

# The Desire Of Our Heart

When I'm given the opportunity to write about the Bible I like to focus on unusual things. My lessons tend to cover subjects that get overlooked, or are rarely discussed, or that have been forgotten about by many people.

The reason I do this is because I want to teach people things. I'm not interested in telling people something they already understand and have heard a thousand times before. That accomplishes nothing! Instead I want to show people something new. That way they depart with more knowledge than they had originally. In order to do that I have to teach new things, so I spend a lot of time looking for new things to write about.

But in this lesson I want to take a different approach. *What's the most important thing that I can teach?* If this was the only opportunity I had to communicate something to you, what would be the best thing to tell you? What's more important than everything else?

If you're not a Christian then the most important thing you need to know is *the gospel*. If you don't know Jesus then the most important thing is for you to be told that *you've sinned against a holy God*. You have wronged God and He is angry with you. *All of us have sinned and are guilty* before God. We've all lied. We've all cheated. We've all taken something that isn't ours. We've all lusted. None of us are perfect – and that's very bad because *God requires absolute perfection* 100% of the time. All those whose sins are not forgiven will be judged by Him after they die. They will face the wrath of God and will spend eternity in a terrible place of eternal fire. It's a horrible fate.

But there's hope. God knew that we were all sinners. He also knew there was no way we could ever pay the price for our sins. Since God is just, He always has to punish sin; He can never look the other way. This means the only way we can be forgiven is if an innocent person suffers on our behalf, and takes upon himself the punishment that we deserve. There's no other way. No

amount of good works can ever save us.

So God did something astonishing: He sent His Son Jesus to this world. Jesus lived a perfect life and then died a cruel and torturous death on the cross. When He died He didn't die for His sins, because He had no sins of His own. Instead *He died for ours!* He took upon Himself the punishment that we deserved – and that makes our salvation possible. All those who repent of their sins and believe on Jesus will have their sins forgiven. When they die they won't face the wrath of God. Instead they'll live forever in a place of joy and peace. On the one hand is eternal life; on the other hand is eternal torment. That is the choice.

For those of you who aren't Christians, that's the most important thing you'll ever be told. You'll never receive any information that's more important than the gospel! It alone has the power to change your fate – not just in this life, but for all of eternity. It's the only thing that can save you from the wrath of God and deliver you from death.

But what about those who *are* Christians? There are many people who've been Christians for decades. They know the gospel and have shared it with others. Not only do they attend church, but they even serve in church. They've read their Bibles and know what it teaches. They're seasoned veterans. What's the most important thing I can tell *them*? If this is my only chance to address those who already know Christ, what would I tell them?

That brings us to **Psalm 73**. This particular psalm has something important to tell us. In fact, it may contain the most important thing a Christian can ever be told. There are many priceless truths in the Bible, but this one is truly life-changing. This truth also happens to be *rare*. In these last days this particular teaching isn't taught very often. The reason is simple: this psalm says something that many people don't want to hear.

The teaching that I want to bring out is found at the end of the psalm, but to get there we must go through the entire chapter. We can't just skip to the end! We need to take the entire journey.

In this psalm a man named Asaph lamented the prosperity

of the wicked. He was appalled that some of the wicked led really great lives:

**Psalm 73:3:** “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. 2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. 3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

Asaph actually *envied* the wicked. He was jealous of their prosperity:

**Psalm 73:4-7:** “For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.”

The wicked weren't in trouble like other people. They weren't plagued with problems. In fact, they had more than their heart could wish! These vile people truly had it all. Even though they were proud and violent, they had it made. These evil people had it so well that their success gave them the courage to speak out against others *and against God Himself*:

**Psalm 73:8-12:** “They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they

increase in riches.”

At this point Asaph was very upset. The wicked were speaking against both God and man. They oppressed others and mocked God. Yet despite all of this, they were actually *prospering*. The wicked were increasing in riches and doing really well for themselves.

There are many people who share Asaph's frustration. In our day there are certainly some wicked people who have incredible power and great wealth! We know what Asaph is talking about and we may have even thought the same things that he was thinking. Asaph was astonished at how successful the wicked were in life – and the wicked are *still* successful today. In our society it seems that evil is advancing on a daily basis. Terrible people are doing terrible things, and instead of being punished for it they're become even more wealthy and powerful. It's easy to look at all the terrible things that people are getting away with and shake our heads in amazement. How is it possible that righteous people are suffering while wicked people are prospering?

Asaph didn't understand this at all. He started to think that his righteousness has been a waste of time:

**Psalm 73:13-14:** “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.”

Asaph had cleansed his heart, but he was still plagued with problems and adversity. Yet the wicked gave themselves over to evil and found wealth and peace! It just wasn't fair. Asaph wondered if being righteous was a big waste of time. What good did it really do?

This entire subject was painful to him until he remembered something important:

**Psalm 73:15-20:** "If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image."

It's true that sometimes the wicked are successful. It's also true that some wicked people don't have the same problems that others do. There may even be times when they're wealthy and prosperous. But there's one more piece to the story – a very important piece! Asaph remembered the ultimate fate of the wicked. He remembered that one day they will have to stand before God and give an account of their lives. They will have to answer for every lie, every sin, and every evil act. God was even going to judge every idle word they ever spoke! Nothing would be left out or overlooked.

On the day of judgment the difference between the righteous and the wicked will be extremely obvious. Since the righteous have their sins forgiven by the blood of Jesus, when they're judged they will be declared innocent and let go. They will inherit everlasting life, joy, and peace! They have nothing to worry about because their future is absolutely secure.

However, the wicked are a different story. They haven't repented of their sins and believed in Jesus alone for salvation. Their sins haven't been forgiven. When they're judged they will be found guilty and face the unending wrath of God. All of those whose sins aren't forgiven will be cast into a place of everlasting fire and torment. They face a fate that's horrible beyond words.

When Asaph remembered this it changed his outlook on

life:

**Psalm 73:21-24:** “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

Asaph remembered that God was always with him in both in the easy times and the hard times. He knew that God was there, guiding him and holding him. Asaph also knew that one day God would receive him up to glory. Better days were coming and he knew it.

Now that we know the story, *we can finally get to the point* that I want to bring out. It's in the very next verse:

**Psalm 73:25-28:** “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.”

This passage is the sum of the matter. In fact, it's the key to life itself! When Asaph looked over his life he said that ***God was all he wanted.*** It's true that some of the wicked had prosperity. There were a few evil people whose lives were easy and had both wealth and success. All of that was true. At the same time, the lives many righteous people was extremely difficult.

But Asaph didn't care. The prosperity of the wicked didn't appeal to him. Their riches weren't tempting. He didn't want their

money, or their power, or their success. *All he wanted was God!* The Lord was enough for him. In fact, God was the *only* thing that he desired. Nothing else really mattered. Let the wicked have their prosperity; Asaph had something better because he had God. Asaph might never have wealth or success or fame, *but it didn't matter because he had God.*

That's the point I want to focus on. You see, if we're honest with ourselves I think we'd have to admit that Asaph's attitude is rare. If God took away everything that people had and left them with nothing but Himself, I think there would be outrage. Many people would be profoundly upset. They would feel wronged. The idea that "God is all that you need" is nice in theory, but in practice many people don't believe it. There are many things that they want in life, and the truth is that not many people believe that God is enough. There are quite a few Christians who would never dream of saying "There's nothing on earth that I desire except for God". In fact, for some that idea is *unthinkable*.

One of the reasons it's unthinkable is because many Christians treat God as if He's some sort of bill they have to pay off every month. They've divided their lives into two categories: the small part they've given to God, and the rest that they've kept for themselves. They believe that God wants something from them in exchange for salvation, so they try to pacify God by tithing and going to church and volunteering now and then. They give God "His cut" and then do whatever they want with the rest of their life. You might say that God is a chore, like cleaning the house. It's a box that people check off.

For some people, the only reason they want God in their life at all is to save them from Hell and rescue them when things go wrong. Outside of those areas, they'd be perfectly happy if God left them alone. What they desire in life is money, or fame, or power. They have wishes that have nothing whatsoever to do with God. They may try to appease God by doing religious things now and then, but their lives are most about themselves.

*But that's not what God wants from us!* God doesn't want a

tenth of us. Instead He wants *all* of us. The Lord doesn't want our money, or our stuff, or our time. What He truly desires is *us*. He wants to own our heart! This is how Jesus put it:

**Mark 12:29-30:** “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”

According to Jesus Himself, the greatest commandment of all is to love God with *all* your heart, and *all* your soul, and *all* your mind, and *all* your strength. *That's what God wants from you.* That's what God *requires* from you. Nothing less will do! God doesn't want His portion. He wants absolutely everything. He doesn't want to become a part of your life; instead He wants to *become* your life.

You see, in order for us to be saved God requires us to declare spiritual bankruptcy. We can't say “God, if you save me I'll give you ten percent of my life, but the rest is mine.” That's not going to work! What God actually requires is this: “Lord, I completely surrender myself to You. I belong to You now. You're my master and I'm your humble servant. I'll do whatever You want me to do. I'll go where You want me to go, I'll think what You want me to think, and I'll believe what You want me to believe. I will hold nothing back. I'll sacrifice all of my dreams and desires, and replace them with *Your* dreams and desires. I now have but one purpose in life: to glorify and honor You.”

Have you ever heard the phrase “Give your life to Jesus”? That isn't supposed to be a metaphor! Becoming a Christian literally means that our life doesn't belong to us anymore. God doesn't want us to follow our dreams; instead He wants us to follow *His* dreams. God doesn't want us to follow our desires; instead He wants us to follow *His* desires. God wants us to reach the point where the only things we want are the things that He



wants, and the only things we desire are the things that He desires.

God requires us to view ourselves as His servants. He commands us to look at everything we have and everything we are, and ask this question: how can we use it for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom? He wants us to see ourselves as stewards, not owners, and to use our resources for His benefit. When we're saved our sin was crucified with Christ and we became new creatures. That means we also have a new purpose – a very different one from what we had before. God has called us to devote all of our passion and energy and love to Him. We're literally living for Him now! Our old life is over.

That doesn't mean God requires us to give 100% of our income as charitable donations. What it does mean is that we must live our lives very differently than those who aren't saved. We must see ourselves as stewards of His property and managers of His resources. Our lives aren't about us! Instead they're about God. We are God's servants on a mission from Him, and that mission is to glorify Him and advance His kingdom.

This doesn't mean it's a sin to be rich. Abraham, David, and Solomon all had enormous wealth. It also doesn't mean it's wrong to have nice things. But it does mean that *riches must never own our heart!* Asaph was able to look at the prosperity of the wicked and honestly say that it wasn't appealing to him. He didn't want it because he had something better. Let me repeat that: the riches and prosperity of the wicked meant nothing to Asaph because he had God, and *God was better than everything that the wicked had put together!* The wicked may have had wealth, but *God* was his portion.

You might say it's something like being in love. When you're in love with someone, that person becomes your whole world. You're obsessed with them to the point where they're on your mind constantly. You want to spend all the time that you can with them, and you want to talk with them as much as possible. You become obsessed with pleasing them. Your whole life starts to become centered around what they're doing, what they're

seeking, and what they want. The reason you're doing this isn't because you have to be or you feel like you should be; it's because you genuinely want to be. It's a natural outflowing of your heart.

That's how God commands us to feel about Him! When God says that He wants us to love Him with all of our heart, *He meant it*. It wasn't a metaphor. God wants to become our whole world – not because He should to be, but because we love Him so much that we can't imagine any other kind of life. He wants our whole life to be centered around Him – what He's doing, what He wants, and what He's saying. He wants to fill our heart to such an extent that all of this just happens. Everything else just fades away and becomes unimportant.

The apostle Paul had this attitude. There was only one thing he wanted in life, and that was to know Christ. Paul's love for God was so great that everything else was meaningless to him:

**Philippians 3:7-11:** “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

Asaph desired one thing in life, and that was God. The Lord didn't have just part of his heart; He had *all* of his heart! Nothing else really mattered. Likewise, the apostle Paul counted everything as loss so that he might know Christ. Paul loved God

so much that He was *all* that Paul longed for! Nothing else mattered.

I'm not going to ask if you've arrived at the place that Paul reached. I'm not going to ask if you can honestly say that Christ is your all-consuming passion. Instead I'm going to ask this: *is that the kind of person you want to be?*

You see, if that's what you genuinely want then that's eventually who you'll become. If you seek it you'll find it. If you cry out to God and beg Him to change your heart then He will! It may take time and it may not happen overnight, *but it will happen*. God is very willing to give you a heart that's perfect toward Him.

But *do you want it?* There are many people who don't. They prefer to give God a portion of their life and keep the rest. They don't want to give themselves to God. They want to hold on to their desires, their wants, their riches, their fame, and their power. They don't mind having God *in* their life, but they don't want God to *be* their life. They don't mind serving God from time to time but they have no intention of changing their whole perspective on life. They don't want to be completely and solely dedicated to serving God.

However, that is what God requires! Many people are fine with the idea as Jesus as their Savior but they don't like the thought of Jesus as their Lord. They don't mind giving God a portion but they have a big problem giving Him absolutely everything. However, the truth is that becoming a Christian is an all-or-nothing deal! God demands *all* of you, and He will be satisfied with nothing less.

In the famous Parable of the Sower, Christ warned that there would be people who bore no fruit in life. The reason is because the cares and riches of this world would draw their heart away from God:

**Mark 4:19:** “And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it

becometh unfruitful.”

God can fix this problem! He can give you a new heart. The question is this: *do you want it?* Do you want to be passionately dedicated to God, or do you prefer the cares and riches of this world? The choice is yours – and the consequences will last forever.

This isn't a minor issue. No, this is the real test. This is how the true sheep are separated from the false sheep. This is how you can tell if your salvation is real or fake. Yes, you can choose to hold on to your heart. You can keep your life. You can continue seeking after riches and power and everything else this world has to offer. You can do that – but as the apostle John warns us, the price is high:

**I John 2:15-17:** “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

If Christ truly has our heart then the things of this world won't be able to tempt us because they're not what we want! The problem is that many people would rather have the things of the world. They don't actually desire God at all! They may go church and serve God, and they may even give Him a portion of their income, but *they don't actually want Him*. They may include Him in their life if they have to, but they don't desire Him. The world owns their heart.

You can continue your love affair with the world – but it will cost you everything. Those who love the world will pass away with this world – but those who have given their lives to Christ will abide forever. It really is an all-or-nothing deal. God

won't be satisfied with a portion of you. Either we belong to God or we don't. If our heart belongs to the world then it doesn't belong to God, and that's a very serious matter.

Asaph was clear: his heart really *did* belong to God. The only thing he desired in all the world was God Himself; riches meant nothing to him. Paul's heart also belonged to God. He was willing to count everything as loss so that he might know Christ.

Where do you stand?