

PSALM 63:1-8

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. ² I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. ³ Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. ⁴ I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. ⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. ⁶ On my bed I remember you I think of you through the watches of the night. ⁷ Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. ⁸ I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6 & 12-13

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ² They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³ They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

¹² So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

MUSIC CAN BE POWERFUL AND MOVING AND CAN OPEN A WINDOW INTO THE HEART AND SOUL. FOR EXAMPLE:

WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS THE IMPACT OF ITALIAN TENOR ANDREA BOCELLI'S PERFORMANCE OF AMAZING GRACE IN VACANT MILAN DURING THE 2020 COVID OUTBREAK.

THEN THERE IS THE TESTIMONY OF PATRIOTISM AND DEFIANCE AMONG UKRAINIAN'S PERFORMING THEIR NATIONAL ANTHEM IN THE MIDST WAR.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS MAY ALSO BE VIEWED THROUGH THE LENS, OR BETTER THE YET NOTES- OF TWO SONGS, ONE WORLDLY AND THE OTHER SPIRITUAL.

THE SONGS I HAVE IN MIND ARE "MY WAY" AND "HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION".

THE FIRST STANZA OF THE POP SONG "MY WAY" OFFERS AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW TO THE ONE THAT WAS EXPRESSED IN PSALM 63.

THE WORDS LAUD THE VIRTUES OF DEPENDENCE UPON ONESELF, WHICH WAS ONE OF THE PROBLEMS AMONG THE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS.

"AND NOW, THE END IS NEAR AND SO I FACE THE FINAL CURTAIN. MY FRIEND, I'LL SAY IT CLEAR I'LL STATE MY CASE, OF WHICH I'M CERTAIN.

I'VE LIVED A LIFE THAT'S FULL, I TRAVELED EACH AND EVERY HIGHWAY. AND MORE, MUCH MORE THAN THIS I DID IT MY WAY."

THE SENTIMENT EXPRESSED BY THESE WORDS DESCRIBE TO SOME DECREE MANY IN THE CHURCH OF CORINTH.

PAUL'S LETTER TO THEM IS FILLED WITH REFERENCES TO THEIR PRIDE.

AS THE SAYING GOES, THEY OFTEN HURT THEIR ARMS BY TRYING TO PAT THEMSELVES ON THE BACK OVER BEING SAVED, OR HAVING CERTAIN SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

EVEN WORSE, MANY CORINTHIANS PUT TOO MUCH FOCUS ON THEMSELVES, FORGETTING SALVATION IS NOT A LICENSE TO SIN.

THE APOSTLE PAUL REMINDED THEM IN CHAPTER TEN ABOUT THE ERROR THE HEBREW PEOPLE MADE DURING THE EXODUS JOURNEY.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE ALSO LOOKED TOO MUCH TO THEMSELVES RATHER THAN TO GOD, AND THEY SUFFERED THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR UNREPENTANT SIN.

BUT THE HYMN OFFERS ANOTHER WAY TO LIVE, IT BEGINS: "HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION, YE SAINTS OF THE LORD, IS LAID FOR YOUR FAITH IN HIS EXCELLENT WORD.

WHAT MORE CAN HE SAY THAN TO YOU HE HATH SAID TO YOU WHO FOR REFUGE TO JESUS HAVE FLED."

THIS VERSE COMPLIMENTS THE WORDS OF DAVID, ALTHOUGH WRITTEN LONG BEFORE JESUS, THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH IN GOD IS THE SAME.

ACCORDING TO THE PSALM, WHILE IN THE WILDERNESS AND EXPERIENCING PHYSICAL HUNGER AND THIRST, DAVID RECOGNIZED AND VOICED HIS GREATER NEED, WRITING:

"O GOD, YOU ARE MY GOD, I SEEK YOU, MY SOUL THIRSTS FOR YOU, MY FLESH FAINTS FOR YOU AS IN A DRY AND WEARY LAND WHERE THERE IS NO WATER."

HERE WE FIND A DECLARATION OF BOTH THE NEED FOR AND THE DESIRE FOR GOD'S PRESENCE AND HELP.

CONVERSELY, PAUL WARNS THE CORINTHIANS THEY HAVE MORE TRUST IN SELF THAN IN GOD: "SO IF YOU THINK YOU ARE STANDING, WATCHOUT THAT YOU DO NOT FALL."

THIS IS REFLECTED IN THE POP SONG LYRICS: "REGRETS, I'VE HAD A FEW, BUT THEN AGAIN, TOO FEW TO MENTION. I DID WHAT I HAD TO DO AND SAW IT THROUGH WITHOUT EXEMPTION.

I PLANNED EACH CHARTED COURSE EACH CAREFUL STEP ALONG THE BYWAY. AND MORE, MUCH MORE THAN THIS I DID IT MY WAY."

THOSE WORDS ARE CONTRASTED BY VERSE TWO OF THE HYMN: "FEAR NOT, I AM WITH THEE; OH BE NOT DISMAYED FOR I AM THY GOD AND WILL STILL GIVE THEE AID.

I'LL STRENGTHEN THEE, HELP THEE, AND CAUSE THEE TO STAND UPHELD BY MY RIGHTEOUS, OMNIPOTENT HAND."

THIS VERSE OF THE HYMN CONNECTS US TO THE VERSE EIGHT OF THE PSALM.

IT SAYS, "MY SOUL CLINGS TO YOU, YOUR RIGHT HAND UPHOLDS ME."

AND WE HEAR IN THE FOLLOWING WORDS THAT THE PSALMIST WORSHIPS THE GOD WHO UPHOLDS HIM.

"SO I HAVE LOOKED TO YOUR SANCTUARY, BEHOLDING YOUR POWER AND GLORY."

HOWEVER, FOR THOSE WHO LOOK TO THEMSELVES THERE IS NO ACCEPTANCE OR EVEN A DESIRE FOR GOD'S HELP, AND CERTAINLY NO WORSHIP OF THE LORD.

THE SONGS SPEAKS ABOUT FIDELITY TO SELF RATHER THAN TO GOD, DECLARING: " YES, THERE WERE TIMES, I'M SURE YOU KNEW, WHEN I BIT OFF MORE THAN I COULD CHEW.

BUT THROUGH IT ALL, WHEN THERE WAS DOUBT, I ATE IT UP AND SPIT IT OUT. I FACED IT ALL AND I STOOD TALL AND DID IT MY WAY."

THE CORINTHIANS ERRED SIMILARLY BY THINKING THEY COULD BENEFIT FROM THE LOVE THE LORD JESUS WITHOUT BEING DEVOTED TO HIM.

HOWEVER, PAUL REMINDS THE CHRISTIANS OF CORINTH THAT DOING THINGS THEIR WAY, AND FAILING TO REPENT WILL NOT BODE WELL.

THE APOSTLE POINTS TO THE ISRAELITES WHO TURNED FROM GOD, WHILE TRUSTING IN THEIR STATUS OF AS GOD'S PEOPLE:

"...GOD WAS NOT PLEASED WITH MOST OF THEM, AND THEY WERE STRUCK DOWN IN THE WILDERNESS."

BUT DAVID CONFESSES THAT HE IS SUSTAINED BY HIS MEMORIES OF WORSHIP IN COMMUNITY, AS WELL AS HIS SOLITARY PRAISE OF GOD, EVEN IN THE MIST OF HIS PRESENT DISTRESS.

SIMILARLY, THE HYMN SPEAKS ABOUT THE PROMISE OF GOD'S HELP DURING TROUBLES IN LIFE:

"WHEN THROUGH THE DEEP WATERS I CALL THEE TO GO THE RIVERS OF SORROW SHALL NOT OVERFLOW.

FOR I WILL BE WITH THEE, THY TROUBLES TO BLESS AND SANCTIFY TO THEE THY DEEPEST DISTRESS."

THOSE WHO TRUST ONLY IN THEIR OWN RESOURCES HAVE THIS TO SAY: 'I'VE LOVED, I'VE LAUGHED AND CRIED, I'VE HAD MY FILL, MY SHARE OF LOSING.

AND NOW, AS TEARS SUBSIDE, I FIND IT ALL SO AMUSING. TO THINK I DID ALL THAT, AND MAY I SAY, NOT IN A SHY WAY- OH, NO, OH, NO, NOT ME, I DID IT MY WAY."

SIMILARLY, THE CORINTHIANS PUT SO MUCH TRUST IN THEIR OWN SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND TALENTS. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF THEY THOUGHT THEY DID NOT NEED GOD- OR ONE ANOTHER.

PART OF THEIR PROBLEM WAS THEY ACTED AS IF THEY NEITHER WANTED NOR NEEDED ANYTHING MORE FROM JESUS THAN THE SALVATION THEY ACCEPTED FROM HIM.

BUT IN THE PSALM DAVID SHOWS US A BETTER WAY, HE PROCLAIMED ABOUT GOD: "... YOU HAVE BEEN MY HELP, AND IN THE SHADOW OF YOUR WINGS I SING FOR JOY."

HERE HE EXPRESSES HIS SENSE OF GOD'S PROTECTION AND CARE. IT DID NOT ALWAYS REMOVE TROUBLE FROM HIM BUT SHELTERED AND SUSTAINED HIM THROUGH IT.

THE SAME IS TRUE FOR CHRISTIANS AS THE WORDS OF THE HYMN REMIND US.

"WHEN THROUGH FIERY TRIALS THY PATHWAYS SHALL LIE, MY GRACE ALL SUFFICIENT SHALL BE THY SUPPLY.

THE FLAME SHALL NOT HURT THEE; I ONLY DESIGN- THY DROSS TO CONSUME AND THY GOLD TO REFINE.'

FURTHERMORE, DAVID DOES NOT FORGET HIS NEED FOR THE LORD, OR HOW GOD CONTINUALLY REVIVES AND STRENGTHENS HIM.

HE WROTE: "MY SOUL IS SATISFIED AS WITH A RICH FEAST, AND MY MOUTH PRAISES YOU WITH JOYFUL LIPS."

THE HEBREW WORD TRANSLATED AS SOUL CAN ALSO BE TRANSLATED AS LIFE. THEREFORE, DAVID ACKNOWLEDGES HIS LIFE COMES FROM GOD, WHO IS WORTHY OF HIS PRAISE.

THE HYMN REMINDS CHRISTIANS OF A SIMILAR THING, IN THAT OUR FAITH IN CHRIST AND TRUST IN HIM IS THE FOUNDATION OF SALVATION AND LIFE.

"THE SOUL THAT ON JESUS HAS LEANED FOR REPOSE I WILL NOT, I WILL NOT DESERT TO ITS FOES; THAT SOUL, THOUGH ALL HELL SHOULD ENDEAVOR TO SHAKE- I'LL NEVER, NO NEVER, NO NEVER FORSAKE."

THE PSALMIST, LIKE THE WORDS OF THE HYMN, CALLS US TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE OF STAYING CONNECTED TO GOD, BEFORE WHOM HE KNEELS.

"SO I WILL BLESS YOU AS LONG AS I LIVE; I WILL LIFT UP MY HANDS AND CALL ON YOUR NAME."

CONVERSELY, THOSE WHO PRAISE THEMSELVES RATHER THAN GOD SADLY MISS THE MOST VITAL DEFINITION OF LIFE.

"FOR WHAT IS A MAN, WHAT HAS HE GOT? IF NOT HIMSELF, THEN HE HAS NOT. TO SAY THE THINGS HE TRULY FEELS AND NOT THE WORDS OF ONE WHO KNEELS.

THE RECORD SHOWS I TOOK THE BLOWS, AND DID IT MY WAY. YES, IT WAS MY WAY.”

WHILE IT IS TRUE WE EACH HAVE OUR OWN IDENTITY, THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT MAN AND WOMAN ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

THIS MEANS OUR REAL IDENTITY AS A MAN OR A WOMAN IS IN GOD WHO CREATED US AND LOVES US.

THEREFORE, PAUL REMINDS THE CORINTHIANS WHERE THE SOURCE OF THEIR HELP AND HOPE IS FOUND:

“NO TESTING HAS OVERTAKEN YOU THAT IS NOT COMMON TO EVERYONE, GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND HE WILL NOT LET YOU BE TESTED BEYOND YOUR STRENGTH,,,,,”

THE MEANING OF THE WORD TESTING HERE IS MORE LIKE TEMPTATION, SUGGESTING WE WILL ALL BE TEMPTED-TESTED IN A SIMILAR WAY TO JESUS.

BUT THIS TESTING IS NOT INTENDED TO BREAK US, BUT RATHER TO DIRECT US TO LOOK TO THE LORD, WHO WILL HELP US ENDURE AND OVERCOME, IF WE LET HIM DO SO.

AND SO, FOR PAUL THE IDENTITY OF THOSE SAVED BY JESUS IS NOT FOUND IN BEING THEIR OWN MAN OR WOMAN, BUT RATHER IS FOUND IN BEING A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST.

IN GALATIANS 2:20 THE APOSTLE EXPLAINS HIS IDENTITY BY WRITING:

“I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST AND I NO LONGER LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME.

THE LIFE I NOW LIVE IN THE BODY, I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME.”

THEREFORE, PAUL WOULD NEVER PROUDLY PROCLAIM “I DID IT MY WAY”.

INSTEAD, HE TEACHES -THE SOUL, THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN IS BEST LIVED BY FOLLOWING JESUS AND DOING IT HIS WAY.

DOING THINGS JESUS’ WAY DOES NOT MEAN WE CEASE TO BE WHO GOD CREATED US TO BE, BUT RATHER IT ENABLES US TO BECOME MORE AND MORE OUR TRUE SELVES.

CONSEQUENTLY, IT IS NOT WEAKNESS NOR A DENIAL OF SELF TO LEAN ON JESUS, OR TO BE UPHELD BY GOD’S HAND.

IN FACT, IT TAKES NOT ONLY WISDOM AND HUMILITY, BUT ALSO STRENGTH OF CHARACTER TO KNOW WE NEED GOD’S HELP TO GUIDE AND SUSTAIN US THROUGH LIFE.

HERE IS A FINAL IMAGE THAT MAY HELP ILLUSTRATE THE VALUE OF A LIFE BUILT UPON JESUS AND HIS WAY- OPPOSED TO ONE BUILT UPON SELF ALONE.

THINK ABOUT CLIMBING A LADDER. IN ORDER TO DO SO WE MUST STEP UP ONE RUNG AT A TIME UNTIL WE REACH THE TOP.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER VITAL THING WE MUST DO BESIDES USING OUR LEGS AND FEET.

AND THAT IS TO HOLD ONTO THE LADDER, AT THE VERY LEAST, WITH ONE HAND.

IF WE INSIST ON CLIMBING WITHOUT HOLDING ON WE MAY ASCEND FOR A TIME, BUT EVENTUALLY WE WILL FALL, AND WHEN WE DO IT WILL BE OUR FAULT- NOT THE FAULT OF THE LADDER.

REMEMBER, FOR BOTH DAVID AND THE APOSTLE PAUL, THE LADDER WAS THE LORD, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

LENT INVITES US TO CHOOSE, OR AFFIRM, OUR DESIRE TO GO WITH GOD BY CHOOSING TO DO THINGS GOD’S WAY.

SO WHICH SONG WILL YOU CHOOSE TO TELL YOUR LIFE’S STORY?

WILL YOU PROUDLY PROCLAIM “I DID IT MY WAY”, OR WILL IT BE SAID ABOUT YOU THAT AS A SAINT OF THE LORD, JESUS WAS THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR LIFE.

SERMON SUMMARY: PSALM 63:1-8 AND 1 CORIN. 10:1-6 & 12-13

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