

Thirsty for God

by Alphaus Mdlalose

The psalmist's soul thirsts for God, and he desires to be in His presence and experience His joy.

Duration: 1:15:52

Scripture: Psalm 42:1

Topics: "Spiritual Longing", "Godly Satisfaction"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Psalm 42 and the longing of the soul for God. He uses the example of Absalom, who appeared perfect on the outside but harbored rebellion in his heart. The speaker emphasizes the importance of finding satisfaction in God rather than being consumed by external circumstances. He leads the congregation in a prayer for understanding and asks for God's presence to be felt in all places where His word is being preached.

Transcript

Lord Jesus, you have called us together. Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of meeting around your word and what you have to say to us this morning. And Lord, wherever your word is being preached today, all over the world, please presence yourself in a mighty way.

Strengthen your people, challenge them, help them, give them the victory. We also pray, Lord, for Uncle Elo and Uncle Friedel and the team in Europe at the moment preaching the gospel there. And the many teams out this morning from the mission.

We ask you to empower them, to glorify yourself through them. Please speak, Lord, to us individually. May it be as if we are closed in with you privately and we are in your presence.

We ask all this, Lord, for your namesake. Amen. If you have your Bibles with you, turn with me to Psalm 42.

The 42nd Psalm. Let's read the first five verses. As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? 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 a 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 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. Let's pray once again. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your word.

We've read now, Father, your holy word. And yet, Father, we can never understand it unless you explain it to us. And our God, as we are all here with our individual needs, we ask you to please explain to us your word.

So that all the honor, power and glory would be to your name. Amen. This psalm is a psalm written for those on a pilgrimage, those who are on the way to heaven.

This is recorded for those who mean business with God, those who sincerely want to walk with the Lord and be with him one day. And this is a song. It's a song.

And it explains in the beginning that this is a song that was sung by the sons of Korah. It wasn't written by the sons of Korah. It was written by King David, and then it was given by him to the sons of Korah for them to sing.

You might marvel at that fact and say, but I thought that Korah and his whole family, they were all swallowed up in their rebellion. Swallowed by the earth. In the book of Numbers it says so.

Yes, that is true. But if you follow carefully the history of the family of Korah, you'll find that there were those who were a remnant. I don't know whether that remnant began at the time when the Lord spoke to Moses.

When the Lord commanded Moses and said, tell all those of the camp of Korah and Abiram to separate themselves that the others would come out from them because there's something I'm about to perform. Well, I'm not sure, but it could be that there were just a few of the family of Korah that stayed on Moses' side at that time. I don't know.

But there are commentators of the Bible who say that those who were a remnant of Korah, those within the family of Korah who received grace, they made God happy. He rejoiced over them and they worshipped him in song. Perhaps this began the singing, especially because they were protected from the destruction of their own family.

And so with their lives and their voices, they wanted to bring glory to God. Now this had gone down through the generations, this being the case. And down the generations it got to this dispensation of King David.

And it came about then that they sang this very song that King David had penned for them. Actually, you'll find that this is a cry, it is a call upon God for one who has found that he's missing from the place of God. This psalm speaks about an individual's longing and feeling of emptiness and the cry for more.

And from the very first verse we hear this cry, this cry of the person who says, My soul thirsts for thee as the heart thirsts for water. And so here we find a comparison being made. As the soul longs for God, so too that animal, that deer, longs for water.

Now this wild animal has an amazing attribute. This deer usually goes together with others and it's found with other deer. But when there is a longing for water, it goes out on its own and it looks, it searches for

water.

Even if there are green pastures and beautiful mountains, all that is forgotten in its seeking for water. There is the possibility that the beauty of our surroundings and the attractions of the world around us cause us to forget God. If we have what we want regarding food, clothing, shelter, a good job, we feel secure and yet we don't go on with our souls to seek God, we forget Him.

Some say that David penned this psalm in the time of his conflict where his son wanted to schism and to rebel and break away from David's kingdom. That was Absalom. It is amazing then that David should write in this vein in the very time that he is at war with his own son.

Remember the time of the conflict with Absalom, how it caused David to have to flee. He together with his army chiefs and the heroes of war, they had to run away. They took refuge in different places and at a certain place King David met up with an amazing thing.

There is on record in the Bible that a certain man in seeing David running away, taking refuge, this man Shimei mocked David and threw dust at him. He had been a servant of David. Then of those men who were closest to David, when they saw this happen, they said, let's behead the man.

David said, no leave him. Lest there is something that God is trying to say to me through this man. You see the eyes of David were not just on this immediate situation but went further to God above.

You found David in the situation saying, oh my soul longs for God. My soul feels thirsty for Him. And he openly admitted that nothing else satisfies him.

His royalty, his throne, his crown, all of that is as nothing in comparison to the need for the satisfaction of a soul with God. He is saying in other words, all this that is happening regarding my son is of no real account. What really matters is that my soul must find satisfaction in God.

You know that the Bible says about the son Absalom that he was a handsome man. He was without blemish and if you looked at him, he was just a perfect example. The Bible describes him as being a man that was perfect physically from his head to his feet.

But despite his outward attraction, inside his heart it was a different story. Though he looked so perfect and without blemish on the outside, inside his heart was this rebellion forming, wanting to kill his own father. We too brethren can be like that.

As a Christian we can look at you and say well everything looks so fine, so good, so outwardly perfect, but inside your heart you might be rebelling against God. And you don't have the authority and the power to worship him. You might be fine in appearance, the outward is fine, but you do not have that power to worship him, to serve him.

That was the case with this man Absalom. The Bible says he was blemishless, but in his heart he was murderous towards his father. And even when his father left with many tears, left the royal palace, Absalom still went after him and others wanting to destroy them, kill them.

So David is saying here, my soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? In other words, in that place of worship where I've been, I've been removed now from that and I'm now separated from it. I used to be in the temple, I used to be able to come and appear before God and

experience Him being close to me.

And I've had to now leave that place because of becoming a refugee, I've had to run away, but oh how my soul longs for God. And in his innermost being he had this craving to be there with God in his presence. And you know friends that mostly in the world people inside are not longing for God.

You'll find with most young people they're not longing for Him. The same was also true with older people. With some their soul is panting after the things of this world.

There are some who crave to experience the pleasures and possessions of this world and they say well if I get that it'll satisfy me. With one person it might be the desire to earn enough money and then they think they'll be happy. As long as they have money, as long as they have the things they crave for regarding God, that means nothing to them.

The aim of some is simply to get married and their craving is if only I reach that point that I can be married I'm sure I will be satisfied. An old granny one day said to me, she has since passed away, she said the following to me, she no longer is so happy about marriages anymore. I said what granny, aren't marriages always wonderful? She said I'm old and I've experienced many things in this world.

She said I've noticed that many young people were burning for the Lord before they got married. They sang for the Lord, they preached, they witnessed before they got married. They were able to win souls to the Lord before marriage.

But the moment they got married, she said with most of them I don't even see them coming to the services anymore. She said that's why I don't rejoice anymore in many marriages because if it makes them disappear from fellowship then I'm not happy. So brethren, whatever God gives to you, whatever He blesses you with, never let that distract you from going further than that and being satisfied with God Himself.

If you read the Song of Songs chapter 3, the person says one day I woke up at night and I noticed that the one whom my soul loves was not there and I was troubled. Meaning that when I noticed that the Lord was not there in close fellowship with me, it made me get up. And the author there says that when I noticed that the one whom my soul loves was not there, I woke up at night and I began to search Him out.

And even as others were fast asleep at night, I was busy seeking Him whom my soul loves. Dear friends, there's nothing that brings true joy to a person as much as meeting with God. There's nothing that satisfies and causes the soul to rejoice as meeting with the Lord.

And in the Song of Songs it says that that person got up seeking and going all over looking for the one whom her soul loved. And then she says when I passed by, went further than the watchman, I found Him. And when I found Him, I embraced Him, never wanting to let Him go again.

There are those who rejoice in their first meeting with the Lord, but they don't continue with that relationship, they just let go of Him. Maybe you remember when you met with the Lord Jesus, and know the joy that you had when you met with Him, the testimony which you had when you first met with Him, and the songs that you had that you could sing when you met with Him. But then you deserted Him, you let Him go and that first consuming love has gone lost.

And now you notice in your soul that you are thirsty again and your soul longs for Him. I remember one day when we were in France, a certain person offered to take us on an interesting tour in caves underneath the ground. The beauty was not known above the ground, but underneath it was just full of amazing beauties inside these caves.

There were these beautiful stalactites and stalagmites and the dripping and the beauty, they had lighting, it was just stunning. They told us on the tour that the person who first discovered this cave found it so precious they would spend a lot of time there. His heart was in this cave day and night.

And one day when death arrived to this person, and when they realized they were going to die and have to leave this beautiful cave, he spoke to his friends and relatives. He said, what you must do when I have died is take out my heart and put it in a vase and find a permanent place in the cave, my body you can bury elsewhere. And the tour guide showed us and he said, you see that vase up there on the wall, that's the heart of the man who discovered the cave.

So his heart was solely in this, he was absolutely obsessed with this. Even when it came to death, he demanded that his heart must be there because he had worshipped this cave. Now I don't know about the faith or non-faith of this person, but as I saw his heart in that vase in the cave, I thought, well, I wonder what it was like, whether his heart, whether his soul longed for the Lord or not, or just this.

But here David says, my soul longs for you, the living God. Other things I'm unconcerned about. One thing I desire and that is that my soul should meet with the living God.

He could experience no joy, no peace while separated from that place of God. He had no peace when he was wrenched out of the fellowship of God's people. When he no longer had opportunities to be in the fellowship of the house of God, peace left him.

There are some Christians who are actually glad if they can find some excuse to avoid a Sunday service. There are some Christians who just are thrilled if they can get an opportunity to avoid Christian company. And for some even to miss out on a month or more of Christian fellowship, that's nothing to them.

Perhaps they feel a lot for their bosom pal, their buddy, and if they don't see them after a few days, then they have that deep need and longing to be in their company. So that means that you can actually enjoy not being in the house of God and with God's people, but you're happy just to be in the company of your pals. Maybe that is your condition this morning.

To meet with your friends and just to chat, well, then you feel like your heart is melted and you're just so at home. And you feel great oneness with them. But when you're with the children of God, you feel nothing for them.

To have fellowship and to enjoy the company of God's people, you have no desire for it. In fact, maybe that's when joy deserts you when you're in the company of God's people. And you feel your heart is inclined towards those who are flippant and just joking and where there's just trivial stuff being spoken.

We won't read it, but do you know what it says in Psalm 122? The psalmist there says, I rejoiced when they said, we will ascend to the house of the Lord. And he said, oh, when my feet can only stand in you, oh Jerusalem. And when we can be there standing in that place that God has called us to be in, that brings me joy.

If I can only be there where God has called me to, to be in that which God created me for. To be in the house of Jehovah. To be in that place where I can serve the Almighty.

To be in that place where I can experience the Lord speaking to me. Brethren, that's what we were made to be. That's why we were created, for fellowship with him.

We were made for a relationship and intimacy with God every day. We were made to be companions with God every day. One thinks back of Adam and them, when they had sinned, that oneness, that unity with God, that fellowship came to an end.

That enjoyment of each other's company in the cool of the day came to an end. I don't know what Adam must have felt when the Lord had parted from them. When he had known God coming every day to visit them, and they were able to speak with the Lord, he could hear the voice of the Lord.

Behold, brethren, how sin separated him from God. That was the end of their intimacy. That was the end of their joy.

Sin separates and divorces you from fellowship with God. You'll find that when sin is allowed, that your soul experiences separation from the Lord. But here in the psalm, he says, Oh, I rejoiced when I heard that we would go to the house of the Lord.

And oh, when our feet could stand in you, oh Jerusalem. When we could be in that place where we could serve the Lord. It is a great thing to be in the house of the Lord.

One thinks also of the story of Asaph, another Bible story. He was a Levite. We find his story also recorded in Psalms.

A man who was always serving the Lord, keeping the commandments of God. He didn't walk in the ways of evil. He was blameless.

But listen to what this man says when he gave his testimony. He said, One day I looked at the evil and wicked people and I contemplated about their lives. I pondered upon their lives and I saw how they were happy and free going.

They seemed to be comfortable and satisfied and they easy going. Everything's fine. And then the thought began to arise in him, but aren't I just wasting my time? If they seem to be so happy and they seem to be fine in what they're doing, aren't I wasting my own time? And he said, My feet almost slipped as I thought this and I almost fell.

Because he thought I'm keeping myself pure in vain. It's for naught that I keep God's commandments. That I should be in the house of the Lord, it seems to be just in vain when it looks like the people of the world are having a fine time.

And he said, As I looked at the people of the world, my feet almost slipped. But one thing helped me. I went to the house of the Lord.

And when I got there, I beheld the end of the wicked. And then I saw that the end of the wicked was utterly hopeless. They perished in joylessness.

And Asaph says that was a life changing experience regarding his coming into the house of the Lord. That being in the place of the Lord changed Asaph's attitude. To be before the Lord and to see things from his angle revolutionized his life.

His whole life was changed as he beheld the end of these people. Maybe you Christian, you find that your heart is being drawn and attracted, enticed towards the things of the world. And you find that there is that love of the world.

As you behold the joys and the pleasures of the world, and you look at others the way that they walk in pleasure, how they satisfy their fleshly lusts, and you think, well, they seem happy. And maybe you've got to the point that you say, well, what's the use of being a Christian? Why should I keep myself? But standing before the Lord helped Asaph. Standing in the Lord's place brought him a change and helped him.

And that's why David also prays here and says, Oh, my soul pants for the Lord. I want to be in the Lord's place. If you continue in the psalm that we've been reading, he explains further.

He says, for I used to go, in verse four, I used to go with the multitude. I went with them to the house of God with the praise, with the voice of joy and praise. And he has memories of the crowd of God's people as they went up to Jerusalem.

And he thinks in particular of a certain feast where they went up to worship and praise God together. And he says here, I remember that time when we were united with God's people and we went up to the house of the Lord, to that place where God meant us to be. And he said, we would go into the house of God with the great voice of joy and praise, with the multitude, with the nation that kept the pilgrim feast.

And he remembers that particular instance as he now finds himself being away from that place. He said, oh, when we would be united, praising God together, when there was this great united voice of joy and praise, that's why he says, my soul pants for you, oh God. In other words, it was a longing for that intimacy with God being in the place of the Lord where he could experience God being there, being present.

That is why you'll find that the children of Israel, after they'd been captured and exiled to Babylon, you find in one place where it says, we children of Israel, we sat next to the river and we just wept. You see, they were exiles, they were now foreigners away from their land. The enemy had come and captured them and they were made captives now.

They were slaves in a foreign land, in a land which served other gods. It was a land which spoke other languages, not that of Israel. And then being in that place, these children of Israel, it's recorded that they sat next to this river of Babel and they just wept together.

And he explains why they wept. Because they remembered Zion. They remembered the place of the Almighty.

And they must have also remembered their united worship of God and their times of joy and praise to God. And now, having experienced that they were made captive and removed from that place of joy and fellowship, they wept. When they realized they could no longer serve God in the way that they should have.

And he says in that psalm that the enemy, in other words, those from Babylon, wanted to see them rejoice. Scoffingly, they said, sing us the songs of Zion. And they replied to them, how can we sing songs of Jehovah, of the Almighty, if we are not in the place of the Lord? If we are exiles in a foreign land and not in God's place, how can we sing the songs of the Lord, being exiles? You'll find many Christians will very easily sing the songs of the Lord while their souls are indeed far away from Him.

When we're together like this as a congregation, we all unite in singing. Anybody sings and that's good. But can you honestly say that my soul, my inner being is in the place where God wants me to be? So that as you sing to the Lord, that you know inside yourself that you are in the place where you ought to be.

And I do love the attitude of those children of Israel as they were there together in exile in Babylon, because when they acknowledged that they were not in the place of the Lord, when they recognized that they weren't in the place where the Lord had wanted them to be, they just sat down and wept. They said, we took our instruments of song and we just hung them on the willow trees. As they wept, as they remembered that place, can't you perhaps say, you Christian, that inside yourself you know that you're in bondage? In other words, you're made captive.

You must acknowledge that the enemy has come and carried you away. He's made you captive and you say, even the way I speak shows that I'm speaking the language of this foreign land. The songs I listen to are a proof that I'm no longer in the place of the Lord.

The company I keep shows and is a proof that I'm not in Zion, I'm in Babylon. The books I read, those very books and magazines which I hide when other Christians come by, shows me I'm in Babylon. And finding yourself in the company of those who say, but don't tell, just keep this quiet, shows you that you're in the company of Babylon.

Now, consider what David then continues to say in Psalm 42 and verse 5. You find him in a conversation with himself. It's almost like he is talking to two people. It's like there are two voices, two characters here.

He speaks now to himself. He speaks to his heart and says, why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted and bowed down, O my soul? And you are restless within me. And then he says, hope in God, for I shall yet praise him.

Do you hear that matter? Do you hear this point? He discovered that his soul inside him was disquieted and cast down and that his soul was restless within him. And his soul was without peace and deeply heavy inside him. And then in that condition he speaks to himself.

He says, O my soul, why are you in this condition? O my soul, hope in God. Don't be cast down. Don't be disquieted.

Don't despair. What a marvelous matter. Some Christians fall into great discouragement because of tough situations that they meet up with.

Or maybe they fall into doubt. Are my sins really forgiven or are they not? And there is a restlessness within them. It might be that they do have some physical illness.

You have prayed so much about it and yet the Lord has not removed the illness from you. And you begin to doubt and you ask, well, am I really a Christian? That I don't have an answer is, am I really in fellowship with the Lord or not? Now this man in our psalm says, why is my soul cast down? And why is my spirit

disquieted within me? You might ask that same question. Ask yourself, why does my soul hanker after the things of this world? Why am I not longing for the things above? And why is my soul so restless? You see, you can never have real peace until you meet with the Prince of Peace.

Now in this verse it says here, hope in God. You know what I remember as I read this verse? Where it says, hope in the Lord. I think of Paul and Silas.

I think it was in Philippi where as they went preaching there was a certain woman possessed of an evil spirit that went after them and was always following after them crying and shouting and speaking and saying, these are servants of the living God, obey and listen to what they have to say. Paul then angrily rebuked the spirit and said, come out of you. Come out of her.

And when the spirit left her and she was relieved and helped, it says that her family or her owners then were very angry. Because they used to earn a lot of money through the spirit of divination in her. And they caused a riot.

Just to make the matter brief, they ended up, these two men, arrested in the stocks. And it says they were beaten. They were badly beaten and then handed over to the jailer that he would imprison them.

They were taken not to the common jail but down in the dungeon where they were locked in chains around their feet and their hands. And what had they done? They had simply helped the servant girl to be free from the spirit of divination. I am reminded of that story when I read here, why you cast down on my soul, hope in the Lord.

Listen to their response as they are now locked down in this dungeon. Late that night, these badly bruised and beaten men were singing praises to the Lord. They were singing unto the Lord.

Down there in the dungeon, in their imprisonment, they had been hurt and bruised. They refused to allow their soul to be cast down. They trusted in the Lord despite being in the hole, in the dungeon.

And it says that the jail was shaken as they sang. And just in short, finally, even the jailer asked for the way of salvation. What can I do, O men, to be saved? So they were never cast down and discouraged.

They trusted God. How is it with your soul today? Are you down and cast down and discouraged? Maybe through circumstances you've met up with. Maybe your neighbours.

Maybe it's because of your physical condition. Maybe your family and relatives. And now you're feeling cast down.

It says here, hope in God. In other words, rise up and trust in the Lord. In closing, allow me to say this.

Although I'm not going to read it, I think of the place in Hebrews, in that section where it speaks about the heroes of the faith. And it mentions there Abraham and his generations. When God had rescued or taken Abraham out of his family land, his country, and left all his possessions behind.

And if you do read a little bit around it, you'll discover that Abraham and them were not poor people. They were very wealthy. If you see all the servants that he had, he was from a very elite group.

And if you see how much livestock he had, you'll realise that he was rich. But the Lord said to him, come out. Go and you will be sent to a place that you do not know.

So he came out from his relatives and country. But as pilgrims and as tent dwellers, in that difficult lifestyle, and I can assure you it's difficult living your life in a tent. I know what it's like living in tents preaching the gospel.

When you're full of sand everywhere, and you get cold. But this man went out trusting God. In Hebrews, listen to what it says in chapter 11.

It says, Abraham and them left in obedience and trust in God. Seeking, longing after a land that is better than that. A country that is better than the world in which they dwelt.

A wonderful country, speaking of that heavenly land. Longing for the land of heaven. Even though they were just tent dwellers then, they had this longing for the country of heaven.

So even though they were rich in livestock, but their longing was for heaven. Nothing was allowed to interfere with their longing for heaven. And their soul, their inner longing was not after their riches and wealth, but after that country which they sought.

And see what God says about those who long for that. God says in Hebrews 11, therefore God was not ashamed or embarrassed to call himself the God of these people, that these were his. Do you hear this? Those who are obsessed with heaven, who long for the Lord.

The Lord says of them, I'm not ashamed to be called their God. You too can be one of them. You can leave this place being one of them.

One of those of whom God can say, I'm not ashamed to be associated with this person. In other words, I rejoice to be the God of this person. For his soul, his longing, his craving is after me, God.

Even though there are other things of the world, they don't care about that. Even with all his possessions and family and children, all that he has, his real longing is after me. And the joys of the world and the pleasures of the world have not distracted his attention from me.

The Bible says, therefore, because of that, the Lord was not ashamed to be called the God of these people. Don't you want to be one of these as we are now leaving the service? Don't you want to be counted among them? To be in the number of those who have a true craving for God? Where God is not ashamed of them, where he delights to be called the God of these people, don't you want to meet with him? Maybe you have experienced so much, your soul has just had so many things happen to it, but now make the decision, I want to be counted in this number. Even if you have failed in the past.

Say to the Lord, Lord, I want to be counted with those of whom you are not ashamed. You cannot achieve that in your own strength. It is only by the grace of God.

Let's bow and pray. Lord Jesus, thank you for recording the heart cry of your servants and it's recorded for us to read today. Thank you, Lord, for your grace which places in us this longing to have you.

Thank you, Lord, that you cause us to be without peace and without satisfaction while you are not Lord over us. Lord, whatever our condition is today, you see each one of us as a unique person individually. You see our heartfelt response to this message.

Lord, we thank you that you do not disappoint your people. You have promised that he who calls upon the Lord, you will never cast out. Lord, even those who feel that they are surrounded by darkness and

hopelessness, Lord, give them the grace to call out with all their hearts to you.

Thank you, Lord, that you delight to answer the prayers and the heartfelt cries of those who truly long for you. Thank you that you have made it possible that we can be thoroughly cleansed from our sin through Jesus' blood and that you do enable us to live by the power of his resurrection. Lord Jesus, we want you to rule over us to be Lord in every way in our lives.

Deliver us, Lord, from captivity to anything that competes for lordship over our lives. Lord Jesus, all the glory and honor will be to your name. Amen.

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