

# Hope Thou in God

by Richard Burson

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God above all else, especially during life's trials, as exemplified by David's life and writings.*

**Duration:** 30:42

**Scripture:** Psalm 40:1-3, Psalm 41:9, Psalm 42:1, Psalm 42:11 - 43:1

**Topics:** "Seeking God", "Spiritual Thirst"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a little girl who was crying and afraid until her mother comforted her. The speaker then relates this to the biblical story of David, who desired God above all else, even his kingdom and family. The speaker emphasizes the importance of thirsting for God and seeking Him above all else. They also mention a book about the country of Palestine and its laws, which highlights the believer's need to flee to God in times of distress. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to prioritize their relationship with God above all other desires and to seek Him wholeheartedly.

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## Transcript

If you turn to the fourteen-second psalm, one of the biographers of King David made a summation of his life in this line, that David, having served his generation, died. David having served his generation. Not all kings can be said to be servants of their subjects.

But God, in recording the life of David, spoke of him as a servant. Again, God, speaking of this man, spoke of him as a shepherd. It appears that, though he had a kingdom, his life was characterized by service to others, and by caring for people.

You see David being appealed to as a shepherd when once David had sinned, a terrible sin, a sin that even men in the world who know nothing about the Bible know all about. The sin of David, in the case of Uriah the Hittite, whose wife David cohabited with when Uriah was on duty as a soldier, Uriah was a Hittite son-in-law. Hittite later felt justified to rebel against David, maybe because of this.

But when Nathan came to David, the prophet came to David, to reprimand the king, he used what in our day we would call psychology. He first got his attention, and then he got his sympathy, his heart and sympathy, and then after he got his attention and his sympathy, he called him once, he said, David, there was once a man who had sheep. This had the king's attention.

David was always a shepherd, and then he told how this man had the sheep stolen from him, and the only sheep he had. This had the king's sympathy, he said, anyone that cruel, that man will die! Nathan knew he had reached the right place to say, Thou art the man. And the king was humbled that day, because he had been approached by a man who approached him as a shepherd rather than a king.

The Psalms, very often, are awful biographical, I think. The section through here, 42nd and 43rd, are Psalms that were written when David was in exile. A rebellion had been raised by his own son, Absalom.

David fled the castle in fear of his very life. He didn't jeopardize others, he didn't insist on people going. Anyone who wanted to could stay in the city.

But some of the Psalms that speak of aspiration and of heart-searching are those Psalms written while he was away from his castle. The 43rd Psalm, actually, if adjoined to the 42nd Psalm, there's no heading to 43. So, actually, it's helpful to read 42 and 43 together, and you might do that sometime.

You'll see that verse 11, the last verse of Psalm 42, is repeated as the last verse of Psalm 43. I'm going to talk to you for a little bit on the first verse of Psalm 42. As the heart passeth after the water brooks, the soul passeth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat, day and night. While they continually stand to me, where is thy God? As the heart passeth after the water brooks, the soul passeth my soul after thee, O God.

To begin with, these really are sad words. Because, if David had maintained unbroken, high-level communion with God, he would never have written them. If David's soul had always been in fine settled, and there had always been a closeness and a fellowship unbroken, these words would never have been said, and so it speaks of retrogression on the part of David spiritually at some point.

There has been a time when David's soul was fed and watered upon God himself, but at this time he is crying out in thirst for God. And yet, God uses even sin in the life of David to bless you and me. God overrules in his grace so that even when we're away from God, these times when we come back to God or when we cry out for God, these times even are used to the blessing of others, and to the strengthening of ourselves, and to the discovery of the depth of iniquity in our own being.

And we would never have had these words if David hadn't gotten from God. As the heart passes after the water broke, so passeth my full absentee, O God. The other thing you might notice here is that though David was away from his capital and from his house, of which he must have had great pride, it took him a long time to build it, and he cut down almost a forest to make the beams, yet he isn't crying out for his home, and he was a homebody.

He loved his home, and he was a man who delighted in comfort, and yet he's not crying out for the comfort of his home. And he was a family man. He loved his children.

He didn't have his children with him, and he's not crying out for his children. He's not crying out for his wife. More than that, he was a great politician, and there is such a thing as great politicians.

Great princes. This man was a prince. He loved his country.

He served his country for God's sake, and yet David isn't crying out for his throne. He doesn't say anything in this chapter, in these two chapters, about his throne. And you would never know, if you didn't know the chronology of the writing of these psalms, you would never know that the man was off his throne, and he was perfectly within the capital.

Because when you come down to fundamental things, David was talking of the thing that really mattered now. What matters a throne, but not God? What matters a home, unless God is there? As the heart pandeth after the water brook, so pandeth my soul after thee, O God. He wanted God himself more than throne, or home, or family.

And that is the only time that God draws near, and that the sense and presence of God is a reality when God means everything to you, or to me. I have a homely illustration. One time I went to the police station.

I had been over parked, and when we first, ten years ago, when we first got the parking meters, and our village took it very seriously, you had to go to the police station with your little ticket, and pay a dollar, and explain to the judge why, and that sort of thing. Now, they give you a ticket, and the ticket's written on an envelope, and there's a little box there, right on the meter, and you just drop it in, and don't talk to anyone, and cost you a nickel. But then it cost a dollar, and I had over parked, and so I had to report to the police station.

When I got there, they were in a terrible stew. In the foyer of the police station, the entrance hall, there sat a little girl on a chair. I was a little over eight, but I'd say not over four, and possibly she was younger than that.

She had the attention of a fireman in uniform, and of a policeman, and of a policewoman. The policewoman had an ice cream cone, a rather dilapidated ice cream cone that was melting and running down, and saying, look, the ice cream, don't you want ice cream? And the little girl was saying, I want mommy! And the policeman was saying, look, look, and he was jumping. He said, see the clown, see the clown, and he would act very much like a fool.

He was accomplished at it. She didn't look. She wanted mommy.

The fireman had chewing gum, and he got out of the mall for chewing gum. He got out of the machine there, and he said, look, look, look, and he was throwing things around. She didn't want the gum.

She wanted mommy. And they tried their dead-level best to occupy that child, and she was just filling the police station with cream. Ice cream was nice in its place.

It seemed to be her philosophy. She didn't talk to me about it, but I guess. I heard from observations that her philosophy was ice cream is all right in its place, but I want first things first.

First I want my chewing gum, and I suppose it's all right. But now I want mommy. She was lost if someone had found her.

And while I was there paying my dollar and explaining to them, mommy came. And they didn't have to ask her to identify that little girl. Nobody had time.

As soon as mommy came in, she had a little girl in her arms. And she was hugging her mother, and she wasn't crying anymore. She still had tears on her cheeks, but she wasn't crying.

She was laughing, and mother was kissing her. And then the little rascal held out her hand for the ice cream. First things first.

I want mommy. And that's the way it was with David. I want God.

I want God, he said, just like a deer that is dying of thirst. It won't be stopped by anything until it gets water. If life amounts to absolutely nothing unless it has water, the scenery around means absolutely nothing unless it has water.

The enemies at hand mean nothing unless that heart has water. Nothing will stop that thirsty animal. From getting a drink.

I read a book once, *The Land is a Book* by Thompson, a vivid description as the country of Palestine was, not as it is at all. It's really a very obsolete book, but a good book, as the country was at one time. And he tells, he travels a lot, travels four months, about being in Syria when a herd of deer, primes, or arks as they're called here, I've forgotten the number, but a number of them came and they were so thirsty that they came to this waterhole even though there were three men standing nearby.

Their very thirst had made them brave. So, they in spite of the fact that mankind was there, usually they hide from man, they came right up, approaching near, and got themselves a drink of water. As the heart panders after the water brook, so panders my soul after thee.

O God. The fifth religion reads this way, As the heart earnestly desires the fountains of water, so earnestly longs my soul after thee. O God.

That's beautiful, isn't it? As the heart earnestly desires the fountains of water, so earnestly longs my soul after thee. O God. Actually, his longing was uniting with others.

He was alone at this time in many ways, and his very longing would unite him with others who had a light longing. Others who had the same thirst would join the heart as he sought for water, and others who wanted God alone would find David good companionship, and there would be a seeking for God together. Have you ever noticed that if you really want to find God, you will have company along the way? No one seeks God by themselves.

No one seeks to go on for God by themselves. No one walks closer to God but that they have company. You soon find there are other hearts drawn straight to God in your company, and so with David.

He was a thirst. A thirst for God, and a thirst for a company that wanted God alone. I read a book by Mr. P.D. Blago named *Christian Joy*, or maybe it's just named *Joy*.

The *Joy*, I don't know what it was named. At any rate, he said, many Christians are not witnesses because they lack joy. I think it was just named *Joy*, the book.

He said, many Christians are not witnesses for the Lord Jesus because they lack joy. Now, no matter how far away or indifferent one becomes, if one earnestly becomes a seeker for God, earnestly wants to be in his presence, there is a joy, a joy that's greater than any sorrow that shadows the night. David had this joy, this undergirding joy, when he sought God as the wild deer seeking fresh water.

Then, the animal, the deer, knows what he wants when he's thirsty. This is a blessing. Many, many people, most unsaved people, I think you could say, all unsaved people don't even know what they want

out of life.

I've talked to people at universities and colleges, and you'd think a person that old would have some philosophy about life, some aim in life, some goal in life. And, it's surprising in the age in which we live how many young people reach university age and you have no goal, except of going to school because someone's paying the bill. No aim! Not even the aim of making good grades when someone else is paying the bill.

But, the heart, seeking after water brooks, knows what it wants. And, you know people, this is a blessing. To know what you want out of life means almost certainly you'll get what you want out of life.

Scriptures have a saying, be careful what you pray for earnestly, you're sure to get it. And, it's true. The aim that we have in life, the goal that we have in life, is the place we reach.

David had this goal. As the heart panted after the water brooks, so long, earnestly, my soul after these, oh God, he went on to say, my soul searches for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? And then, it was an all-consuming desire in the heart, because it meant life or death itself.

When an animal becomes thirsty, if the thirst isn't slaked soon, the animal becomes weak, and is to pray for all its enemies. And, the animal knows his love, and quickly seeks for water, and so with the believers. Alexander the Great conquered the whole world before he was 32 years of age, and sat himself down, I think on his 32nd birthday, and wept, wishing there was more that he might conquer.

He might have worked a little bit on Alexander, but I don't think he did. But, Alexander one time, after he had a battle, and after he had won decisively a battle, he lost 32, was proceeding across the Alps with his, with a great army, and some of the enemies, who had been routed by the army in Zanon, went farther up, and stopped the river. And this man, who never lost, I don't know, I don't think he lost three battles in his whole life, lost an entire army in a week.

The whole army, practically speaking, all the conquerors were wiped out. But, this genius mind that could overcome all the machines of destruction that man had thought up at that time, this man who could overcome manpower, had no way of quenching the thirst of a hundred thousand men, and then died all over, and the enemy who lost the battle wiped out the army. It was too late.

The battle had been won, but that poor man lost his army, because they didn't have anything to drink. They died of thirst. I'm told, and I've read this in a book, that, you know, it depends on which of you has read the book, but I read someplace that the human body can go 28 days without food.

I don't want to prove this myself, but I read it. Just take it for what it's worth, 28 days without food. But, that the human body cannot go a week without water.

There'd be dehydration. There would be death. And, this is why David used so vividly this simile, as the heart panted after the water brooks, the fountains of water, so earnestly longs mine soul after thee.

Oh, God! Longerhand translation makes this, as the heart breatheth, as though the heart is not only seeking for the water, but is calling out in its thirst. And, I suppose there is no such thing as a believer seeking for God and doing it quietly. He will express the desire of his heart.

And, lastly, let us look at the cause of this deep, deep desire, as the heart panted after the water brooks, so panted mine soul after thee. Oh, God! Well, something inward caused this, something outward caused this, something in the past caused this, something in the present, and something in the future. The something inward was not anything the heart could muster.

It was an unquenchable thirst, created by a lack, a known lack. The heart had known what it was to have its thirst quenched. Hence, he knew what he needed.

The heart had known the satisfaction of a cool, cool drink of water. Hence, he knew where to head in this very real need. It was something inward.

And, you know, it's not natural for you and me to seek God even as Christians. It's the work of the Spirit of God. There is something inward.

The Holy Spirit of God dwelling in the believer makes the believer want God more than anything else in the world. About ten years ago, there was a lady who got saved in Hutchinson, Martha Enoch Millington, I hope you hear. Her husband is a grocer in Hutchinson, and he's not a Christian yet.

As a matter of fact, they have relatives down here at the end. And, when Mrs. Enoch became a Christian, he made a remark that was so true, it comes from an unbeliever. In disgust, he said to her, when she said she had become a Christian, he said, oh, that thing is getting God.

He said, it's just like taking a whiskey. He said, the more a drunkard drinks, the more he wants to drink. And, he said, these people who began to learn about God, the more you get of God, the more you'll want of God.

And, she came weeping and said, you know, it isn't true. And, told me, I said, well. She said, he's just an ungodly man, and this isn't true.

And, I said, it's true. It's true. That ungodly man knows more about God than you do right now.

It's true. The more you really get of God, it's just like a drunkard in his dream. And, it just made her feel so terrible that he said that.

But, it's true. It's like a drunkard in his liquor bottle. He can't leave it alone.

Once he's tasted it, he's got to have more of everything. He can go houses and lands and family and everything. And, the believer who really knows God gives anything to know him better.

And, it's never satisfied. Something inward. It's always something outward.

The heart is pressed. It's pressed to the water by the heat of the sun. And, all the working of nature about him.

And, the enemy that's pressing from the rear. And, he must find water, or he'll become weak. And, the enemy will overcome him.

And so, he must find water. And, what about the believer? We'll look in the third verse. Did he have enemies? Well, they continually say to him, where is thy God? With a sneer, where is thy God? Yes, there are enemies outside.

And, the enemy works a work on the believer and makes the believer see God. Many a time, the devil, in oppressing a believer, only makes that believer stronger. Only drives that believer closer to Christ.

There's something outward that causes desire. And then, there's something in the past that causes desire. The heart has taste of the water brooks.

The heart knows where the water brooks are located. He doesn't need a map. He doesn't need radar.

He's been there many a time. He's heading for water brooks because he's been to the water brooks. Something in the past.

The thing that draws our hearts back to God is the experience we've had with God. An unbeliever flees from God. A believer flees to God.

As the heart handed back to the water brooks, so has it my soul after thee, O God. And, there's something in the present. Imminent distress.

Immediate danger. This drives the heart to the water brooks. And, something in the future.

The heart, the animal, naturally has something to live for. Something. The desire for life.

And, a believer has someone to live for. Hope thou in God. As the heart handed back to the water brooks, so has it my soul after thee, O God.

Every experience we have is for the purpose of bringing us to the point to which David was wrought. His kingdom had fallen into the hands of someone else. His land was in rebellion.

And, all these perplexities, these political perplexities, these personal problems, only tended to drive that man to God. And, that's the purpose of problems in your life and mine. When troubles come, the purpose of the trouble is that we will turn to God, and with David say, as the heart handed back to the water brooks, so earnestly longs my soul after thee, O God.

And, might this be our experience in our problems from day to day.

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