

Cultivating A Desperate Prayer Life

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Date: 10 November 2019

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- [0 : 00] Thank you, Sean. I am unbelievably grateful to be able to stand here before you today.
- As a man of God, I'm grateful to be here. I'm grateful because I remember walking these streets years ago with Sean, praying and seeking God as to whether this was the place for him to plant.
- And now to see all your faces out here is just a real blessing to my soul that God would be so gracious and so kind as to build his church here in this community.
- Amen? And as Sean said, I would agree completely that Sean is one of my best friends, a man I truly look up to and am grateful for his friendship, grateful for him speaking into my life without hesitation.
- And I am blessed by the words that he speaks. I believe they are truly from God when he speaks. So you are blessed to have him as your pastor.
- [1 : 15] Just to give you a quick update before we get into, to give you a little bit about Salem and the church plan. And since he asked me to, never asked a church planting pastor to tell you about his church plant because he won't shut up.
- So Salem, if you're not familiar with it, is a city of about 43,000 people. It is a city that has probably 500 or so active practicing believers.
- So do the math on that. That is missions territory. That's really less than 2%. So it's a great place to plant a church.
- There's tons of opportunity in Salem. It is a very spiritual city. People are actually very spiritually engaged in Salem. So if there's 500 believers, there's three times that amount that are actively practicing witchcraft.
- There are lots of people. Yeah, there's a lot of covens there. There's 20 plus covens in the city. That's witches who practice witchcraft are in covens, like we're in churches. There are probably another...
- [2 : 29] I don't even want to try and give a percentage. People practicing paganism, neopaganism, and some other strange New Age type stuff, crystals. Everything you can possibly think of is kind of in that city.
- It's a great place to be. Think of Paul in Ephesus. It's a great place to be. People are openly engaged in some sort of worship. Not ours, and we're not preferable, and they don't like us there.
- But God's opening doors for us. So we're excited. We've added two new families. I'm hoping to have a third. They keep telling me they're going to visit.
- He's a non-believer. He's fallen on some hard times, and I've been helping him walk through. And I'm excited to see where that may go. You could be praying for us.
- So if I could give you a vision of something that God gave me in 2017 before I planted. I was standing on a hill at the west end of Salem.

[3 : 34] It's called Gallows Hill. It's right near where they hung the witches. It's the high ground. You can look over the city. And I was just really praying, God, this is hard ground, and I don't know if we can do this.

And everything stands against us. How are we going to do this? And as I had my eyes closed, and I opened them, and I was looking at a tree that was growing out of a rock.

Like the tree had split the rock and was growing out of it. And God said, this is what I will do in Salem. Just plant the seed. Amen?

So, it's going to be hard ground. It takes time. But God is doing something in that city because God cares about people. And there are people in that city that are called by his name.

They just don't know it yet. And so, our job is to spread the gospel, to proclaim it, and to be Christ's representatives in that city, just like you are here. And so, please pray for us that we're able to do that, that we're able to proclaim the glorious gospel of Christ, and that we do it faithfully and consistently.

[4 : 46] Amen? Amen. Thank you. So, our passage today is from Psalm 63. Now, scholars believe that Psalm 63 springs out of the events from 2 Samuel 15-17.

And in those chapters, the son of David, Absalom, is conducting a coup against his father. It's a coup that is five years or more in the making.

Years of deception and well-thought-out lies, years of cunning were what is behind this coup.

As chapter 17 picks up, David has abandoned Jerusalem. Now, he's abandoned it to save it from the conflict. He doesn't want warfare in the city.

And he's taken those who are loyal to him into the wilderness where both food and water are scarce.

[5 : 55] Many of those who are following him are now women and children. Verse 29 of chapter 17 in 2 Samuel tells us that the people were hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.

It is here that David prepares to do battle against his son, Absalom, a son whom he loves. And it is from this place that Psalm 63 is written.

So let's turn to Psalm 63 and I'll read that for us. Psalm 63. The Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

O God, you are my God. Earnestly 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 your glory.

[7 : 19] Behold, your steadfast love is better than life. My lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live. In your name, I will lift up my hands.

My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food. And my mouth will praise you with joyful lips when I remember you upon my bed and meditate upon you in the watches of the night.

For you have been my help and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you. Your right hand upholds me.

But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth. They shall be given over to the power of the sword. They shall be a portion for jackals.

But the king shall rejoice in God. All who swear by him shall exalt for the mouth of liars will be stopped.

[8 : 33] May God bless the reading and the hearing of his word. from today's passage.

I hope to help us understand the psalm from David's perspective and also to understand that this psalm is included in Scripture in God's word to be instructive for us as well.

From the passage, I hope to convince you of three things. I hope to convince you that you can come before God with a desperate spirit or a desperate heart.

That is what David did and it is what we should be doing as well. From there, I want to encourage you to remember God with an expectant heart because as we see in verses 2 through 7, when we remember God, our faith is built.

We are able to worship God and in the worship of God, even in difficult circumstances, our hungry flesh and our thirsty souls will be satisfied and find joy in God's presence.

[10 : 08] And finally, my desire is to lead you and to challenge you to rejoice in God with the overcoming King.

But before we go any farther, please let me take a moment to submit this message to God, to ask Him to guide and give power to my words, to ask Him to prepare your hearts and mine to receive the word that He would speak to us today and that He would cause it to transform our thoughts and actions in the coming week.

So Father, You are so good to give us Your Word to faithfully speak to us even today through Your Scripture.

Lord, I just want to humbly submit this message to You today that You've given me. Lord, I ask You to change it in any way You see fit.

Lord, Your promise is that Your Word does not go out and come back void. So Lord, we ask accomplish all that You would.

[11 : 30] Lord, I pray that today You would give us eyes that are seeing and perceiving, hearts that are understanding.

Lord, and as required, Father, through the power of Your Holy Spirit, that You would give us the ability to repent where that's necessary and faith to believe where that's necessary.

Lord God, come and do all that You intend today, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen. In 2 Samuel 17, David and those who are with him are in a desperate place.

As we mentioned earlier, this passage that we've read in Psalm 63 is rooted in the events of Absalom's conspiracy and coup to overthrow his father.

things are desperate for David. David has left the city with a small contingent of faithful followers.

[12 : 50] They have left behind almost everything in the way of supplies because they were completely caught off guard by this turn of events. Absalom is literally entering the city with an army behind him as David is going out the other gates on the other side of the city.

David hurries his people to the only place that he is absolutely familiar with, the only place that David is likely to go when he's being pursued.

It's the wilderness of Judea. He knows it because he's hidden there before. He's hidden there before from King Saul, Israel's first king. But now the circumstances are different.

When he went the first time it was as a warrior fleeing on his own. And now he's going as a king into a dry and weary land with women and children and his entourage with limited supplies and no clear knowledge of who he can trust.

The world has been unturned upside down for him. It is from this place that David cries out to God in the beginning of his psalm. I cannot imagine David having spent a more restless night.

[14 : 18] I can imagine him wrestling with his past. How should he have dealt differently with Absalom? Wrestling with his doubts has God abandoned me?

Is this payment from God for the blood on my hands for my many years as a warrior? I can imagine David wrestling with fears on behalf of his other sons.

Will Absalom murder them to solidify his place on the throne? What will happen to those who are loyal to me? I can imagine David wrestling with his fears for the city of Jerusalem, his beloved city.

What will happen to Jerusalem if a king who does not fear God sits upon the throne? What will happen to Israel? Israel? I can imagine David also wrestling with the weight of the responsibility for a kingdom and then specifically for those who are now with him.

How would he feed them? How would he get them water? How would he shelter them? How would he protect them?

[15 : 42] who were his friends and who could he trust? All of these questions and David has no answers.

He is in the wilderness where there is no food, where there is no water, and there is a weariness that finds no rest.

I can also imagine that Satan is trying to supply lots of answers because that's what he does. I can imagine that Satan is speaking words of condemnation, words of abandonment, words of rejection by God.

I can imagine that Satan is speaking words of fear and despair and death.

Satan is a liar and the father of lies. And I can imagine that he is actively painting a picture of hopelessness for David, God's chosen king.

[16 : 58] Finally, I can imagine David in the gray light of the early dawn, rising and heading up to the high ground in the wilderness to seek God. as a day that promises to be hot and dry dawns.

I can picture David looking over the wastelands before him and crying out to God, Oh God, you are my God.

Earnestly 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.

It is from this place of deep desperation that David turns to God. It is from this place of hopelessness that David cries out.

It is out of the realization that if God doesn't work a miracle, he and those with him will be destroyed. It is out of this place of soul twisting, gut wrenching, spiritual, mental, and emotional agony that David cries out like a sponge that has had all the water wrung out of it and is left out to dry in the noonday sun.

[18 : 25] David is now feeling spiritually and emotionally dry and brittle and it is from the barren wilderness of his soul that he cries out, Oh God, you are my God earnestly with great desire, with desperation I seek you.

Friends, you can bet that with all the events that have led to this point, the hopelessness that appeared to lay before David. David's cry to God was a wholehearted seeking of God.

A wholehearted desperation for God to meet him and act on his behalf. So, my question do is this.

Can you relate? Have you been in the place of desperation and hopelessness where you had to earnestly seek God?

Are you in that place now? Life brings circumstances like this as they did with David. They catapult us from our kingdom where we are on top of everything to the wilderness of desperation and they do it in the blink of an eye.

[20 : 08] Things like a sudden change in your visa status. A dramatic governmental change back home that may leave you very unwelcome.

Maybe it's something closer to home like betrayal from a spouse or a close friend. A child incarcerated.

An unexpected diagnosis of cancer. The loss of your job. You get the idea. You can fill in your own story here.

And you know how quickly it can unseat you from a throne room of abundance and put you in the inhospitable wilderness of desperate weariness where you hunger and you thirst.

Let me encourage you. There is hope for us here. God does not reject the pleas of a desperate heart.

[21 : 20] God doesn't turn his back on the person who seeks him earnestly. God doesn't ignore the soul that thirsts for him.

No. The history of Scripture is clear. As are the Psalms. Consider Psalm 139. We heard a little bit of that earlier.

Psalm 139 reminds us that God is not surprised by our circumstances. He is acquainted with all of our ways. He hems us in from behind and before.

There is nowhere that I can go that I can get away from the Spirit of God. There is nowhere I can go that His presence will not be there with me.

He leads me. His right hand holds me. And even though I may be in a place of physical, spiritual, and emotional darkness. The darkness is like light to God.

[22 : 25] Your desperate plight is not hidden from God. When you cry out in desperation to God, He hears you and He knows you completely.

Consider Psalm 23 where He reminds us that even though we walk through the valley of deep darkness, darkness, God is leading us.

His rod is a symbol of His authority and leadership even in deep darkness. His staff is a symbol of His protection over us even in deep darkness.

He leads us through deep darkness and tells us not to fear but to trust that He is leading us through that valley to green pastures where our hunger will be fulfilled and satisfied where our thirst will be met with still waters where our souls will be restored friends God recognizes and hears our cries of desperation so if you're in this place let me encourage you not to hesitate but to cry out to God in desperation make your plea known make your request known before the throne of mercy and grace that you might receive mercy and grace in your time of need just like Hebrews 4.16 tells us to do when he is threatened on every side desperate when he is physically emotionally and spiritually torn

David turns to God David remembers God and as he does he remembers God with an expectant heart so let's look at our second point to see how remembering God affects David's actions during desperate circumstances let's look again at verses 2 through 7 David says here so I have looked upon you in the sanctuary beholding your power and glory because your steadfast love is better than life my lips will praise you so I will bless you as long as I live and in your name I will lift up my hands my soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips when

[25 : 23] I remember you upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night for you have been my help and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy in this section we see that as David cries out to God in raw desperation it is a desperation that is now shaped by the memory of God David knows God do you know God are you intimate with God David knows God this psalm comes from the later half of David's life a life that has been marked with intimacy towards God and so in desperation David remembers God and when David remembers

God it is not with doubt but it is with expectation born out of years of desperation and dependency and deliverance by God David first remembers God's sanctuary the place where the holy of holies is located the place where the ark of the covenant resides it is where the mercy seat of God rests it is where the presence of the living creator God of Israel Yahweh dwells Israel's God in the past David has danced before the ark rejoicing in God's power and presence he has sought God's power in the sanctuary he has prostrated himself in the sanctuary he has experienced

God's presence there David thinks back now to the sanctuary of God where he has experienced God's power power and glory and God's glory and his actions and his expectations let me say that again David thinks back to his time in the sanctuary he thinks back of God about God how he's experienced God's power and glory and he lets that shape his prayers and his actions and his expectations guys when you and I come before God in desperation having made our desperate plea having made your complaint known before

God then remember God's power and glory let your heart your mind your soul rest there soak it in let it build your faith consider God remember his steadfast love and faithfulness remember his mercy and grace remember how it's extended to you first through Jesus Christ who called you who pursued you who gave his life for you who redeemed you gave you new life promised to never leave you and has made a way for you to be with him and his heavenly father for all of eternity then as your hope and faith are built let it turn to praise yes in the middle of your desperation when your soul thirsts and your flesh is ready to faint remember the steadfast love of God expressed to you in Jesus

Christ and let it lift your heart let it lift your mind let it lift your soul let it lift your voice in praise to the living God who knows you who loves you who gave his life for you remember what Christ has done and let remembering dispel your deep darkness let remembering that God knew you before the foundations of the earth let remembering that he sent Jesus for you that he adopted you in love let those truths dispel the lies of the enemy remember that he has given you his Holy Spirit as a seal and a guarantee of your faith and let that memory fill you with fresh hope as light shines into your darkness remember the nail scarred hands those hands which are engraved with your name for all eternity and remember the name that he calls you by beloved because you are his blood bought bride you are his beloved let that memory of who

[31 : 41] God is and what he has done leads you to look up not only with grateful praise but also with expectation that God is for you that he hears you that he knows you you come before a throne of mercy and grace not as unknown not as forgotten but as beloved when David remembers and meditates on what God has done in the past it gives him faith for the future when you cry out to God in desperation when you earnestly are seeking God when your soul is parched from walking in the barren wasteland where there is no water when you are ready to faint from hunger in a dry and weary land the dry and weary land of your own personal desperate circumstances remember

God remember what God has done in the past and let it fuel your prayers let it fuel your faith let it fuel your expectation for the future God has rescued you in the past he has redeemed you in the past he has delivered you in the past surely he will not leave you now surely he will not leave you desperate now surely he will come and rescue and deliver you are his beloved God see what David does in verse 5 the desperate plea that he began in verse 1 from his soul that thirst and was barren thirst and in a barren land where there is no water has been changed to praise as he remembers God's steadfast love praise is then turned to expectation in verse 5 where

David says my soul which thirsted my soul which thirsted my flesh that was fainting will be satisfied my lips which cried out to you my God you are my God earnestly I seek you my flesh faints for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water will now praise you with joyful lips as I remember you friends let me be clear David's circumstances have not changed do you get that Absalom is still sending an army out they are still hunting David down to kill him and all who follow him that hasn't changed

David is writing this he's saying these words purely in faith because God has delivered him in the past he trusts that God will deliver him into the future David's desperate circumstance had not changed but how he saw it had though David did not know the outcome prayer fueled by desperation led David to remember God remembering God's steadfast love led David to praise praise led to faith filled expectation and that's what frames the remainder of this psalm so let's look at our third point to see how David will now rejoice in

God as we look at the last segment of the passage we see how David's prayer that has fueled that was fueled by desperate thirsting of his soul became faith filled to expectation as he remembered God's steadfast love and power and glory and as we look at this last section let's start by seeing how David anchors his expectation in verse 8 here David says my soul clings to you your right hand upholds me now I live in Salem it's a harbor town I live like five houses off the water by God's grace it's a miracle and I'm stoked about it I live there and there's lots of boats and ships out in the harbor now we get a lot of nor'easters strong winds big waves it can get pretty rough out there so the ships are double anchored the first anchor is kind of like tight it's a mooring line it's drilled down into the bedrock and they clip onto that from the back of the boat the other is an anchor they drop off the front of their own boat verse 8 is like

[37 : 21] David's double anchor in the storm at the back he's anchored into God it's the mooring line his mooring line that's drilled into bedrock below the water line the second or I should say that David clings to God that's his anchor that's his mooring line into the bedrock God is his bedrock it's the rock on which he stands yet his second anchor is just as important it is the strong right arm of the Lord that upholds him it is the strong right arm of the Lord that upholds protects and leads it is these two things working together both clinging to God and trusting the strong right arm of

God to lead you into the future these two things work together both clinging and trusting the strong right arm of the Lord that allows David now in the middle of his desperate circumstance to speak with bold expectation bold expectation that's far beyond anything he can visually see at this point David now grounded and rooted and anchored in God declares destruction over his enemies now let me say that this comes from David's understanding of justice it is an Old Testament justice he understands that he is the rightful anointed king of Israel and therefore to go against God's anointed king is to go against

God since those going against him are from the tribes of Israel they are not only breaking covenant with their king but they are also breaking covenant with God and so David is calling on God literally to enforce the Mosaic covenant for those who have rebelled not only against him but also against God hence he says that those who are against him will go down into the depths of the earth they will be given over to the power of the sword they will be a portion for jackals that means they're going to be not only struck down by the sword but left unburied David's literally invoking the curse language of the Mosaic covenant yet and let me just say that in his time frame that's the right thing to do

I don't want to encourage you to do that don't pray for them don't curse them don't wish their unburied bodies are eaten by jackals we'll just leave that part out for us today we want to pray for them but that's what David does and he's right in his context to have done that yet for those who are faithful both to David and by extension to God they shall join with David in praising God in rejoicing at the victory that God will work for them it is a victory that David does not see as he's in the desperate place in the wilderness where there is no food and no water and no army and lots of women and children not physically he doesn't see it but in his spirit knowing that God has delivered him in the past fueled with faith filled expectation for the future

David sees it and prays it here's my point though David's circumstances remain desperate desperation fueled prayer remembering God faith filled praise have led him to see his circumstance from a very different perspective they have led him from a place where his soul thirsted to a place where his soul is satisfied it has led him from a place of hopelessness to a place of faith filled hope guys this can be true for us as well though our circumstances are desperate our prayers can be filled with faith when we remember what God has done in the past when we remember God's faithfulness in the past it will fuel our praise for him faith filled prayer and praise changes our perspective when you and I are desperate in desperate circumstances and our thirsty souls are weary from life's dry and barren wasteland we can turn to

[43 : 01] God in prayer we can remember what he has done for us through Jesus Christ we can remember Jesus has authority and power that he's given to us we can remember that the Holy Spirit has been given to us we can remember Jesus promises to be with us and to help us we can remember that our weary souls can be lifted up in Christ as we remember what God has done our voices can be filled with praise as we remember what Christ has done our prayers can be filled with faith our souls can find satisfaction in Jesus our Redeemer and our coming King we can rejoice over the defeat of our enemy Satan whose lies tell us of our shame and our guilt and our condemnation whose lies tell us we will find no place to rest but only a dry and weary land but let me tell you in

Jesus Christ those lies find no place to rest because in Christ there is no condemnation guilt and shame were nailed to the cross you don't live under those lies remember what Christ has done let it fuel your prayer let it fuel your expectation let it fuel your praise we can rejoice because one day the lies of the enemy of our soul will be silenced for good in Christ we can rejoice in God whose steadfast love gives us victory over the enemy of our soul amen now I'm coming up I'm closing here now maybe you're here today and you're thinking decent message

I don't feel very desperate so I'll just put it in my back pocket in case I get desperate later well if that's you and you are a believer let me give you something that I use every day to develop a desperate prayer life something I use every day to fuel my desperation the lost let me say that again the lost let me offer up to you your unbelieving parents your spouse your siblings your children your best friend your co-workers let me ask you if you just bear with me a moment what will happen to them if they don't place their faith in

Jesus Christ you're not sure I'll tell you they're going to hell for all of eternity I'll let you read the Bible and see how it describes hell it's pretty unpleasant now let me ask you this can you save them no you cannot my best sermon your slickest presentation of the gospel can't do a darn thing unless God unless God has mercy upon their souls unless God sends his spirit to open their eyes to open their ears to soften their hearts unless

God does that your best attempt falls right there who can save them only Jesus so guys every day even if my life circumstances are not present presently desperate my soul cries out to God from a dry and weary land to do the impossible to raise dead souls with the same power that he raised Jesus every day I cry out to God to give new life to those who are perishing even as he did to me to rescue those who are stumbling into the pit even as he did with me and knowing that he did it for me gives me hope that he will do it for others it changes my tears of desperation to hope filled praise that the

[49 : 12] God of my salvation will be the God of their salvation as well it gives me hope that the God who cries mine over all of creation will declare mine over my son over my grandson over so many people that I pray for here this is my list this week there's about 12 names on there not including my sons grandsons family members if nothing else sends you to God in desperation then my friends let it be the salvation and eternal life of your loved ones of your friends of the lost let that fuel your desperation if nothing else will so as we close let me encourage you to develop a desperate prayer life let me encourage you to recognize your own desperation your own desperate need for

God to intervene in circumstances let praise lead you to expectation that God will be faithful again even as he has been in the past and then let expectation lead you to fresh prayer fresh praise as God reframes your understanding of the circumstances amen amen