

DESIRES TOWARDS GOD—A SERMON FOR THE WEAK

NO. 1564

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“Lord, all my desire is before You; and my groaning is not hid from You.”
Psalm 38:9.

IT is our earnest desire that all who are in Christ may be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. I would earnestly wish to see such spiritual life among us that every man had reached the very height of holy manhood and was in possession of the utmost possible degree of spiritual vigor. It is a great calamity when there is a very large proportion of sick folks in any Christian community, for these must draw off the care and strength of the Church from aggressive movements. How favored would we be if it could be said of us as of Israel when they came out of Egypt, “There was not one feeble person in all their tribes.” Oh that the day would come when the Word of God shall be fulfilled which says—“He that is feeble among them shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them.”

Let no man suppose that there is a necessity that he should always be weak in faith, always walk under a cloud, or that he should forever be a Mr. Feeble-Mind or Mr. Ready-to-Halt. Miracles of Grace are for saints as well as sinners! Feeble minds can be strengthened and crutches thrown away. We ought to grow out of the feebleness of our spiritual childhood. We should cry to God for Grace that we may get up “into the hill country” of holy confidence and there, like Mary, sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Oh that we might all attain to assurance, yes, to the *full* assurance of understanding, so that we should know why we are thus assured and so become rooted, grounded and settled in the faith—for then nothing would, by any means, remove us *from* the Truth of God or even move us *in* the Truth. May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.

I would to God that you might each realize that promise of the 25th Psalm, “What man is he that fears the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth.” At the same time, we are most painfully conscious that all of God’s people are *not* in a vigorous condition and we know that there is a large mixture in every Church of those who are sickly, desponding and faint. These we are bound to care for. Common humanity demands it, our sacred office binds us to it and the example of the good Shepherd constrains us. We must feed the lambs. We must “lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees.” The voice of God is heard in our heart saying, “Comfort you, comfort you My people,” which voice we dare not disregard!

Indeed, the sympathies awakened within us by a similar experience prompt us to be forward in compassion for the weak and the tried. Therefore, at this time I would seek out the weary and wounded and feeble—not with a view of trying to multiply their number—but with the hope of diminishing their number by cheering them till they grow out of their low condition. We would not pamper weakness till we seem to offer a premium to unbelief, but yet we would feed the feeble in the king’s meadows till they become strong in the Lord! I shall now look after those who cannot get beyond desires and groans and let none blame me for this service. If the shepherd spends much of his time among the weakly sheep—if he gathers the lambs with his arms and carries them in his bosom—if he seems, even, to neglect the stronger sheep because they do not so urgently call for his care, no one should, therefore, infer that he delights in feebleness.

Far from it! He is trying to remove it by his tenderness! You do not blame the humane for caring for the sick. If great efforts are put forth to build or endow a hospital, you do not say, “Sickness is a desirable thing, for all this money is spent upon comforting and helping those who feel it.” Your feelings are quite the contrary—though these sick folk become the object of care, it is not as a reward to them—but an act of compassion towards them. Let none, therefore, say that the preacher encourages a low state of Divine Grace—he encourages it no more than the physician encourages disease when he tries, by his care and skill, to heal the sick! Whatever your judgments may be, I always mean to look after the downcast and the struggling! Nor shall the babes be forgotten of my soul while I am able to be a nursing father to them.

In a large family where there are little children there must always be arrangements for their feeding. Spoon victuals and milk must always be in the house, for if the cupboard contained nothing but meat and biscuits, the tender ones would starve. If it should ever come to pass that a ministry consisted entirely of the higher doctrines and the deeper experiences, it would leave many unsupplied and it certainly would not be like the ministry of Christ which had in it as much of simplicity as of mystery! A true steward cares for *all* the household and provides milk for babies as well as meat for men. If he forgets anything, he had better forget the meat than the milk, for though babies could not live on strong meat, men can live upon pure milk. To tell the truth, I have known the strong men come into such a condition at times that the milk for babies was all that they could take.

Burly Samsons who can carry Gaza's gates may yet be so reduced that they can digest nothing but a milk diet. Those whose confidence is at its very height, today, may be brought so low that they will prize beyond gold the smallest marks and evidences of Grace and will be delighted to take hold upon those elementary Truths of God which belong to new-born Believers! Even fathers in Christ are glad, at times, to seize upon those simple promises which they left, before, to the most trembling of the saints, or perhaps to desponding sinners. If, therefore, at this present time I speak to the very lowest form of Christian life—if I try to meet the weakest case—I shall not admit that I am neglecting the strong. My giant Brother over yonder can have a drink of milk if he likes—it will not hurt him.

Come and try it, my worthy Friend! Receive, again, the simple doctrine by which little children live and you will find wholesome fare! Delight yourself, by all means, in such grand old doctrine as we were singing just now in Toplady's noble hymn, but do not disdain the plain Truths of God which must always remain the staple food of the household of faith! Come we, then, to the text, "All my desire is before You; and my groaning is not hid from You." May the Holy Spirit be our Instructor and we shall learn aright!

I. Our first point is DESIRES TOWARDS GOD SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN TO HIM. You, it may be, my dear Friend, cannot see any Grace in yourself at all—all that you perceive is a *desire* to *have* Grace. You know that you desire to repent of sin, desire to be delivered from it, desire to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, desire to be perfectly reconciled to God—but you fear that you have come no farther. Now, it is true that many desires are of no use whatever. "The sluggard desires and has nothing." Mere wishes are sorry things. But the desires of our text are earnest desires—the movements of the heart—for they are accompanied by "groaning." The Psalm evidently speaks of desires after *God*, not after temporal things—desires which are mainly expressed in the first verse of the Psalm, "O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath: neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure."

It is of intense, earnest, agonizing desires toward God for spiritual things that I am about to speak. Such desires ought to be made known unto God. It may be said that God knows our desires and that is what the text asserts. I do not doubt the Omniscience of God! But He bids us confess everything to Him quite as carefully as if He did *not* know it until we informed Him. We are to declare our cases for ourselves, just as David did, for it was not until after he had told out his sad story in the eight previous verses that he said, "All my desire is before You." We may expect the Lord to treat us as if He did not know our desires if we are negligent in declaring them. Does not the Apostle say, "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be *made known* unto God"?

Mark the language—"Let them be *made known*." The Lord waits to be gracious, but He tarries till His people have pleaded for the blessing! He knows, but frequently He does not act upon the knowledge till we have laid bare our case before Him. Make known, then, your requests and do so, first, because our whole life ought to be transparent before God. What is the use of endeavoring to *hide* anything? "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The life of every man should be unveiled before the eye of Heaven—but as for those who are believers in Christ, even in the humblest degree they desire no concealment—rather do they cry, "Search me, O God." We do not wish to hide anything! Our hope lies in our heavenly Father's knowing all.

There should be no wish to hide, even, a stray desire, or to conceal the most doleful groan. All should be open and aboveboard between a sinner and His Savior. What secrets can there be between a soul convinced of sin and a pardoning God? It would have an ill look if we still sewed fig leaves together, or hid among the trees of the garden. No, let us stand forth and let our covering be such only as the Lord, Himself, provides. Take care, then, in prayer, to set forth the secrets of your soul before God. Tell Him your sin and spread it out in all its sorrowful detail. Tell Him your fears for the past, your anxieties for the present and your dreads for the future. Tell Him your suspicions of yourself and your trembling lest you

should be deceived. Tell Him what salvation you wish for and what work of Grace it is that your soul desires—make all your heart known unto God and keep back nothing, for much benefit will come to you from being honest with your best Friend.

Do this, next, because it is *commanded* of God that we should make our desires known to Him. Prayer, which is a constant duty and privilege, is, practically, “desire.” It is desire with its garments on. It is desire booted and saddled for traveling the heavenly road. Prayer without desire is dead—its soul has fled, it is but the carcass of prayer. When desire is burning in the soul, it sends up the flame of prayer, or the sparks of sighs and groans. Prayer is the fiery chariot and desires are its horses of fire! Since, then, we are commanded to “pray without ceasing,” we are really commanded to make known our desires continually. Give utterance to your desire in the best form you can, however difficult may be the task. I pray you do this, for God would have you confess all to Him. He says that “men ought always to pray and not to faint.” And again, “In everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God.” Jesus said, “Watch and pray,” and His Apostle said, “I will that men pray everywhere.”

And what is this but to make your desires known to God? It is a great benefit to a man to be able to express his desires and this is an argument for making them known to God! You know your own desires better by trying to express them. They are indistinct till prayer sketches their likeness and fixes their image. Even should you fail to express your desires, their inexpressible character will better make known to you their greatness and their intensity. Sometimes a desire that is in the heart would at once be extinguished if you were to attempt to express it, for you would not dare to allow it to exist after you once saw its true nature. A glance at some desires would seal their doom, for we should feel them to be unworthy to be presented before the Lord. But when it is a holy and pure desire, tell it, for it will relieve your heart! It will heighten your estimate of the blessing sought! It will bring you to think over the promises made to such desires and it will, thereby, strengthen your hope that your desire will be fulfilled and enable you, by faith, to obtain it.

The prayerful expression of one desire will often quicken further desires and make a thousand of them where there was but one. If you will make known your desire before your God it will gather strength and soon obtain fulfillment. Desire should not be like a bird shut in within the ark—it should be sent out as Noah sent forth his dove. There! Let it fly towards Heaven! It will come home bearing the olive-leaf in its mouth. The return of prayer brings peace, therefore send it on its profitable errand and never attempt to hold it in the cage of silence! Though it has lain among the pots and is grimed with groans, let it mount towards Heaven and soon its wings will be covered with silver and its feathers with yellow gold! By prayer shoot out the arrows of desire from the quiver of your heart, for every one of them shall smite your enemies.

Perhaps you feel that you cannot pray because you are under so dense a gloom—but that is the time to double your desires and your pleading! I am told that the flower, of which the ancients used to say so much because it always turns toward the sun, is said to follow the great lord of day just as much in cloudy weather as when his bright beams gladden all things. What? Though the sun is not visible, yet he is still in his sphere and the nature of the flower seems to tell it in what direction to turn! Be it ever so with our soul in gloomy hours! When we cannot see the Lord’s face, may we still look towards Him with strong desire. O Soul, pray even when God does not appear to hear! When your eyes are blinded with tears, turn your mournful face towards the Mercy Seat and look towards His holy hill!

Remember where He was known to manifest Himself to you. If He meets you not today at Zion’s gates, yet remember Him from the Hermonites and the hill Mizar, where He revealed Himself, before, and let your desires follow hard after Him until you find Him again! Let nothing stop you from desiring and pouring out your complaint, for herein is the way of health to your soul. A gracious expression of desire before God will often be to you a proof that those desires are right. A desire that you dare tell to God is sure to be of a godly sort. If I can say, “O Lord, all my desire is before You and I wish it to be before You—I court Your inspection because I hope You will fulfill the desire,” then my wish is such as conscience approves and is right and good! Is there not comfort in this for those of you who think you have nothing more than desires? If you have desires which you wish the Lord to know of, they must be right—you would not dare to bring them before God if they were not good desires!

When you are in God’s House and with God’s people, or reading God’s Word, or when you are drawing near to God in contemplation, then these desires are strongest. Now, if they were bad desires, they would not flourish in the best of atmospheres—they would not be watered and nourished by the best of influences—for such influences would tend to kill ill weeds of strange desire. So, then, there is some good thing in you towards the Lord God of Israel after all! You would not

have these heavings of your soul, these strivings of your heart, this panting, hungering and thirsting if it were not that there is somewhat in you of the Spirit's working! God has dealt graciously with you in giving you these good desires! Sparks of everlasting life are alive within your spirit so long as you have spiritual hunger and thirst, your desire must be a good thing or you would not dare to make it known to God and, seeing that it *is* a good thing, take care you nurture it well and cause it to grow by expressing it with your whole heart before God.

II. This leads up to my second head which is this—DESIRES TOWARDS GOD ARE GRACIOUS THINGS. Intense groaning desires towards God are, in themselves, works of Grace. For certainly, first, they are associated with other Graces. When a man can say, "All my desire is toward God and my heart groans after Him and yet I find little in myself but these desires," I think we can point him to some other good things which are in his heart. Surely *humility* is apparent! You take a right view of yourself, O man of desires! A lowly esteem have you of yourself and this is well. I would to God that some who are full of bragging and boasts about their holiness could only be as safe as you are with your desires and groans, for there is in you that broken and contrite heart which the Lord will not despise.

God has given you this jewel among the rest—a meek and lowly spirit. Yes, and there is faith in you, for no man heartily desires to believe unless he does, in some measure, *already* believe. There is a measure of believing in every true desire after believing. If you say, "I desire to trust Christ," why, Soul, you trust Him, already, in some degree, since you believe that He is the kind of Person whom it would be right to trust! Your *desire* to cast yourself wholly upon Christ has in it the beginning of saving faith! You have the grain of mustard seed within you which will grow into a great tree. I can tell the mustard by its taste—the strength of your desire, its pungency and heat—betray the genuine seed. And you have love, too. I am sure of it! Did ever a man desire to love that which he did not love already? You have already some affection toward the Lord Jesus, some drawings of your heart Christward, or else you would not sigh and cry to be more filled with it.

He who loves most is the very man who most passionately desires to love more. Love and desire keep pace in Christians so that the more love, the more desire to love—and so I gather that this desire of yours to love Jesus is a sure evidence that you love Him already! Your desire is the smoke which proves that there is fire in your soul. A living flame lingers among the embers and, with a little fanning, it will reveal itself! Your desire to serve God is obedience! Your desire to pray is prayer! Your desire to praise is praise! I am sure, also, that you have some hope, for a man does not continue to groan out before his God and to make his desire known unless he has some hope that his desire will be satisfied and that his grief will be relieved. David lets out the secret of his own hope, for he says in the 15th verse, "In You, O Lord, do I hope." You, my downcast Brother, do not hope anywhere else, do you? You know that every other door is shut; every other road is blocked up except that which leads from your soul to God. I know you have some hope and, therefore, if you have no hope anywhere else I am persuaded that you have a hope in God!

That thought of God which makes you cry, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him," has the seeds of hope and the beginning of comfort within it. I might go over many of the Graces, but these will suffice—as a man is known by his company, so may our desires be known by their attendants—and as holy desires after God keep company with humility and faith and love and hope, I am persuaded they are of like character and are gracious themselves. Another proof that they are gracious is that they come from God. Desires after God must come from some source or other. If you desire to be holy, where did that desire come from? From your own corrupt nature? Impossible! Certain believers in free will may think so, but we are not agreed with them. We believe that none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, neither can thorns bring forth figs. If there is a desiring and a groaning of the heart after God in your bosom, depend upon it, human nature never originated it!

Can *sin* desire holiness, or *death* pant for life? Holy desires are plants which are by no means native to the soil of human nature—their seed comes from a far country. Do you think the devil worked these holy desires? Listen, Brother—does the devil make you thirst after God? Does he make you sigh and cry after the light of your Father's Countenance? Does he make you pray to be delivered from temptation? Does he make you sigh to be conformed to the image of Christ? Then the devil has very greatly altered since I met him, last, and since he was described in Holy Writ, or seen in the conflicts of good men! Who, then, has kindled these heavenly flames of desire? I earnestly acknowledge my belief that *every* pure desire is as much the work of God as the Grace which it desires! He who sincerely longs to be right with God has already somewhat of a work of Divine Grace within his soul creating those aspirations. Now, as God can say of all that He creates, "It is very good," I come to the conclusion that these groaning desires after God are very good. They are not great, nor strong, but they are

gracious. There is water in a drop as well as in the sea. There is life in a gnat as well as in an elephant. There is light in a beam as well as in the sun and so is there Grace in a desire as truly as in complete sanctification!

Thirdly, holy desires are a great test of character—a test of eminent value. You ask, “Can you judge a man’s character by his desires?” I answer, yes. I will give you the other side of the question that you may see our side all the more clearly. You may certainly judge a bad man by *his* desires. Here is a man who desires to be a thief. Well, he is a thief in heart and spirit. Who would trust him in his house, now that he knows that he groans to rob and steal? Here is a man who desires to be an adulterer—is he not, in God’s sight, already such? Did not Jesus tell us so? Here is a man who *desires* to be a Sabbath-breaker but he is compelled by his situation to attend the House of God—he is already, in God’s sight, a Sabbath-breaker because he would follow his own works on God’s holy day if he had the opportunity. The desire to commit a fraud and especially the *earnest* desire to do it, would prove a man to be a villain at heart. If a man were to say, “I want to cut my enemy’s throat. I am full of revenge. I am groaning to murder him.” Is he not a murderer, already, before God?

Let us, then, measure out justice in our own case by the rule which we allow towards others. Let me help you to apply the principle. If you have a desire, an earnest, agonizing desire towards that which is right, even though, through the infirmity of the flesh and the corruption of your nature, you do not reach to the height of your desire, yet that *desire* is a test of your character. The main set of the current determines its direction—the main bent of the desire is the test of the life. It is well with you even though you have to cry with Paul, “To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I find not.” If you earnestly desire to love God, you *do* love Him! If you desire to be purified. If with a strong, continual, agonizing desire you pine for it—already the work of purification has begun, for your desire has been purified—your wish, your will, your heart have already been purified! Is there not proof enough that there is a measure of graciousness about true desires after God?

Note, further, that our desires are a test very much superior to several other favorite modes of self-judging. For instance, many people judge their religion by the regularity of their attention to its outward duties. “I was never absent on a Sunday morning, nor even from an evening service. I attend communion at least once a month. I go to the Prayer Meetings, I read a chapter or half a chapter every day. I bow my knees at my bedside every morning and evening—I have never omitted any part of my duty for many years.” I am very glad to hear it, respected Friend, but if you have no desires towards God, all your regularity of attendance does but liken you to the Church clock which is quite as punctual, or to the pulpit Bible, which never leaves its place. You may be a capital Pharisee, but you are not a true Christian unless your soul is full of living desires!

If you cry out, “I am thirsting for God, the living God. My spirit groans after holiness. When I have bowed my knee, I groan before God because I cannot live as I would, or even pray as I desire to pray. I have come to the House of God longing to be fed with spiritual meat. I have always been a hungry soul towards Divine things.” Then I quote my Master’s words, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Living desires are better than dead duties—as a living dog is better than a dead lion. The most regular outward performance of pious duties may be the revolution of heartless machinery, but *desires* mean life and *life* is necessary if we would please the living God! Desires are a better test than the self-congratulation I have sometimes met with about the possession of gracious things. I say not better than the possession of Graces, but better than the supposed possession of them.

Did you say, “I have faith. I can move mountains”? I had sooner hear you say, “Lord, increase our faith.” Did you boast, “I have love so that I shall never backslide or deny Christ”? I had rather you should say, “Hold me up and I shall be safe.” Do you say, “I have experience and shall never be misled. I can hear heresy and be none the worse”? Ah, yes, I have heard that kind of talk, but I feel safer about a man who says, “Preserve me, O Lord, for in You do I put my trust.” Remember that the chief of the Apostles said—“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

We feel surer as to the Grace in a man’s heart who groans after more Grace than we do of him who boasts—“I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing.” A man may be full and dead! But he who hungers is alive. Brothers and Sisters, if your soul is desiring and crying and groaning after God, do not condemn yourself because you cannot speak quite so positively as others as to your safety or your sanctity! Desire on and groan on, but at the same time get nearer to the Cross! Trust more completely! Look out of self and rest more fully in the Covenant promises of God. Your state is not one

to cause trouble—it is painful but it is not perilous. I am sure that there is a graciousness about holy desires because they have been very prominent in the very best of men. Look at David! See how his soul longs, yes, even faints! Hear how he pants, like a hart for the water brook, that he may draw near to God!

His Psalms are very largely made up of desires—they abound with such passages as, “One thing have I *desired* of the Lord, that will I seek after.” “Unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.” “My soul thirsts for God.” All his desires went heavenward, for he said, “Whom have I in Heaven but You?” And in his last hours he exclaimed concerning the Covenant of Grace, “This is all my salvation and all my desire.” Nor must we forget Daniel. In the passage in which Daniel is spoken of as a “man greatly beloved,” which is a very sweet translation—the words may be read, “a man of desires”—I suppose that he obtained that name of the Lord because he much abounded in holy longing and was accustomed to rise from one desire to another. There is a remarkable expression in the second of Daniel at the 18th verse.

When the king had dreamed and none could interpret the dream, the Word of God said—“Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this secret.” In other books we would have found it stated that he asked his friends to pray, but Daniel went to the very soul of things and begged them to *desire*. His prayers thrice a day were not formal—they were deeply and intensely sincere and, therefore, they were full of desire which is the motive force, the life-blood of prayer! Daniel, then, was a man of great desires and hence a desirable man with God—a man greatly beloved. As for Nehemiah, that faithful servant of God, he began his work by praying for a blessing on those who “*desired*” to fear God’s name.

If you turn to the New Testament, what a man of desires Paul was! He was always desiring this and desiring that for other people, until he desired for himself that he might depart and be with Christ! A part of the inheritance of Israel of old lay on this side of the Jordan, but the major portion was on the further shore—and so the major part of a Believer’s portion for the present lies in desires for things not yet attained. A man of devotion is always a man of desires. Among your acquaintances you will find the best people are full of longing to be better. They know that God has blessed them—they rejoice in every particle of Grace they have ever received from Him—but they are always wanting more. They are, in spiritual things, as hard to satisfy as the king whom Du Chaillu met with in the center of Africa. He gave him a huge present of goods and his gracious majesty was overjoyed and held a great feast over the treasure.

But before the week was over his black kingship said to Du Chaillu, “Truly, goods and money are like hunger; you are filled today, but tomorrow you are hungry again.” In one sense he who has obtained Grace never hungers, that is to say, he needs nothing beyond his God. But in another sense he always hungers more and more, the more he obtains. Covetousness of goods is a crime, but covetousness of *good* is a virtue. “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” He who has little Grace can be content with little. He that has more Grace longs for more and he who has most is insatiable to a still larger degree. He has the greatest esteem for the heavenly treasure who has had the most acquaintance with it and, therefore, he longs to possess all that can be possessed!

Time warns me to leave this point, only repeating the fact that desires towards God are gracious things.

III. Thirdly, DESIRES TOWARD GOD ARE CAREFULLY OBSERVED BY HIM. Was not that the first head? No, it was not. The first head was that we ought to *make our desires known* to God—the third head is that they *are known*. It is wonderful condescension that the Lord should observe so poor a creature as a sinful, mournful mortal. You heard me read the whole Psalm just now. Is it not a terrible description of a horrible sickness? I wonder how many of you would like to go and visit a man who was in the condition which David pictures and watch over him and nurse him? Here was a man who had no soundness in his flesh and no rest in his bones, but was eaten up with a loathsome disease and covered with wounds which corrupted till they stank.

The Lord cannot look upon iniquity. He hates and loathes it infinitely and yet He looks upon His poor servant when sin has worked in him all this mischief. Oh, poor, broken-down Believer, your God still looks upon you! Oh you whose wounds gangrene; you who seem, already, to be rotting into the sepulcher of apostasy, still if there is any life and desire in you, your God is watching you! With tender, loving eyes He sees you in your misery and filthiness! The best thought of all is that He sees the good points in us for, while David does not say, “Lord, all my *wounds* are before You; Lord, all this stench and corruption are before You,” he does say, “Lord, all my *desire* is before You.” God has a quick eye to spy out anything that is good in His people—if there is but one speck of soundness; if there is a single mark of Grace; if there is any remain-

ing token of spiritual life—though it is only a faint desire; though it is only a dolorous groan, the Father sees it and records it, casting the evil behind His back and refusing to behold it.

Oh, is it not a blessed matter of fact that my desire is before God? Even when I cannot speak it, it is all before Him! I cannot explain it, but it is known to Him! It puzzles me to state my case, but it will not puzzle Him to solve it and to deal with it and to deliver me out of the evil of it. “All my desire is before You,” as if David had said, “There it is, Lord, I have not kept back anything. As far as I know I have put it all in Your view. But, inasmuch as I do not know it all nor I cannot express it all, this is still my comfort, that Your eyes miss no point, Your heart leaves nothing unperceived! You know all about me and You will deal wisely with me!”

IV. The last head is that EARNEST DESIRES TOWARDS GOD WILL BE FULFILLED. How do we know this? If men are sighing and crying to God they will be heard—how do we know that? Why, first, because these desires are of God’s creation and you cannot imagine, at least I hope you cannot imagine, that God would create desires in us which He will not satisfy! Why, look even in Nature—if He gives the beast hunger and thirst, He provides the grass upon the mountains and the streams that flow among the valleys for it! There is not a fish in the sea nor an insect in the air but what God has made provision for gratifying its instincts and its desires. If, then, He has put in you a desire after Himself, He will give you Himself!

If He has made you long after pardon, He will give you pardon! If He has made you sigh after purity, after eternal salvation, He means to give you these. Do you think that God would act towards us wantonly and torment us with the torments of Tantalus needlessly? Has He made His mercy flow all around you and has He given you thirst and will He never let you drink? If He did not mean that you should drink, why has He created the longing within you? You do not thirst after God by nature and if He had let you alone you never would have so thirsted! You did not pine after His love until He made you pine for it—why, then, this creation of a wish if it is not to be gratified? Has He made you long after faith and yet, do you think, He will deny it to you? Has He given you a groaning after His dear Son, Jesus Christ, and will not Jesus yet be yours? Soul, He *is* yours!

I have seen some treat children very unkindly when, to make sport for themselves, they have exhibited fruit or toys to the children which have excited great desire and they have acted as if they were going to give them to the children and then they have gone away and given them nothing and laughed at them. They thought there was wit in such conduct, but it seemed to me meanness, itself! God has no such cruel ways with men—if He has taught them to desire His Grace, He will fulfill their desire because He is always a merciful and gracious God. Remember, O desiring man, that you already have a blessing! When our Divine Master was on the mountainside, the benedictions which He pronounced were no word blessings, but they were full of weight and meaning and among the best of them is this—“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Blessed while they hunger, blessed while they thirst! Yes, they are *already* blessed and there is this at the back of it, “for they shall be filled.” Thank God that you hunger!

Oh, my Friends, if we could make this city of London to be full of souls that hungered after Christ, we might pray day and night for so blessed a consummation! If we could cause the multitudes of men who go up and down these streets, careless of God and of eternity, to thirst and sigh and cry after God, what a blessing that would be! Time was, perhaps, when you, too, were stony-hearted and had no such desires—the change is a thing to be grateful for. Bless God for your grief, your agony, your anguish—for anything that is like a *spiritual* feeling—it is better than to be left altogether alone. Here is something comforting for your distressed heart—a blessing is already pronounced upon you. And we may be sure, dear Friends, that God will hear the desires which He has, Himself, created, because He loves to gratify right desires.

It is said of Him in Nature, “You open Your hands and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” Does God care for sparrows in the bush, for minnows in the brook, for midges in the air, for tiny things in a drop of stagnant water and will He fail to satisfy the longings of His own *children*? Nothing gives us more pleasure, perhaps, as parents, than to gratify the proper desires of a dear child. We like to see the pleasure that beams upon the little face when the desire is fulfilled. Do you not know that God loves to give *us* pleasure? It is His joy to do it! It is one of the joys of the great Father’s heart to make His children glad. Be assured, my dear Friend, it is no joy to God to see you with that dreary countenance. God delights in the delight of His people! He has made a promise to the happy which well fits in with my text—“Delight yourself, also, in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

He would have us rejoice in Him, for He rejoices over us! If you need proof, note well the names He gives us—“You shall be called Hephzibah and your land Beulah: for the Lord delights in you and your land shall be married.” If God delights to fulfill our desires, let us not be slack in desiring! If you need a sure proof that He will grant gracious desires, let me remind you of His promises. Sometimes one promise may stick in the memory and be better than quoting fifty. Here is the 19th verse of the 145th Psalm—take it home with you—“He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry and will save them.” If there is a holy awe of God in your soul, so that you fear Him, He will yet fulfill your desire and your cry shall bring you salvation!

The Lord will keep His promise—you can be you sure of that. Has He said and shall He not do it? What a joy it will be when you get your desire satisfied and how you will praise the Lord! It may not be long before your soul’s longing is before you. This prophecy I venture to make concerning you, that when the Lord has given you the desire of your heart, you will hardly know how to extol Him sufficiently! How you will bless and magnify His dear name! And what is more, others will begin to praise Him, too. In the 21st Psalm, when the king had obtained a blessing from God, his subjects began to bless God for him. Read the second verse—“You have given him his heart’s desire and have not withheld the request of his lips.” Now, I should not wonder but what, before long, others will say the same of you—“The Lord has done great things for him.”

His wife, who lamented his deep dejection, will bless God and say, “Lord, I thank You that You have given him the desire of his heart and that You have not withheld the request of his lips.” Godly friends will hear of his deliverance and rejoice, saying, “He who has long been cast down has found the light of God’s Countenance,” and they will also say, “You have given him the desire of his heart.” As you spread your new joy and perfume the atmosphere with gladness, the saints will bless God that He has given you the desire of your heart! I am persuaded that you will obtain your desire since it will glorify God for you to have it. “Whoever offers praise, glorifies God” and you will praise Him and thus glorify Him. Go your way and seek the Lord with confidence through Jesus Christ and He will bless you evermore. Amen.

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