

THE GREATEST PRIORITY
Psalm 63

Intro: It is hard to find a sincere Christian who does not love the Psalms. We often find in the Psalms the words which are in our hearts, but which we somehow have difficulty expressing. The Psalms teach us how to talk to God. It would be difficult to find any circumstance in the lives of the people of God which is not portrayed somewhere in the Psalms--and often we can find ourselves many places. In the Psalms the curtains are drawn back, so to speak, and we see the deepest emotions that filled the hearts of the Psalmists, whoever they might have been. And they are emotions of every kind. The Psalms become a pattern for the child of God who would really learn to know God and to walk with God.

And yet the Psalms are not emotional to the point of ignoring the truth of God. The theology of the Psalms is consistent with the revelations of truth that we have everywhere else in the Bible. But they do teach us the way in which our hearts can be stirred over the truth, and especially concerning the God of the truth.

The Psalms help us to keep our priorities straight as we see the struggles of the soul that the people of God went through in past days. We all have things that we need to do every day, and the Scriptures nowhere encourage us to neglect the things that we ought to do. But sometimes things and events and people crowd in upon us until we are forced to answer the question, "What has the greatest priority with me? If I must choose (and all of us must), what is the most important thing in my life around which everything else must revolve?"

Not only the Psalms, but also many other parts of Scripture help us to answer this question. And usually we see what the important things as a result of special testings and trials.

David's words in Psa. 27:4 are most helpful.

So are the words which we find at the beginning of Psa. 42 (vv. 1, 2). Note in the remainder of this Psalm the evidence of tears and deep depression from which the Psalmist had come to realize the way of escape.

Psalm 46 is another wonderful Psalm where we find this much needed truth.

We see from Luke 10:38-42 how the Lord helped Martha when she was inclined to get her priorities mixed up.

Think also of what the Lord was teaching Paul in that Philipian jail, in the words found in chapter 3, verses 10, 11.

Perhaps the best of all passages to show us what the greatest priority in our lives should be is to be found in the answer the Lord gave to the question, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matt. 22:36). The Pharisee who asked the question was not sincere. In fact he was trying to trick the Lord into saying something that would give them some basis for accusing Him. But the answer the Lord gave silenced them, because even the Pharisees could not bring themselves to refute his answer. They knew that there was nothing greater than this—first of all, to love the Lord with **all** the heart and soul and mind.

I would go so far as to say tonight that learning this lesson is the main reason for all of our trials. There may be other reasons, but this is the main one. Nothing else can really be right as long as this is not **THE GREATEST PRIORITY** we have.

We often want to serve the Lord. Or we want to see some blessing from the Lord. But have we learned to seek the Lord just for the pure joy of fellowship with Him? We want His blessings, but how much do we want HIM? That is the question that we all need to answer tonight, and the question that we need to keep before us continually!

Do you remember how the Lord restored Peter after he had failed the Lord so miserably? The questions are found in John 21:15-17.

We are not brought to this in a moment of time. In fact, we learn more about this continually, and the more we learn the more important it becomes to us.

Tonight I want to spend some time with you in Psalm 63—not the whole Psalm, but mainly the first four verses with brief references to other statements which David made here in order to determine as much as we can the things which were in David's heart.

(Read it.)

Let us approach it as David did. I am sure that he did not say these words as fast as we can read them. They indicate some great lessons David had learned.

This Psalm was so important that in many of the earliest churches the morning service was introduced with this Psalm Sunday after Sunday because they felt that it was so very important for the people to follow.

I. **THE WAY DAVID SPOKE OF GOD:** "O God, thou art my God."

Remember this is the beginning of a prayer. There was the

consciousness that he was in the presence of "God." And then he went on to say, "my God." Lit. it would be, O Elohim, thou art my El (the mighty One).

He was not coming to a man like he was; he was coming to God, and he let that truth permeate his soul again as he came to the Lord.

II. THE TIME OF HIS COMING: "Early will I seek thee."

He was giving expression here not just to this occasion, but that which would be the practice of his life, and most likely it had to do with the way he would begin each day. The dawning of the day would find him seeking the Lord. With all that he had to do, he had learned that this was the essential thing--not just to pray for blessing, nor to intercede for others, but to seek the Lord Himself!

Does the Lord mean that much to you and to me? Has our quiet time, if we have one, just become a regular reading of the Word without any real hunger in our hearts for God?

III. THE REASONS FOR HIS COMING.

There are several reasons given here, and they are rich in their significance for us as they were for David.

- A. Because of what David felt in his heart, which had an effect upon his body.

Note that the soul comes first, and then the body. What was going on inwardly with David affected him outwardly. Perhaps David was suggesting here that in his body, which can become an instrument of sins, he had found that the right way to control his speech and his walk and his inclination to do evil was to make it an instrument of holiness--and this could only come about through seeking God.

- B. Because of where he lived.

I do not think that David was just talking about his circumstances if, as it is generally thought, this was composed while he was fleeing from Absalom. He was talking about this world in which we live. It is "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." This world promises much, but produces nothing that is lasting in its ability to satisfy us. We are thankful for what the Lord has given us, but things do not satisfy. We need the Lord. Even our enjoyment of other people will be determined by whether or not the Lord comes first in our lives and in our days.

- C. Because of what he wanted: "to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

All of us have had those special times of blessing when we have felt the presence of the Lord, and when it has been easy to pray. We have not wanted to come down from the mount. David had been blessed by the Lord, and had seen the Lord in the sanctuary. And it spoiled him for any other joy.

- D. Because of what he had learned.

The lovingkindness of the Lord is another way of expressing the favor of the Lord, or the blessing of the Lord. When we disobey the Lord, we lose that blessing, and we lose the realization of His presence with us. And if we have known the Lord's blessing, and then have had to go without it, we know that life is really not worth living without the assurance that the blessing of the Lord is upon us.

Finally,

- E. Because all of this is what really leads to praise.

"My lips shall praise thee."

We all know from the Word that praise is to be our continual sacrifice to the Lord. But how often we forget. Or how often it is replaced by burdens that we want to bring to the Lord.

But do you know that praise does something to us, and to our hearts, and to our relationship to God that nothing else will do? Note how thanksgiving figured in to what Paul told the Philippians in Phil. 4:6, 7.

Concl: Now why is all of this here? Was the Holy Spirit just interested in letting us know a little more about David and his relationship with the Lord, how he lives, etc. No, it is here for "our admonition and learning" (Rom. 15:4). It is so we can follow the example of David, and thus enjoy the Lord as he did, and all of the fruit of such a relationship with God.

May the Lord enable us to profit from this Psalm. It might even be good for us to read it several days in a row until the truth of it really grips our hearts.

45th ANNIVERSARY

A. B. SIMPSON'S HYMN - HIMSELF (HYMNS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE,
154).