

# Loving God for Who HE Is



*A Pastor's Perspective*

One of the most important discoveries I have ever made is this truth: God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in him. This is the motor that drives my ministry as a pastor. It affects everything I do.

Whether I eat or drink or preach or counsel or whatever I do, my aim is to glorify God by the way I do it (1 Corinthians 10:31). This means my aim is to do it in a way that shows how the glory of God has satisfied the longings of my heart. If my preaching betrayed that God had not even met my own needs, it would be fraudulent. If Christ were not the satisfaction of my heart, would people really believe me when I herald his words, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35, RSV)?

The glory of bread is that it satisfies. The glory of living water is that it quenches thirst. We do not honor the refreshing, self-replenishing, pure water of a mountain spring by lugging buckets of water up the path to make our contributions from the ponds below. We honor the spring by feeling thirsty, getting down on our knees, and drinking with joy. Then we say, “Ahhhh!” (that’s worship!), and we go on our journey in the strength of the fountain (that’s service). The mountain spring is glorified most when we are most satisfied with its water.

Tragically, most of us have been taught that duty, not delight, is the

way to glorify God. We have not been taught that delight in God is our duty! Being satisfied in God is not an optional add-on to the real stuff of Christian duty. It is the most basic demand of all. “Delight yourself in the LORD” (Psalm 37:4) is not a suggestion, but a command. So are: “Serve the LORD with gladness” (Psalm 100:2), and, “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4).

The burden of my ministry is to make plain to others that the “steadfast love [of the Lord] is better than life” (Psalm 63:3, RSV). If it is better than life, it is better than all that life in this world offers. This means that what satisfies are not the gifts of God, but the glory of God—the glory of his love, the glory of his power, the glory of his wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

This is why the psalmist Asaph cried out, “Whom have I in heaven but you? Besides you I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever” (Psalm 73:25–26). Nothing on the earth—none of God’s good gifts of creation—could satisfy Asaph’s heart. Only God could. This is what David meant when he said to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good besides you” (Psalm 16:2).

David and Asaph teach us by their own God-centered longings that God’s gifts of health, wealth, and prosperity do not satisfy. Only God does. It would be presumptuous not to thank him for his gifts (“Forget not all his benefits” [Psalm 103:2, RSV]), but it would be idolatry to call the gladness we get from them, love for God. When David said to the Lord, “In your presence is fullness of joy, in your right hand there are pleasures forever” (Psalm 16:11), he meant that nearness to God himself is the only all-satisfying experience of the universe.

It is not for God’s gifts that David yearns like a heartsick lover. “As a deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1–2). What David wants to experience is a revelation of the power and the glory of God: “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. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory” (Psalm 63:1–2, NRSV). Only God will satisfy a heart like David’s, and David was a man after God’s own heart. That’s the way we were created to be.

This is the essence of what it means to love God—to be satisfied in him. In him! Loving God may include obeying all his commands; it may include believing all his Word; it may include thanking him for all his gifts; but the essence of loving God is enjoying all he is. It is this enjoyment of God that glorifies his worth most fully, especially when all around our soul gives way.

We all know this intuitively as well as from Scripture. Do we feel most honored by the love of those who serve us from the constraints of duty, or from the delights of fellowship? My wife is most honored when I say, “It makes me happy to spend time with you.” My happiness is the echo of her excellence. So it is with God. He is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

None of us has arrived at perfect satisfaction in God. I grieve often over the murmuring of my heart at the loss of worldly comforts, but I have tasted that the Lord is good. By God’s grace I now know the fountain of everlasting joy, and so I love to spend my days luring people into joy until they say with me, “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple” (Psalm 27:4, RSV). ☺

# TODAY'S MERCIES FOR TODAY'S TROUBLES



## *Meditation on Matthew 6:34*

*Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.  
Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (author's translation)*

Part of saving faith is the assurance that you will have faith tomorrow. Trusting Christ today includes trusting him to give you tomorrow's trust when tomorrow comes. Often we feel today like our reservoir of strength is not going to last for another day. The fact is, it won't. Today's resources are for today, and part of those resources is the confidence that new resources will be given tomorrow.

The basis of this assurance is the wonderful teaching of the Bible that God assigns only as much trouble to each day as that day can bear. God will not let his children be tested in any given day beyond what his mercy for that day will sustain. That's what Paul means when he says, "No test has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able, but with the test will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13, author's translation).

The old Swedish hymn "Day by Day" is based on Deuteronomy 33:25: "As your days, so shall your strength be." It gives us the same assurance:

*Day by day, and with each passing moment,  
strength I find to meet my trials here;  
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,  
I've no cause for worry or for fear.*

The “Father’s wise bestowment” is the amount of trouble that we can bear each day—and no more:

*He whose heart is kind beyond all measure  
Gives unto each day what he deems best  
Lovingly its part of pain and pleasure,  
Mingling toil with peace and rest.*

With every day’s measure of pain, he gives new mercies. This is the point of Lamentations 3:22–23, “The LORD’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”

God’s mercies are new every morning because each day has enough mercy in it only for that day. This is why we tend to despair when we think that we may have to bear tomorrow’s load on today’s resources. God wants us to know that we won’t. Today’s mercies are for today’s troubles. Tomorrow’s mercies are for tomorrow’s troubles.

Sometimes we wonder if we will have the mercy to stand in terrible testing. Yes, we will. Peter says, “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you” (1 Peter 4:14). When the reviling comes, the Spirit of glory comes. It happened for Stephen as he was being stoned (Acts 7:55–60). It will happen for you. When the Spirit and the glory are needed, they will come.

The manna in the wilderness was given one day at a time. There was no storing up. That is the way we must depend on God’s mercy. You do not receive today the strength to bear tomorrow’s burdens. You are given mercies today for today’s troubles. Tomorrow the mercies will be new. “God is

faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9, RSV). "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will act!" (1 Thessalonians 5:24, author's translation). 🐦

# GOD WAS UP ALL NIGHT



## *Meditation on Psalm 121:3*

*He will not let your foot be moved,  
he who keeps you will not slumber. (RSV)*

**T**he worship team and prayer teams gathered around me and prayed for me before I preached. Our worship leader remarked that God was up all night working on this service and the people who would be there—including me. He thanked the Lord for this and praised him for his unwearying work on our behalf.

O what a truth this is! For every Christian. Let me encourage you with it. Psalm 121:2–3 says it plainly: “My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved, he who keeps you will not slumber.” The one who helps you never sleeps. He stays up all night, every night.

Do you need help? I do. Where do you look for help? When the psalmist lifted up his eyes to the hills and asked, “From where does my help come?” he answered, “My help comes from the Lord”—not from the hills, but from the God who made the hills. So he reminded himself of two great truths: One is that God is a mighty Creator over all the problems of life; the other is that God never sleeps.

God is a tireless worker. Think of God as a worker in your life. Yes, it is amazing. We are prone to think of ourselves as workers in God’s life. But the Bible wants us first to be amazed that God is a worker in our lives: “From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a

God besides thee, who works for those who wait for him” (Isaiah 64:4, RSV).

God is working for us around the clock. He does not take days off, and he does not sleep. In fact, he is so eager to work for us that he goes around looking for more work to do for people who will trust him: “The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show his might in behalf of those whose heart is whole toward him” (2 Chronicles 16:9, RSV).

God loves to show his tireless power and wisdom and goodness by working for people who trust him. Jesus himself is the clearest revelation of this truth: “The Son of man also came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45, RSV). Jesus works for his followers. He serves them. This is a revelation of the way God is.

He worked for us when he was on the earth, and he keeps on working now that he is risen and reigning with the Father in heaven. Paul experienced this in a powerful way: “I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed” (Romans 15:18, RSV). Christ worked for Paul all his life. At the very end of his life, in his last letter, he said, “The Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the message fully” (2 Timothy 4:17, RSV). Through all his life Paul could say, “I can do all things in him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13, RSV). Jesus is the great worker, the great strength-giver.

The eagerness of God to work for us is astonishing. His eyes are running to and fro, looking for opportunities to work for people who trust him (2 Chronicles 16:9). He is pursuing us with goodness and mercy all our days (Psalm 23:6, literally “pursue” not just “follow”). He is not just waiting for us to get his help; he is seeking ways to give us help. He is doing this with overflowing eagerness. “I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good...with all my heart and all my soul” (Jeremiah 32:40–41, RSV).

No wonder he stays up all night! With all his heart and with all his soul he works for those who wait for him and trust him. This is what we must believe—really believe—in order to rejoice always (Philippians 4:4) and give thanks for everything (Ephesians 5:20) and have the peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7) and be anxious for nothing (Philippians 4:6) and hate our lives in this world (John 12:25) and love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39).

What a truth! What a reality! God is up all night and all day to work for those who wait for him. 🐦