more difficult towards the blessed God that never wronged you, and whose way towards you hath constantly imported so much good will!”
-JOHN HOWE

DISCUSSION:

1. What are some benefits of delighting yourself in God on a daily basis? Share what that means to you.
2. How does delighting in the Lord affect those around you? Give examples of the way it changes your actions, the way you think or how you trust in the Lord.

LESSON 6

ENJOY

“Delight yourself in the Lord , and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

Psalm 37:4

"Come and sit down with God, retire thyself to him, and solace thyself in the delights which are to be found in his presence and converse, in walking with him, and transacting thy course as before him, and in his sight." -John Howe

Once you see it, the enjoyment of God permeates the scripture. To know Christ and enjoy Him is the very essence of our lives. Now don't misunderstand, I am not talking about enjoying His blessings and benefits. I am talking about the sheer pleasure that comes from intimacy with the Lord. This may be a forgotten theme in many Christian circles today, but it was the very substance of many great Christians that have gone before us. The great man of prayer, George Muller, said it like this, “I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord.”

John Owen, the great English theologian, said that pleasure in God was the very substance of the scripture.

"The design of the whole of Scripture, and all the parts of it, hath an impress on it of divine wisdom and authority: and hereof there are two parts: first, To reveal God unto men; and, secondly, To direct men to come unto the enjoyment of God."

Stop and think about what Owen was getting at, scripture exists to reveal Christ to us and from that we find the source of all joy. Owen goes on to stress the importance of pressing beyond just the beliefs that we gain from scripture, to press on to know the reality of God.

"If we satisfy ourselves in mere notions and speculations about the glory of Christ as doctrinally revealed unto us, we shall find no transforming power or efficacy communicated unto us thereby... Where light leaves the affections behind, it ends in formality or atheism; and where affections outrun light, they sink in the bog of superstition, doting on images and pictures, or the like."

Finally we come to Charles Spurgeon. He teaches us that reading and studying scripture is important. He points us to the reality that pleasure in God is wrapped up in the scriptures. We become like miners, mining for gold as we search the scriptures.

'Certainly, the benefit of reading must come to the soul by the way of the understanding. . . . The mind must have illumination before the affections can properly rise towards their divine object. . . . There must be knowledge of God before there can be love to God: there must be a knowledge of divine things, as they are revealed, before there can be an enjoyment of them.' So go ahead and dig into God's word. There are pleasures evermore waiting for you there.

"But the meek shall inherit the earth." Above all others they shall enjoy life. Even if they suffer, their consolations shall overtop their tribulations. By inheriting the land is meant obtaining covenant privileges and the salvation of God. Such as are truly humble shall take their lot with the rest of the heirs of grace, to whom all good things come by a sacred birthright. -Spurgeon

DISCUSSION:

1. There is so much here on delighting and savoring Christ. Pull out the nuggets that you found delightful and discuss!

UNEXPECTED JOY

"Delight thyself also in the Lord."

Ps.37:4

"All the desires of this spirit shall live with the Spirit of God, in rest and satisfaction for ever"
-John Pennington, 1656.

Let's face it, at the end of the day everyone basically does what they enjoy. Smokers smoke, drinkers drink, potheads huff, and sex addicts; well you know the rest. It's not that joy is in itself evil. After all, the pursuit of joy is one of the basic ingredients placed in all of us by the Lord. The problem is this, we are all twisted. Our fallen nature has perverted our lives to the point that we want things that are destructive. In a perfect world, (before the fall) our delight would be in God Himself. Our fallen nature longs for everything but God. That's why today's verse is so ridiculous to fallen man. Joy and God are not in the same universe. At least that is true until God renovates our being. To those who have been truly born again, delighting in God becomes our life. Here is how Charles Spurgeon described it.

"The life of the believer is here described as a delight in God, and we are thus certified of the great fact that true religion overflows with happiness and joy. Ungodly persons and mere professors never look upon religion as a joyful thing; to them it is service, duty, or necessity, but never pleasure or delight. If they attend to religion at all, it is either that they may gain thereby, or else because they dare not do otherwise. The thought of delight in religion is so strange to most men, that no two words in their language stand further apart than holiness and delight. But believers who know Christ, understand that delight and faith are so blessedly united, that the gates of hell cannot prevail to separate them. They who love God with all their hearts, find that his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. So the pursuit of God has no hidden agenda. It's not so we will go to heaven, it's not so we will be healed, it's not so we will be financially blessed. All of those things will happen but they are not the treasure. God is the treasure. Once you discover joy in God there is nothing anyone can do to mess up your life, God alone will be more than enough."

DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss this passage; "They who love God with all their hearts, find that his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace."

DELIGHT – COMMIT – TRUST

Psalm 37:4,5 - Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.

"Commit thy way unto. Roll thy way upon - as one who lays upon the shoulder of one stronger than himself a burden which he is not able to bear" - William De Burgh

This language is foreign to the lost man. He knows about delighting in football or fishing; he knows about the delight of hamburgers, jambalaya, or ice cream; he even knows about the pleasures found in a bottle or in the arms of a lover. To delight in God, that is something unexplainable to the lost soul. You must be born again if you are to know what it means to delight in God. Adam Clarke said, "Delight thyself also in the Lord. Expect all thy happiness from him and seek it in him". John Bunyan described this phenomenon like this.

"The desires of God, and the desires of the righteous, agree in one; they are of one mind in their desires."

So where does this radical shift come from? It is the fruit of being born again, only the new creature can enjoy and delight in spiritual things. This passage also talks about committing your way to the Lord. This is how Dick Mills describes what it means to commit your way to the Lord.

"Galal (gah-lahl); Strong's To roll, roll down, roll away, remove. In Gen. 29:3, galal refers to rolling the stone from the well's mouth. In Josh. 5:9, the reproach of Egypt is rolled off from Israel. In this text, the reader is encouraged to roll his works into God's care). The picture is of a camel, burdened with a heavy load; when the load is to be "removed, the camel kneels down, tilts far to one side, and the load rolls off."

Once you begin to find your joy in the Lord you begin to recognize His ability to carry you through anything. Roll whatever you are carrying over on the Lord, He will carry your burden and carry you through your troubles. David also said to trust the Lord. I love this; DELIGHT - COMMIT - TRUST. Trusting the Lord comes from getting to know Him. Here is Charles Spurgeon on trusting Him.

"Trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Our destiny shall be joyfully accomplished if we confidently entrust all to our Lord."

So, this is your pathway to joy- Delight, commit and trust; you will live in the joy of the Lord. The literal meaning of the word "rest," is "be silent" towards the Lord. With the eye fixed on him let all unbelieving thoughts be stilled, such thoughts as rise and rankle in the querulous spirit when it sees only its troubles, and not God in them, when the mists of earth hide from its sight the eternal stars of heaven. Then like Jacob, it may say morosely, "All these things are against me;" or, like Elijah, despondently, "It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life;" or, like Jonah, fretfully, "I do well to be angry." In regard to all such dark and unbelieving suggestions, the heart is to keep silence, to be still and know that he is God; silent as to murmuring, but not silent as to prayer, for in that holy meditative stillness the heart turns to commune with him. What is "resting

in God," but the instinctive movement and upward glance of the spirit to him; the confiding all one's griefs and fears to him, and feeling strengthened, patient, hopeful in the act of doing so! It implies a willingness that he should choose for us, a conviction that the ordering of all that concerns us is safer in his hands than in our own."-James Burns

DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss — “With the eye fixed on him let all unbelieving thoughts be stilled, such thoughts as rise and rankle in the querulous spirit when it sees only its troubles, and not God in them, when the mists of earth hide from its sight the eternal stars of heaven.”
2. Define galal (gah-lahl) in your life.

PSALM 37:24

"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down," etc. Thus the Spirit comforts and answers the secret thoughts which everyone might have, saying with himself, I have, however, seen it happen, that the righteous is oppressed, and his cause is trodden in the dust by the wicked. Nay, he replies, dear child, let it be so, that he falls; he still cannot remain lying thus and be cast away; he must be up again, although all the world doubts of it. For God catches him by the hand, and raises him again. - Martin Luther.

“When our Savior Christ had fed four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes, all being filled, seven baskets full of fragments were gathered up; and it is Saint Austin's note “the victuals in expending were augmented (having been made greater in size and value), so is the alms which is given to the poor.” - Michael Jermin.

PSALM 37:37

“The end of that man is peace”. “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.” Mark him in the setting out, he hath many oppositions; mark him in the journey, he is full of tribulations; but mark in the conclusion, and the end of that man is peace. – Thomas Adams.

PSALM 37:40

"And the Lord shall help them." He shall, he shall, he shall. Oh, the rhetoric of God! the safety of the saints! the certainty of the promises! - John Trapp.

Luther closes his Exposition of the Psalm with the words, Oh, shame on our faithlessness, mistrust, and vile unbelief, that we do not believe such rich, powerful consolatory, declarations of God, and take up so readily with little grounds of offense, whenever we but hear the wicked speeches of the ungodly. Help, O God, that we may once attain to right faith. Amen.

“For a wicked heart the whole world is too little! The Lord knoweth the days of the upright." His foreknowledge made him laugh at the proud, but in the case of the upright he sees a brighter future and treats them as heirs of salvation. Ever is this our comfort, that all events are known to our God, and that nothing in our future can take him at unawares. No arrow can pierce us by accident, no dagger smite us by stealth; neither in time nor in eternity can any unforeseen ill

occur to us. Futurity shall be but a continual development of the good things which the Lord has laid up in store for us. "And their inheritance shall be forever." Their inheritance fades not away. It is entailed, so that none can deprive them of it, and preserved, so that none shall destroy it. Eternity is the peculiar attribute of the believer's portion: what they have on earth is safe enough, but what they shall have in heaven is theirs without end. God loves to view the holy strivings of a soul pressing forward to the skies. In the trials and the joys of the faithful, Jesus has fellowship with them, and delights to be their sympathizing companion." Spurgeon

LESSON 7

PSALMS 40

I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust. And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works Which You have done. And Your thoughts toward us. Cannot be recounted to You in order; If I would declare and speak of them, They are more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God. And Your law is within my heart.” I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness. In the great assembly; Indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O Lord, You Yourself know. Have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth. From the great assembly. Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord; Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have surrounded me. My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; They are more than the hairs of my head; Therefore my heart fails me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me! Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion. Who seek to destroy my [a]life; Let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor. Who wish me evil. Let them be confounded because of their shame. Who say to me, “Aha, aha!” Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You. Let such as love Your salvation say continually, “The Lord be magnified!” But I am poor and needy; Yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God.

PSALMS 40:1

¶ I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. From time to time, I pull out classic Christian books that affected me in my earliest days as a Christian. One of those books is *Waiting on God* by Andrew Murray. Murray had a profound understanding of prayer and it seemed to be that the foundation of his revelation was waiting on the Lord. Too often prayer is perceived as us doing something. Many times we tend to think it is our prayer efforts that are important. Nothing could be further from the truth. Prayer is total dependency on God and prayer starts and finishes with waiting. Here are some of Murray’s thoughts on waiting on the Lord.

“In waiting on God it is of infinite consequence that we not only submit, because we are compelled to, but because we lovingly and joyfully consent to be in the hands of our blessed Father. Patience then becomes our highest blessedness and our highest grace. It honors God and gives Him time to have His way with us. It is the highest expression of our faith in His goodness and faithfulness. It brings the soul perfect rest in the assurance that God is carrying on His work. It is the token of our full consent that God should deal with us in such a way and time as He thinks best. True patience is the “losing of our self-will in His perfect will.”

I love this, waiting honors God and focuses on His goodness and faithfulness. As we wait in the presence of our faithful God we know He is good and He is working in all things on our behalf. Anxiousness tends to take matters into its own hands. That leads to frustration and even more anxiety. Waiting on God deepens our faith and puts us in touch with Him which is far better than all answered prayers. Murray continues to speak of the rich reward found in waiting. "Patient waiting upon God brings a rich reward; the deliverance is sure; God Himself will put a new song into your mouth. O soul! be not impatient, whether it be in the exercise of prayer and worship that you find it difficult to wait, or in the delay in respect of definite requests, or in the fulfilling of your heart's desire for the revelation of God Himself in a deeper spiritual life - fear not, but rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." This new song not only sustains us but it brings great glory to God. David said many would take notice of this song of the Lord and would put their trust in Him.

CHICKEN PIT

Psalm 40:2,3

He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD.

Did I ever tell you about the day I fell into the chicken pit? It had to be the most disgusting and stinky day of my life. It was a cold, rainy day in the San Joaquin Valley and I was rushing to work. It had been raining all night and was 40 something degrees outside. I got to work at the B and C Egg Ranch at 7, and the workers were in a panic. The pump that was used to pump the liquified chicken manure had shorted out and had been pumping liquid chicken mess all night. I went running to the scene of the disaster between two of the chicken houses and was shocked at what I saw. The whole area was flooded with liquid chicken mess at about a depth of one foot and the pump was still pumping into the army style water truck which had overflowed hours before. I took off running (I had my boots on) through the mess to turn off the pump. There was only one problem; I forgot about the fourteen foot deep pit that was next to the truck. Remember, the whole area was flooded and you couldn't see where the pit started or finished. I'm sure you already guessed what happened next. That's right, I went into that pit of liquid 40 degree chicken mess. By the grace of God I kept my head from going under. I was able to get out and get a change of clothes (the shower had to wait until after work). I'll never forget the smell that seemed to stick with me for days. I understand a little bit of David's pit.

The point of this story is this: All of us have made bad mistakes in our lives. Often, the consequences are like that stinky pit of chicken poo. It's what happens in those pits that can be life changing. We can get consumed by our horrible circumstances or we can allow the Lord to put a new song in our mouth. Maybe today finds you in one of those horrible, stinky pits of despair. Call on the Lord and before you know it you too will be singing His sweet, sweet song.

A NEW SONG FOR A NEW DAY

Psalm 40:3 - A new song for a new day rises up in me every time I think about how he breaks through for me! Ecstatic praise pours out of my mouth until everyone hears how God has set me free. Many will see his miracles; they'll stand in awe of God and fall in love with him!

Recently I was reading this Psalm and this verse literally jumped out of the page at me. “A new song for a new day”; that’s it. We are entering one of God’s new days and an old song just won’t do. As I read this passage my mind turned back to the earliest days of the outpouring of the Spirit in our church back in 1994. We stopped singing the songs previous to the outpouring. Those were all good songs mind you, but songs reflect the season that they were written in. We were in a new day, and God was putting a new song in our mouth. I feel like we are presently entering into one of God’s new days. We have been in the horrible pit of Corona quarantine, spending plenty of time reflecting on where we have been. The Lord is bringing us out into a wide place of deliverance, His new song reflects what He is doing. Here is how Matthew Henry describes this verse.

“He filled him with joy, as well as peace, in believing: “He has put a new song in my mouth; he has given me cause to rejoice and a heart to rejoice.” He was brought, as it were, into a new world, and that filled his mouth with a new song, even praise to our God; for to his praise and glory must all our songs be sung. Fresh mercies, especially such as we never before received, call for new songs. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus in his reception to paradise, his resurrection from the grave, and his exaltation to the joy and glory set before him; he was brought out of the horrible pit, set upon a rock, and had a new song put into his mouth.”

We are receiving fresh mercies; after all they are new every morning. Fresh mercies give us new views of God’s greatness and new perspective on His plans. We will declare this new song, and the result will be a season of miracles, signs, and wonders.

THE WELSH REVIVAL

Psalms 40:3 - He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD

I love reading about the glorious visitations of God from the past. I know that we can never reproduce what happened in another time and other cultures, but the similarities in the outpouring of the Spirit throughout history produces an expectancy in my heart for God’s “new thing” for this generation. There is something very special and unique about the Welsh Revival that began in 1904. As a student in Bible School, I heard about Wales and the young revival leader, Evan Roberts, and I longed to be part of a great move of God in our generation. As of this writing, I am grateful to have participated in two such outpourings of the Spirit. I was born again and filled with the Spirit in the Charismatic Renewal and was also swept up in the outpouring I call “The River” in 1994. I am in full expectancy mode for another outpouring to effect our world. Check this testimony from the book “THE WELSH REVIVAL” for a glimpse into that great outpouring.

“It was a meeting characterized by a perpetual series of interruptions and disorderliness. It was a meeting characterized by a great continuity and an absolute order. You say, “How do you reconcile these things?” I do not reconcile them. They are both there. If you put a man into the midst of one of these meetings who knows nothing of the language of the Spirit, and nothing of the life of the Spirit, one of two things will happen to him. He will either pass out saying, “These men are drunk,” or he himself will be swept up by the fire into the kingdom of God. If you put a

man down who knows the language of the Spirit, he will be struck by this most peculiar thing. I have never seen anything like it in my life; while a man praying is disturbed by the breaking out of song, there is no sense of disorder, and the prayer merges into song, and back into testimony, and back again into song for hour after hour, without guidance. These are the three occupations—singing, prayer, testimony.”

I love this description of God’s outpouring. To the casual observer the meetings seemed disorderly. To those awakened by the Spirit, a supernatural heavenly order was on full display. Once you taste this “heavenly order” church as usual will just never do.

PSALM 41

Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee. Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face forever. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

CONSIDER THE HURTING

Psa. 41:1 ¶ Blessed is the one who considers the poor!
In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him;

“How foolish are they that fear to lose their wealth by giving it, and fear not to lose themselves by keeping it! He that lays up his gold may be a good jailer, but he that lays it out is a good steward.” Francis Raworth

Understanding original meanings of Bible words can sometimes give you great understanding of what a passage actually means. In this verse the word ‘consider’ in the original language is quite meaningful. It means looking in detail and searching for solutions to the problems the poor are facing. Here is the definition from Mounce word book.

“to have insight, wisdom, understanding; to prosper, successful; the potent capacity to understand and so exercise skill in life, a state caused by proper training and teaching, enhanced by careful observation”

The Bible is saying that we should come up with clear plans to enable people to come out of their struggles. Here is what Spurgeon says about this verse.

“Such as have been made partakers of divine grace receive a tenderer nature and are not hardened against their own flesh and blood; they undertake the cause of the downtrodden, and turn their minds seriously to the promotion of their welfare. They do not toss them a penny and go on their way, but enquire into their sorrows, sift out their cause, study the best ways for their relief, and practically come to their rescue: such as these have the mark of the divine favor plainly upon them, and are as surely the sheep of the Lord’s pasture as if they wore a brand upon their foreheads. They are not said to have considered the poor years ago, but they still do so....” Who are the poor the Lord is speaking of in this verse? I believe He is speaking of all hurting people that are suffering physically, emotionally, or financially in this world. Really, ministering to the poor is what the ministry of Jesus is all about. Everywhere He went He reached out and helped the suffering and the oppressed.

Obviously, it is not possible for us to solve the problems or even help everyone who is hurting. What is the solution? Follow your heart. Jesus in you will be moved with compassion and direct you how to get involved in people’s lives. It could be anything from hospital ministry, ministry in assisted living homes, or working with a rehab or homeless shelter. It may be as simple as leading a small group or helping in children or youth ministry. It’s important that we do something, our heart demands it. Consider the hurting and in your day of trouble the Lord will deliver you.

DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss ways that one can follow his heart?
2. What can you as the “life group” endeavor to do this year that is “considering the poor”?
3. Lets’s remember the the ministries we support through Victory such as Mary’s Song Restoration Center, Aurora Castillo Africa, Egon Falk Africa, Jesus Project New Orleans, French Quarter Mission New Orleans, Feed the Multitudes, Beyond the Grave, and Jeannot Plessy Fund that gives scholarships to children to name a few!

LESSON 8

GOD WILL PRESERVE US

"The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive." It is worthy of remark, that benevolent persons, who "consider the poor," and especially the sick poor; who search cellars, garrets, back lanes, and such abodes of misery, to find them out (even in the places where contagion keeps its seat), very seldom fall a prey to their own benevolence. The Lord, in an especial manner, keeps them alive, and preserves them; while many, who endeavor to keep far from the contagion, are assailed by it, and fall victims to it. God loves the merciful man. - Adam Clarke.

Ps 41:1-3 - TPT - God always blesses those who are kind to the poor and helpless. They're the first ones God helps when they find themselves in any trouble. The Lord will preserve and protect them. They'll be honored and esteemed while their enemies are defeated. When they are sick, God will restore them, lying upon their bed of suffering. He will raise them up again and restore them back to health.

There has been a law of sowing and reaping throughout time. Even people who are not God believers believe in some sort of sowing and reaping. I find that the scripture in Ps 41 clearly states that the first ones helped through their difficulties are the ones that help others. In fact lots of promises are packed into this psalm. Jonathan Edwards says;

"To him they shall flee, as one who is abroad, and sees a terrible storm arising, makes haste to some shelter to secure himself; so that however furious is the tempest, yet he is safe within, and the wind and rain, though they beat never so impetuously upon the roof and walls, are no annoyance unto him."

Secular newspapers are reeling with talk of recession and depression as if that's the new normal. I believe that we will have peace and security despite what is going on with the world. I pray that you too, during this time, can feel his mighty hand upon your lives. Proverbs 19:2 says, "Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, and he who makes haste with his feet errs." Knowledge without Christ leads us into snares but we must in these days run in the ways of his commandments.

Spurgeon says, "God will think of him. God measures to us with our own bushel. Days of trouble come even to the most generous, and they have made the wisest provision for rainy days who have lent shelter to others when times were better with them. The promise is not that the generous saint shall have no trouble, but that he shall be preserved in it, and in due time brought out of it. He secures the ultimate victory of all his blood bought ones." If you find yourself stricken with sickness/virus, pray His word over you because you will be raised up again and be restored back to health. Don't be in condemnation that you got infected. Use it as a testimony to others that God will raise them up!

Whatever the days ahead look like we all know that God will never leave us nor forsake and the righteous will flourish like the palm tree and will bear their fruit in due time! Days of trouble

come even to the most generous, and they have made the wisest provision for rainy days who have lent shelter to others when times were better with them. The promise is not that the generous saint shall have no trouble, but that he shall be preserved in it, and in due time brought out of it. How true was this of our Lord I never trouble deeper nor triumph brighter than his, and glory be to his name, he secures the ultimate victory of all his blood-bought ones. CHS

DISCUSSION:

1. What are the best antidotes to do when one is stricken?

PSALMS 42

As the deer [b]pant 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 [c]appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, “Where is your God?” 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. Why are you [d]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. 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. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me. 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. I will say to God my Rock, “Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” As with a [h]breaking of my bones, My enemies [i]reproach me, While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” 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.

HAVING HUNGER

“As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.
I thirst for God, the living God.” Psalm 42:1

“If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.” -John Piper

Having a hunger for God all the days of our lives takes a major God intervention. It is not our natural vent in life to stay passionate for God. Unless your Enoch! Augustine even says our hands are so full we have a hard time grasping God. I believe sometimes we just have to reevaluate our lives and ask him to do whatever it takes in us to create this supernatural hunger. It's learning to value our communion with him so much that our lives depend on it. Taking His word as precious promises for our meat and drink. Learning to drink daily at the fountain of Christ isn't as easy as some would think. David knew as in the Apostle Paul it's an all or nothing kind of life. Has the desire awakened in you to become radical enough to count the cost and thirst for HIM? Even in our setbacks and disappointments, we can step out of the negativity and know that God has something bigger, more stunning than any of us can ever imagine. When I

allow this Holy Ghost to take over so to speak, my life takes on a higher dimension. It's not me fighting the world, me fighting my enemies, or me tackling every project in my own strength. Thank God! When he takes over and gives me this supernatural hunger, something supernatural happens. He gives me fresh affections, an ability to become holy, and an amazing love for the body of Christ and others. I find even my politics become guided by him. Imagine that!

Piper again says this:

“The strongest, most mature Christians I have ever met are the hungriest for God. It might seem that those who eat most would be least hungry. But that's not the way it works with an inexhaustible fountain, and an infinite feast, and a glorious Lord. When you take your stand on the finished work of God in Christ, and begin to drink at the River of Life and eat the Bread of Heaven, and know that you have found the end of all your longings.” Even when we are filled to the full, we still remain unsatiated and expectant. God has so much for us, we have only just begun, my soul ‘thirst for God, for the living God.’ There is a reward for the merciful, this is what our lives and church are all about.

DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss what having no hunger begins to do in our Christian life?
2. Discuss suggestions to get back our hunger for God.

DEEP DIVE

“Deep calleth unto deep. “ Psalm 42:7

Men and women who have affected the world in profound ways walked with God through the valley of the shadow of death. David spent years living in caves running for his life. Jonah encountered God in the belly of a fish. Paul was jailed and beaten numerous times in his ministry. Then of course there was Jacob who walked with a limp after wrestling with God returning from his exile. Prayerfully none of us will experience these kinds of obstacles in our walk with God, but the fact remains; we are able to help people from the encounters we have had with the Lord in the difficult times of our lives. This last year we can say all of us have passed through some of those deep places in life. Has the Lord met you during this season? When difficulties arise one of two things happen: We draw close to the Lord and find help or our heart begins to harden and the Lord seems far off. Here is how Watchman Née describes walking through these deep places.

“Only deep can answer deep. Nothing that is merely of the shallows can respond to the depths, and only what goes deep in us can meet the deep needs of others. If we want to help those who are passing through floods, we must have been through floods ourselves. Have we a history of God's secret dealings, or does what men see represent all we have got? Many of us are shallow. We only seem to grow outwardly, with nothing in reserve. If we choose to live on the surface of things, we may be of some help to folk in need, but the happiness we bring them will pass. We shall not have been able really to meet them where they are. Paul had a secret he kept for fourteen long years, and what help has its eventual disclosure brought! When we have found God speaking to us in the depths, then it is we possess treasures of darkness to share with others in their hour of trial.”

So how would you characterize your Christian experience? Have you taken a deep dive because of the challenges of life or are you paddling in the shallows? Two things will happen when you dive deep. First, God will meet you and you will experience peace and comfort in your storm. Secondly, you will have authentic power and compassion to minister to the hurting in your world. So what are you waiting for? Take a deep dive, the Lord is waiting for you there.

Discuss these points on a shallow Christian——

DISCUSSION:

1. Purchase a Bible but don't bother to read it.
2. Don't bother to pray. It is not worth it.
3. Attend church only when it fits your schedule.
4. Do not sign up to serve in any way.
5. Don't bother to let people know you are a Christian.
6. Absolutely do not commit to a small group or a Bible study.
7. Don't bother looking deep within your heart.

STRONGER THAN SORROW

Ps.42:7,8 - My deep need calls out to the deep kindness of your love. Your waterfall of weeping sent waves of sorrow over my soul, carrying me away, cascading over me like a thundering cataract. Yet all day long God's promises of love pour over me. Through the night I sing his songs, for my prayer to God has become my life.

It seems like trials come in bunches like the waves of the sea. Just when you get your head back above water another breaker drags you back under. None of us are immune to the attacks of sorrow; they attack one and all. However, the message of this Psalm is clear; there are other breakers that will come and deliver us in the middle of our storm. The Holy Spirit also comes like the waves of the sea. His breakers will overtake us and fill our hearts with songs of deliverance. Here is how Spurgeon describes these sweet songs of the Lord.

“His song shall be with me. Songs of praise for blessings received shall cheer the gloom of night. No music sweeter than this. The belief that we shall yet glorify the Lord for mercy given in extremity is a delightful stay to the soul. Affliction may put out our candle, but if it cannot silence our song we will soon light the candle again. And my prayer unto the God of my life. Prayer is yoked with praise. He who is the living God, is the God of our life, from him we derive it, with him in prayer and praise we spend it, to him we devote it, in him we shall perfect it. To be assured that our sighs and songs shall both have free access to our glorious Lord is to have reason for hope in the most deplorable condition.”

David starts off this song with the answer to our dilemma,

“As a deer pants for flowing streams, 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?”

What kind of waves have been crashing in on you? Do you feel helpless and all alone? Maybe you have had some sleepless nights thinking about your finances and your future. Maybe you have been overwhelmed and a little bit fearful with all this talk of sickness. These are the waves

David is talking about. Don't let them take you down. Catch the wave of the Spirit and you will be surrounded by His love.

DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss stressful situations and how you were able to get breakthrough.
2. Discuss how to recognize stress. The dictionary defines stress as "physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension."
3. Discuss Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

PRAYER YOKED WITH WORSHIP

Ps.42:7,8 - Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and billows have gone over me. 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.

“God is not only in heaven, but in me. Though David was shut out from the sanctuary, yet David's soul was a sanctuary for God; for God is not tied to a sanctuary made with hands. God hath two sanctuaries, he hath two heavens - the heaven of heavens and a broken spirit.” Richard Sibbes

Lovingkindness is the only way out when the sorrows of life are overwhelming us. It seems that we are living in a critical time and many of the Lord's sons and daughters are being beaten down and overcome by the relentless attacks that we are all experiencing. This beautiful Psalm touches on David's secret to surviving and coming out victorious when the waves of darkness are pounding on our souls. Look carefully at David's words, “His song shall be with me”. First he calls it “His song”. The Lord is singing over us and when we catch it, it becomes our song. Next David says, “His song shall be with me”. The song is always there, we tend to hear it clearer when the waves are crashing on our heads. Here is how Spurgeon describes this verse.

“Our God is God of the nights as well as the days; none shall find his Israel unprotected, be the hour what it may. His song shall be with me. Songs of praise for blessings received shall cheer the gloom of night. No music sweeter than this. The belief that we shall yet glorify the Lord for mercy given in extremity is a delightful stay to the soul. Affliction may put out our candle, but if it cannot silence our song we will soon light the candle again. And my prayer unto the God of my life. Prayer is yoked with praise. He who is the living God, is the God of our life, from him we derive it, with him in prayer and praise we spend it, to him we devote it, in him we shall perfect it. To be assured that our sighs and songs shall both have free access to our glorious Lord is to have reason for hope in the most deplorable condition.”

I love that little phrase Spurgeon used, “Prayer is yoked with praise”. The song of the Lord is supernatural. It is the very breathings of the Holy Spirit in prayer. Sing in the Spirit and sing in

your natural tongue. The song of the Lord is with you, and His prayers are yoked with your worship.

DISCUSSION:

1. No sweet music is this knowing that “His song is with me.” Discuss how prayer is yoked with praise!

LIVING BEFORE HIS FACE

Ps.42:11 - So I say to my soul, “Don’t be discouraged. Don’t be disturbed. For I know my God will break through for me.” Then I’ll have plenty of reasons to praise him all over again. Yes, living before his face is my saving grace!

What made David so different from others? Why are his songs still the best 3,000 years later? The answer is in the last phrase of this verse. David learned the art of “living before His face”. Of course you can see glimpses of this in others. Moses talked to God face to face.

Ex.33:11 - “So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”

Steven looked on the face of Jesus while he was being stoned and his face lit up. David was fixed on this access to the Lord that he had been graciously given. Somehow David was translated through time to the New Testament worship we enjoy today. James said so much when he said the world wide church was the restoration of David’s Tabernacle, the blessing of unveiled worship. Today, His face is shining on whosoever will. This is how William Gurnall described this verse.

“God...is the health of my countenance. The health of David’s countenance was not in his countenance, but in his God, and this makes his faith silence his fears, and so peremptorily resolve upon it, that there is a time coming (how near so ever he now lies to the grave’s mouth) when he shall yet praise him. The health and life of thy grace lie both of them, not in thy grace, saith faith, but in God, who is thy God, therefore I shall yet live and praise him. I do not wonder that the weak Christian is melancholy and sad, when he sees his sickly face in any other glass than this.”

Unveiled worship is a privilege to all New Testament believers. We have access into His presence because of the precious blood of Jesus. His blood not only forgives our sins, but it allows us to come in His incredible presence. This became David’s passion and the way to live his life. For those who are thirsty for God this life is available today. That was the point of Pentecost; all mankind can now come into this new way of life. The blood is not only about forgiveness and access into eternity in heaven, it is about joy unspeakable available to all of us today.

LESSON 9

I WANNA GO BACK TO CHURCH

Ps.42:1,2 - I long to drink of you, O God, drinking deeply from the streams of pleasure flowing from your presence. My longings overwhelm me for more of you! My soul thirsts, pants, and longs for the living God. I want to come and see the face of God.

“Oh, never-to-be-forgotten valley of Achor, thou art a door of hope! Oh! it is a heavenly heart which can sing.” CHS

I guess the old saying is true, “absence makes the heart grow fonder”. I want to go back to church. I love to see the smiling faces and the shouts of joy. I long for those songs of joy and extended times praying in the Spirit. I miss that incredible corporate anointing that unmistakable fills the sanctuary every time we gather. The online services have been good but they can never replace the heavenly atmosphere of the congregation pressing into God together. David knew the feeling that we are feeling right now. David was exiled by the rebellion of his son Absalom. He was on the run for months (possibly two years) while his son took the throne. David is thought to have written this Psalm at this time. David longed to be back in the house of God. He longed for the presence that he found in worshipping in front of the ark. Nothing can replace the life we find in His presence. Here is how Spurgeon describes this passage.

“Debarred from public worship, David was heartsick. Ease he did not seek, honor he did not covet, but the enjoyment of communion with God was an urgent need of his soul; he viewed it not merely as the sweetest of all luxuries, but as an absolute necessity, like water to a stag. Like the parched traveler in the wilderness, whose skin bottle is empty, and who finds the wells dry, he must drink or die—he must have his God or faint. His soul, his very self, his deepest life, was insatiable for a sense of the divine presence. As the hart brays so his soul prays. Give him his God and he is as content as the poor deer which at length slakes its thirst and is perfectly happy; but deny him his Lord, and his heart heaves, his bosom palpitates, his whole frame is convulsed, like one who gasps for breath, or pants with long running.”

I don't know about you but I want to go back to church. Corona or not, I long for His presence only found with the believers in His house.

DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss the setbacks with being isolated and the importance of corporate worship.
2. These things can bring about stress- Being under lots of pressure, facing big changes, worrying about something, not having much or any control over the outcome of a situation, having responsibilities that you're finding overwhelming, not having enough work, activities or change in your life. times of uncertainty. Obviously, the Bible is our guide to all of it and our relationship to Christ!

PSALM 43

Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. 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. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

Psa. 43:4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.

There are all sorts of joy found in this world; as they say, “Different strokes for different folks”. As we grow up from childhood, survive adolescence, develop into full adulthood, and then gracefully grow old; our joy tends to focus on certain things. It grows from a simple pacifier, to trucks and dolls, then “only heaven knows” as a teen, to houses and careers, to grandkids through our changing years. Today's verse talks about a different kind of joy that in one sense is changeless, yet in another is always growing in intensity. It's a joy that can be discovered in the earliest parts of our lives, and can grow and sustain us until our final day. Of course I am describing the spiritual joy, the joy of the Lord. It is not based on circumstances and is available to everyone. Where do we find it? In the presence of the Lord. Here is how Jonathan Edwards described this joy.

"Sometimes only mentioning a single word, causes my heart to burn within me: or only seeing the name of Christ, or the name of some attribute of God. And God has appeared glorious to me, on account of the Trinity. It has made me have exalting thoughts of God, that he subsists in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The sweetest joys and delights I have experienced, have not been those that have arisen from a hope of my own good estate; but in a direct view of the glorious things of the gospel. When I enjoy this sweetness, it seems to carry me above the thoughts of my own safe estate. It seems at such times a loss that I cannot bear, to take off my eye from the glorious, pleasant object I behold without me, to turn my eye in upon myself, and my own good estate."

Jonathan Edwards was a pastor during the Great Awakening in the colonial era of our nation. He was touched deeply by the Holy Spirit, and obviously tasted a joy far different from anything this present life has to offer. This joy is still available today. How do I know? Because I have tasted this joy in my life in different measures over the last 42 years. It has kept me and challenged me onward all throughout my life. Press in for yourself. There is more to this than you can ever imagine.

ELYSIUM

Psa. 43:4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

Have you ever tasted Elysium? You know, that place of eternal joy that is promised to all Christians. You thought you had to die to go to heaven? Absolutely not. Don't you remember what Jesus said, "the kingdom of heaven is within you"? Paul said it like this, "the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink (physical) but it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit". There is that joy thing again. We aren't supposed to wait until we actually die to step over into the joy of joys. Unspeakable joy is all around you now. Recently I was reminded again of the intense, intimate joy that was poured out in revival during the Great Awakening. Here is a snippet of Sarah Edwards' story written by her husband trying to keep her anonymous.

"The soul in the meantime has been as it were perfectly overwhelmed, and swallowed up with light and love and a sweet solace, rest and joy of soul, that was altogether unspeakable; and more than once continuing for five or six hours together, without any interruption, in that clear and lively view or sense of the infinite beauty and amiableness of Christ's person, and the heavenly sweetness of his excellent and transcendent love; so that (to use the person's own expressions) the soul remained in a kind of heavenly Elysium, and did as it were swim in the rays of Christ's love, like a little mote swimming in the beams of the sun, or streams of his light that come in at a window; and the heart was swallowed up in a kind of glow of Christ's love, coming down from Christ's heart in heaven, as a constant stream of sweet light, at the same time the soul all flowing out in love to him; so that there seemed to be a constant flowing and reflowing from heart to heart."

Sarah had been known to struggle with depression. Like all of us, dealing with day to day life (Sarah had eleven children) can be somewhat overwhelming. Sarah Edwards experienced an infusion of joy that changed everything for her. Her joy overflowed and her depression was gone. Today, you too can step into Elysium. Heaven's joy is here now. Where do you find it? Of course, it is in the presence of the Lord.

DISCUSSION:

1. Do you see a connection in Sarah Edwards time and today? They had fears from without (sickness, war with England, poverty), and fears within (depression, fear, and grief). Discuss.
2. Do you feel the state of Elysium is even attainable to you personally? And how could it happen in your life?

THERE IS A HARP IN MY HEART

Ps.43:4 - Then I will come closer to your very altar until I come before you, the God of my ecstatic joy! I will praise you with the harp that plays in my heart, to you, my God, my magnificent God!

God Himself is my joy. This kind of language can only be spoken by those who have tasted His goodness for themselves. There is no way you can learn about this joy from someone else and believe in it; you have to taste it for yourself. David said that God was his ecstatic joy. This is a spiritual joy that has nothing to do with all of our earthly benefits. This is the solution for fear and sadness of heart. Our hearts commune with God and drink deeply of His goodness; this is

where we experience this bliss for ourselves. The result is exuberant worship and celebration. That's why David said that there was a harp in his heart. Here is how Spurgeon describes this verse.

“He is not his joy alone, but his exceeding joy; not the fountain of joy, the giver of joy, or the maintainer of joy, but that joy itself. The margin hath it, “The gladness of my joy, “i.e., the soul, the essence, the very bowels of my joy. To draw near to God, who is such a joy to us, may well be the object of our hungering and thirsting. Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee. His best music for his best love. When God fills us with joy we ought ever to pour it out at his feet in praise, and all the skill and talent we have should be laid under contribution to increase the divine revenue of glory. O God, my God. How he dwells upon the name which he loves so well!”

No wonder David was known for his singing and dancing. This kind of joy just cannot be contained. This is the worship that Paul experienced in that Philippian jail, and Jehoshaphat's singers expressed as they marched into battle. The Lord is our joy, and that surpasses every challenge we face in this life. Today, we are all facing unusual times like no one in this generation has ever known. The problems may be different, but the solution is the same. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

SPILLING BEAUTY AND GOODNESS

Psa. 45:1 ¶ My heart bursts its banks, spilling beauty and goodness. I pour it out in a poem to the king, shaping the river into words:

I love the Psalms. They are literally infused with the fragrance of Christ. This Psalm says it all, "My heart burst its banks, spilling beauty and goodness". How does someone get to a place like this in their experience? Actually, this is the result of a deep touch of the Holy Spirit upon your life. Once you see Him as He is you really have no other option; your heart is filled with beauty and goodness, and it has to come out somehow. It comes out in a display of love that we call worship. This is the source of worship; seeing God and responding. Actually, worship is our response. I say that worship is the act of enjoying God. David was really the prototype of Christian worship. From the day the anointing came upon him, worship was part of who he was. Here is how John Gill describes this anointing on David.

"The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward (after Samuel anointed him with oil); not as a spirit of grace and holiness, which probably had come upon him before this time; but a spirit of prophecy, as did on Saul after his unction; and which particularly showed itself in music and poetry, in which he immediately became very eminent, and he was taken notice of for it, and which was the means of bringing him into Saul's court; and a spirit of wisdom and prudence, in civil as well as in sacred things; and a spirit of fortitude, of strength of body, and courage and valor of mind; whereby he was enabled to encounter with the lion and bear, and get the mastery of them; which, with all other gifts of the spirit fitting him for government, he was now endowed with, and which continued with him.”

Have you connected the dots yet? Worship is supernatural by nature. Worship is birthed by the visitation of God. That's why worship makes no sense to the carnal person. The natural man views it as singing songs about God. True worship is not that at all; it is interaction with the most incredible of all beings. Joyful singing is spontaneous. This is what the psalmist meant when he said, "My heart bursts its banks, spilling beauty and goodness". Your view of worship really describes your spiritual condition. How is it with your soul?

DISCUSSION:

1. How are the two blogs related to each other? You guessed it, each one is expressing joy and worship. The Apostle Paul learned the secret of joy through worship when all around him there was no reason to have joy.
2. Discuss David's methods of worship and how radical it was. How does this relate to today's world?

LESSON 10

PSALMS 45

“My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour. The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.”

SHAPING THE RIVER INTO WORDS

Psa. 45:1 ¶ My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

David is trying to describe with words the prophetic anointing that would often come upon him. It wasn't that David was a great songwriter; he was a supernatural songwriter. I guess you could say he was just a channel or vehicle that God's words and songs flowed through. Today's verse in the Message reads like this, "My heart bursts its banks, spilling beauty and goodness. I pour it out in a poem to the king, shaping the river into words". That is a great way to describe prophecy; we are shaping the River into words. For those that may not quite understand, the River is a picture of the incredible flowing presence coming out from the Father and the Son. Here is how Spurgeon describes this verse.

"The learned tell us that the word may be read overflows, or as others, boils or bubbles up, denoting the warmth of the writer's love, the fulness of his heart, and the consequent richness and glow of his utterance, as though it were the ebullition of his inmost soul, when most full of affection. We have here no single cold expression; the writer is not one who frigidly studies the elegancies and proprieties of poetry, his stanzas are the natural outburst of his soul, comparable

to the boiling jets of the geysers of Hecla. As the corn offered in sacrifice was parched in the pan, so is this tribute of love hot with sincere devotion.”

The amazing thing about this particular Psalm, Psalm 45, is that it is a glimpse into the beginning of the heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ. Paul quotes some of this Psalm in Hebrews 1. In it, Jesus is clearly addressed as God by God the Father. Paul also describes the anointing poured on him to equip him for His heavenly ministry as our High Priest. This is how the Message describes the scene.

Psa. 45:6 ¶ Your throne is God’s throne,
ever and always;
The scepter of your royal rule
measures right living.

Psa. 45:7 You love the right
and hate the wrong.
And that is why God, your very own God,
poured fragrant oil on your head,
Marking you out as king
from among your dear companions.

Psa. 45:8 ¶ Your ozone-drenched garments
are fragrant with mountain breeze.
Chamber music—from the throne room—
makes you want to dance.

So go ahead, step into the River. Allow the River to flow into you and then flow out of you. Don't be surprised when you start shaping the River into words.

DISCUSSION:

1. Everyday our tongue is writing. The question is, are we shaping it into an overflowing river of life? Psalms 45 overflows with being saturated in His presence. Discuss this.
2. Discuss the present day ministry of Jesus.

SECRETARY OF THY PRAISE

Ps. 45:1 ¶ My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King;

My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

David is the epitome of being God's secretary. What do I mean by that? Well, anything that we have that is worth saying or writing comes from the Lord. David said that his tongue was God's pen. His writings were like heavenly dictation. That is David's description of prophecy. We are God's secretaries, hearing from Him and responding accordingly. Recently, I was reading a book written by John Piper called SEEING BEAUTY AND SAYING BEAUTIFULLY. In it, he spoke about the poetry of George Herbert, a country pastor from the 1500's. Here is a short blurb from that book with one of Herbert's poems. Enjoy!

"Poetry is one of those simple tasks of God's servant that needs to be touched by the elixir, the tincture, the stone and turned into God's praise. Herbert believed that since God ruled all things by his sacred providence, everything revealed God. Everything spoke of God. The role of the poet is to be God's echo. Or God's secretary. To me, Herbert's is one of the best descriptions of the Christian poet:

"Secretarie of thy praise." O Sacred Providence, who from end to end
Strongly and sweetly movest! shall I write,
And not of thee, through whom my fingers bend
To hold my quill? shall they not do thee right?
Of all the creatures both in sea and land,
Only to Man thou hast made known thy wayes,
And put the penne alone into his hand,
And made him Secretarie of thy praise.
Why do I languish thus, drooping and dull, As if I were all earth?

O give me quicknesse, that I may with mirth Praise thee brim-full!"
I love this poem. What a great description of our lives, secretaries of His praise. We observe and listen and record and declare our observations. What have you observed recently worthy of His praise? Could it be a newborn hawk trying out his wings or maybe a young deer scampering through the woods? Or maybe a verse of scripture bursting with revelation light, or the fresh touch of God while waiting in His presence. Once you have observed the greatness and beauty of our God, you too will "praise Him brimful". No other job could ever come close to the highest of all callings, "SECRETARY OF HIS PRAISE".

SWEETNESS

Ps.45:2 - TPT - Beautiful! Beautiful! Beyond the sons of men!

Elegant grace pours out through every word you speak.

Truly God has anointed you, his favored one, for eternity!

Have you ever seen something so beautiful that it sets itself apart from everything else? Maybe a favorite mountain view or a special spot to view a sunset. There are moments and places like that for all of us. There is a rose that is especially beautiful to us who are from southeast Louisiana called the Peggy Martin. It was named after a lady who lived in Chalmette who lost everything in Katrina. She lost family and property and all of her precious flowers in her garden except for one; a rose which became known as the Peggy Martin rose. For whatever reason, these Peggy Martin roses survived and even flourished. Her property experienced twenty feet of salt water for two weeks, but these roses survived. Obviously, anyone from this region has to say that these Peggy Martin roses have a beauty shared by no other; they stand out above all others with their message of survival and renewal. Here are some thoughts from Spurgeon about Jesus, our Rose of Sharon.

"Whatever there may be of beauty in the material world, Jesus Christ possesses all that in the spiritual world in a tenfold degree. Amongst flowers the rose is deemed the sweetest, but Jesus is infinitely more beautiful in the garden of the soul than the rose can in the gardens of earth. He

takes the first place as the fairest among ten thousand. He is the sun, and all others are the stars; the heavens and the day are dark in comparison with Him, for the King in His beauty transcends all. "I am the rose of Sharon." This was the best and rarest of roses. Jesus is not "the rose" alone, He is "the rose of Sharon," just as He calls His righteousness "gold," and then adds, "the gold of Ophir"—the best of the best. He is positively lovely, and superlatively the loveliest....Even the recollection of His love is sweet. Take the rose of Sharon, and pull it leaf from leaf, and lay by the leaves in the jar of memory, and you shall find each leaf fragrant long afterwards, filling the house with perfume. Christ satisfies the highest taste of the most educated spirit to the very full." So, maybe your life has been crowded out with the ugliness of this present life. Take a look around, Jesus is near. In the ugly places of this world, His beauty is even more magnificent. His beauty will fill your life with sweetness...

DISCUSSION:

1. How does the story of Peggy Martin and her Katrina rose speak to us today?
2. How is Jesus like the Rose of Sharon in our lives?

HOLY ART

"The King's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold"
Psalm 45:13

Did you ever see a before and after picture of someone that has accepted Christ? Sometimes the contrast is unbelievable. Redemption has a way of making all things new. The old is gone, the new has come. No scientist, doctor, research person can ever understand the work of redemption as it weaves itself in the DNA of man. The effects of sin and the sorrows of yesterday have a way of being erased!

I have had the privilege of seeing redemption up close and personal since I was 16. God working upon the soul of man is a mysterious work indeed. Then in 1994, during the years of revival at our church, I saw redemption in a new way; God falling on the weary downcast and depressed Christian who seemed to have lost their way. By the time they came up off the floor being hit by the power of God, you could see years of age come off their face. When the King steps into the room everything changes. He makes Holy Art within us, and that is the game changer in our life. "When our world is dark, how great is the darkness?" Jesus said.

Spurgeon says, "Within her secret chambers her glory is great. Though unseen of men her Lord sees her, and commends her. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Truth and wisdom in the hidden parts are what the Lord regards; mere skin-deep beauty is nothing in his eyes. The church is of royal extraction, of imperial dignity, for she is a king's daughter; and she has been purified and renewed in nature, for she is glorious within. Note the word all. The Bridegroom was said to have all his garments perfumed, and now the bride is all glorious within - entireness and completeness are great points. There is no mixture of ill savor in Jesus, nor shall there be alloy of unholiness in his people, his church shall be presented without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. "Her clothing is of wrought gold." Best material and best workmanship. How laboriously did our Lord work out the precious material of his righteousness into a vesture for his people! No embroidery of golden threads can equal that master-piece of holy art. Such clothing becomes one

so honored by relationship to the Great King. The Lord looks to it that nothing shall be wanting to the glory and beauty of his bride.” And you thought you were just saying a little prayer didn’t you? Ahhhhhh redemption. We will never come to the end of it.

DISCUSSION:

1. Look around and see the Holy Art in each and everyone. Use this time to speak into each other's lives, and what we see in them for the glory of God, admonishing one another in love!

BEAUTIFUL BRIDE

Ps.45:13,14 – “All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold. In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her.”

This beautiful Psalm is a glimpse into the greatest of all mysteries. It is a sneak peek into the future glory of the bride of Christ. The presentation of the Lord’s bride is the ultimate display of God’s glory. We see His glory and power in creation, we see His wisdom in His written Word, we see His compassion in the miracles of Jesus, but He reserved His greatest display of His glorious grace on the fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. The wedding supper of the Lamb will be the celebration culminating at the presentation of His beautiful bride. His church, made up of former liars, the immoral, all varieties of addicts, and criminals, will be cleansed and clothed with His beautiful garments, and celebrated at the greatest party of all time. Here is a glimpse of this passage from Spurgeon.

“In the latter-day glory, and in the consummation of all things, the glory of the bride, the Lamb’s wife, shall be seen by all the universe with admiration. While she was within doors, and her saints hidden ones, the church was glorious; what will be her splendor when she shall appear in the likeness of her Lord in the day of his manifestation? The finest embroidery is but a faint image of the perfection of the church when sanctified by the Spirit. This verse tells us of the ultimate rest of the church—the King’s own bosom; of the way she comes to it, she is brought by the power of sovereign grace; of the time when this is done—in the future, she shall be, it does not yet appear; of the state in which she shall come—clad in richest array and attended on. Let none hope to be brought into heaven at last who are not purified now.”

We will be with Him, enjoying His love for us throughout all eternity. He will wipe away all of our tears, and lead us to His glorious streams of living water that will satisfy us all of our days. Only then will we begin to see the ramifications of His grace. Not only did He love us when we were unlovable, He has crowned us with His own beauty for eternity.

DISCUSSION:

1. Are you undone yet, beautiful bride?! Use the rest of the time to glorify Christ, adorn yourselves with His love and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in you! You are precious and you are loved!

LESSON 11

PSALMS 46

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

HELP AT THE DAWN

Ps.46:5 - God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

I woke up in a hospital for the first time this morning. The Lord is my refuge, he proved it when I first opened my eyes today. I opened my Bible and it opened (John Wesley Style) to Psalm 46. Wesley would open the Bible randomly looking for a word. Today the Lord was waiting for me. As I read the psalm, I could hear His booming majestic voice with a visual of beauty flying before my eyes. He is my refuge, and whether I am aware or not aware, He is always with me. He is surrounding me and He is surrounding you with Himself. The Lord being there was all that I needed. He was unveiling to me what Him being my refuge is all about. As He began to speak to me, I felt a love and a confidence that I cannot express in human words. He is like no other, He is a man, and He is touched with the troubles that we go through. His words are like medicine and life that affects every part of us. His presence wraps around, totally cocooning us in His love. Here is how Spurgeon describes today's verse.

“His help is therefore sure and near. Is she besieged, then he is himself besieged within her, and we may be certain that he will break forth upon his adversaries. How near is the Lord to the distresses of his saints, since he sojourns in their midst! As soon as the first ray of light proclaims the coming day, at the turning of the morning God's right arm shall be outstretched for his people. The Lord is up betimes. We are slow to meet him, but he is never tardy in helping us. Impatience complains of divine delays, but in every deed the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. Man's haste is often folly, but God's apparent delays are ever wise; and when rightly viewed, are no delays at all. Today the bands of evil may environ the church of God and threaten her with destruction; but ere long they shall pass away like the foam on the waters, and the noise of their tumult shall be silent in the grave.”

All of us need help; what kind of help do you need today? He is nearer than you know and is never shaken no matter how severe your circumstances may be. He has an answer; He is the

answer. Your fears and worries melt like wax before Him, nothing can stand before His majesty. He is with you - He is in you - you will not be moved. Here is a powerful word from Spurgeon on this verse. Pay close attention.

“God alone is our all in all. All other refuges are refuges of lies, all other strength is weakness, for power belongeth unto God: but as God is all sufficient, our defense and might are equal to all emergencies. A very present help in trouble, or in distress he has so been found, he has been tried and proved by his people. He never withdraws himself from his afflicted. He is their help, truly, effectually, constantly; he is present or near them, close at their side and ready for their succour, and this is emphasized by the word very in our version, he is more present than friend or relative can be, yea, more nearly present than even the trouble itself. To all this comfortable truth is added the consideration that his assistance comes at the needed time. He is not as the swallows that leave us in the winter; he is a friend in need and a friend indeed. When it is very dark with us, let brave spirits say, “Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm.” “A fortress firm, and steadfast rock, Is God in time of danger; A shield and sword in every shock, from foe well known or stranger.”

This is an attack on Christ and His bride. The Lord is with us in special ways in seasons like this. We will see an unprecedented breakthrough in our midst in the days ahead. The Lord will have His say - Victory (pun intended) belongs to the Lord. The Body of Christ will rise up and do what she can do.

Martin Luther used to sing this Psalm in times of trouble. I love this incredible promise. He is a ‘very present’ help in times of need. He is not just a promise that somehow things will work out, He is very present when things go bad. I can’t think of a better promise, God Himself is with us, especially in times of trouble. In the margin of my Bible it says that the Lord is a ‘well proved’ help. He not only shows up Himself, He has proven over and over again to be faithful to help His sons and daughters. Your problem may seem overwhelming but just stop for a moment and sing. He lives in your song and is much greater than any of our troubles. Here is what Matthew Henry said about this verse.

“God is our refuge and strength; we have found him so, he has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our refuge to whom we may flee, and in whom we may be safe and think ourselves so... Are we oppressed by troubles? Have we work to do and enemies to grapple with? God is our strength, to bear us up under our burdens, to fit us for all our services and sufferings; he will by his grace put strength into us, and on him we may stay ourselves. Are we in distress? He is a help, to do all that for us which we need, a present help, a help found (so the word is), one whom we have found to be so, a help on which we may write —It is tried, as Christ is called a tried stone. Or, a help at hand, one that never is to seek for, but that is always near. Or, a help sufficient, a help accommodated to every case and exigence; whatever it is, he is a very present help; we cannot desire a better help, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.”

DISCUSSION:

1. In everyday living how do we make God our refuge?
2. Give biblical examples of others in the Bible that faced storms and how they found their God.

THE EVER ABIDING CONSTANT RIVER

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.” Psalms 46:4

If you don't watch out, one might grow tired of the river or ignore it; pretend that the river doesn't exist. But as Christians we know "there is a river --it will have its way in our lives and hearts. It cannot be walled in or stopped. It will overflow its banks and take what it wants and leaves behind new life and new growth.

Step into the river my friends--it's streams will take you right into His presence.

Far too often, the missing ingredient in the church is joy. As C.S. Lewis famously said, “Joy is the serious business of heaven”. Jonathan Edwards also said, “Heaven is a world of love”. Being loved is the source of our Christian joy. Heaven is a place of joy because it is a world of love. So what about this happy river that David sang about? The river is a picture of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us a foretaste of heaven, an actual taste of what heaven is like. Are you beginning to connect the dots? Joy is connected to God’s love and the Holy Spirit is the outpouring of God’s love. If that is true, the River of God, the Holy Spirit, flows through His church and fills His church with an abundance of joy. Here is how Augustine saw it some 1600 years ago.

“ When the mountains shake, when the sea rages, God deserteth not His City, by the streams of the river. What are these streams of the river? That overflowing of the Holy Spirit, of which the Lord said, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, out of his bosom shall flow rivers of living water.’ These rivers then flowed out of the bosom of Paul, Peter, John, the other Apostles, the other faithful Evangelists. Since these rivers flowed from one river, many ‘streams of the river make glad the City of God.’ For that ye might know this to be said of the Holy Spirit, in the same Gospel next said the Evangelist, ‘But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that were to believe on Him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.’ Jesus being glorified after His Resurrection, glorified after His Ascension, on the day of Pentecost came the Holy Spirit, and filled the believers, who spake with tongues, and began to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Hence was the City of God made glad...”

So maybe what our church, or every church, needs is more of the Holy Spirit. David was familiar with the River of the Holy Spirit. He sang about the presence, prophesied by the power of the Spirit, conquered armies by God’s power, and even danced with all his might in the presence of the Lord. So let’s be about that serious business of heaven, step into the river and maybe you will be dancing too.

Exposition goes to say- "What are the streams of this river? Answer -- the perfections of God, the fullness of Christ, the operations of the Spirit, and these running in the channel of the covenant of promise." There is a river. Divine grace like a smoothly flowing, fertilizing, full, and never failing river, yields refreshment and consolation to believers. This is the river of the water of life, of which the church above as well as the church below partakes evermore. It is no boisterous ocean, but a placid stream, it is not stayed in its course by earthquakes or crumbling mountains, it follows its serene course without disturbance. Happy are they who know from their own experience that there is such a river of God."

Is it possible that this river that we see all throughout scripture is actually God Himself? Several years ago there was an international outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was characterized by the River. Anytime you were around Christian gatherings in the mid-nineties everyone was talking about "the River". The question on everyone's lips was "have you been touched by the River?" It was everywhere at the same time; the river was a living, breathing thing. Some began to see the River as an experience that would surely be temporary. It seemed that many ministers were anxious for things to "get back to normal". That has been twenty five years ago now, I'm still not back to normal. The conclusion I came to is that the River is not an experience but a person. Ralph Erskine, a Puritan minister in Scotland in the 1600's said this about the River.

"What is the river that makes glad the city of God? I answer, God himself is the river, as in the following verse, "God is in the midst of her." 1. God the Father is the river: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer 2:13. 2. God the Son is the river, the fountain of salvation: "On that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Zec 13:1. 3. God the Spirit is the river: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Jn. 7:38. What are the streams of this river? Answer—the perfections of God, the fullness of Christ, the operations of the Spirit, and these running in the channel of the covenant of promise."

The Father is the fountain of the River which is the love of God. Everything springs from this overflowing fountain. Jesus is the very radiance or display of God's love. In Him we see the glory of this River of love. The Holy Spirit is the very essence of God, the manifestation of the love of God. When we are immersed into the Holy Spirit, we begin to experience the blessing of the River, the amazing love of God.

DISCUSSION:

1. What is the river?
2. Does Jesus speak of a river? Where is it in the New Testament?
3. What does a river provide?

GOD IS IN HIS CITY

Psa. 46:5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

For me, community has a special connotation. It started for Parris and I when we became part of the Christian Community called God's Army back in the seventies. We learned a lot and went through some really tough times in those days but there was something unique and special about that community. What made it different? Today's verse tells us, God was in the midst of us. He made our society very special, actually it was supernatural. That is why I love the local church, this is where we experience true community and of course this is where we find God in the midst of us. Here is how Matthew Henry describes today's word.

"God has assured his church of his special presence with her and concern for her; his honor is embarked in her, he has set up his tabernacle in her and has undertaken the protection of it, and therefore she shall not be moved. The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when that is in ruins. It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Not disturbed, not much moved, with fears of the issue. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us. Deliverance to the church, though her dangers be very great: God shall help her; and who then can hurt her? He shall help her under her troubles, that she shall not sink; nay, that the more she is afflicted the more she shall multiply."

Without His presence, community is just a club or an organization with temporary written all over it. The family community breaks up, businesses split, friendships wander apart, all human communities are just that, natural and human. We need the Lord in our lives individually, we also need Him in all our relationships. He is the bond that makes it survive, He is the engine that drives it, and He is the joy and love that sustains it. Yes, God is in the midst of His community and He helps and sustains her.

DISCUSSION:

1. What is the city of God?
2. Has community been important to you? Why?

BE STILL GOD REIGNS

Psa. 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted on the earth!"

CSB translation says: "Stop your fighting, and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth." This verse has been special to me for many years. It was actually the one the Lord used to speak to me in 1977 that ultimately landed me back home in New Orleans. Taking matters into your own hands often leads to bad choices that, in turn, lead to unpleasant consequences.

Oftentimes, especially when we are in tight spots, we tend to get ahead of ourselves, or better, we get ahead of the Lord. Yielding and trusting in the Lord puts us in position for Him to orchestrate the circumstances ahead of us as well as pouring His peace into our hearts. Thinking back to my dilemma in 1977, I could have strived and pushed to start a ministry where I wanted to go, or I could be still before the Lord. I am so glad I waited, favor and guidance is better than stress and frustration any day. Here are some thoughts from Jonathan Edwards on being still before the Lord.

“The great works of God, wherein his sovereignty appeared, had been described in the foregoing verses. In the awful desolations that he made, and by delivering his people from terrible things, he showed his greatness and dominion. Herein he manifested his power and sovereignty, and so commands all to be still, and know that he is God. For says he, I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. In the words may be observed...A duty described, to be still before God, and under the dispensations of his providence; which implies that we must be still as to words; not speaking against the sovereign dispensations of Providence, or complaining of them. We must be still as to actions and outward behavior, so as not to oppose God in his dispensations; and as to the inward frame of our hearts, cultivating a calm and quiet submission of soul to the sovereign pleasure of God, whatever it may be.”

Recognizing that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, ruling all things is a good place to start in our ‘being still’. He is orchestrating events for His kingdom plan to be realized. He turns the evil plans of the lost into tools to advance His kingdom. He blesses the work of His sons and daughters who joyfully wait on Him. Be still!! God will be honored and we will rest in His love.

DISCUSSION:

1. Maybe you have an example of cease striving in your life!
2. Discuss when Piper says; “When we say God is sovereign, we mean he is powerful and authoritative to the extent of being able to override all other powers and authorities. Nothing can successfully stop any act or any event or design or purpose that God intends to certainly bring about.”

DO, DO, DO

Psa. 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted on the earth!”

Sometimes I think it is hard for the Lord’s dutiful servants to receive impartation from the Lord. Christian workers tend to get fixated on programs, routines, principles, goals, performance... You get the idea. Working continually, praying, counseling, witnessing, administrating, serving. Sometimes we tend to act as if God’s work depends on us. If you haven’t figured it out yet; it doesn’t. The kingdom of God will be complete on this earth, our privilege is to be part of it. It’s success is not dependent on us and our performance. How do I know this? Actually I am describing the corner I had painted myself into after pastoring in New Orleans for sixteen years. I had disciplined, counseled, and led daily morning prayer for most of those sixteen years. We had done street evangelism, friendship evangelism, cell ministry, door to door ministry, hospital ministry, and too many other projects and programs to mention. I was exhausted. Of course we had seen a lot of fruit in those years but I was done, running on empty. What was the problem? Dutiful servants forget how to receive. We can become so busy helping others and always having the answer for whatever comes up that we can no longer receive from God. Actually receiving from the Lord can be something we have forgotten, something we used to do a long time ago. I am describing my condition in 1994, sixteen years of pastoring had drained the well dry for me. That’s when my life was turned upside down (or right side up) once again. In one morning (actually it spilled over into the afternoon) my life was radically changed. What happened? I fell into the river, got swallowed up by God, fell into a trance, got drunk on the new wine; whatever

you want to call it. My receiver got fixed. I was sitting in a revival service when I somehow got it. I was the problem. I needed God too.

In that life changing moment it was as if a switch was turned on inside of me. I changed from the serving and pouring out mode into the receiving and drinking mode. In that instant my life was flooded with God. It was as sudden and dramatic as my salvation experience. I was experiencing my second conversion. I was being delivered from being a pastor, I was just a Christian again. Now don't get me wrong, twenty one years later I am still pastoring the church in New Orleans. I am just not a professional anymore. I am just a Christian.

DISCUSSION:

1. "Be still" (vs. 10) – aka. let go, put your hands down to your side and stop fighting, cease striving. Requires humility (you admit you can't do it all), release of control, etc.
2. God is a place of security in an insecure world. Diagnose yourself: Where do you find security in? Ex. financial stability, other people (approval of others), comfort (the familiar and routine)?
3. Our strength comes from a God who cannot change. Diagnose yourself: Where or what do you find strength in? Ex. your intellect, other people, your own abilities.

GOD'S INVISIBLE BEAUTY

Ps.46:10 Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

Every part of creation is speaking. It has spoken from the dawn of creation but can only be heard by those who have ears to hear. One of the most powerful experiences one can have in this creation is heard and seen in the solitude of God's creation. In our fast paced, city centered world it is becoming harder to hear that voice hidden in creation. It is muted by the gadgets which hold our attention for much of our day. We hear the radio or sound system in our cars. Television spews out news and worse covers up the voice that speaks. To "be still and know that He is God" has become more and more difficult. Forcing ourselves to go outside (without the earbuds) has become critical in order to listen intently to Him who speaks. Here is how Jonathan Edwards describes creation and its beautiful declaration.

"The immense magnificence of the visible world, it's inconceivable vastness, the incomprehensible height of the heavens, etc. is but a type of the infinite magnificence, height and glory of God's work in the spiritual world: the most incomprehensible expression of his power, wisdom, holiness and love, in what is wrought and brought to pass in that world; and in the exceeding greatness of the moral and natural good, the light, knowledge, holiness and happiness which shall be communicated to it. And therefore to that magnificence of the world, height of heaven, those things are often compared in such expressions, "Thy mercy is great above the heavens, thy truth reacheth [unto the clouds]"; "Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens," etc.."

To just look at the ocean (or Lake Pontchartrain) and listen to the sounds is to listen to the Master's voice. To see an eagle or osprey in flight is to glimpse His creativity and beauty.

Watching a sunrise or a sunset humbles us as we see the master artist at work. Our lives are more cluttered than we realize, His creation is nearer than we think. Make it a habit to go for a walk. Go to City Park and check out the ducks, pelicans, and herons. God is speaking in His creation and He is nearer and more beautiful than you know.

DISCUSSION:

1. Are you in trouble? Being still is another way of surrendering to God.
2. All of creation was created for the enjoyment of God. Why is that important?
3. Take personal steps in your life to enjoy creation and give God glory!