

LONGING FOR THE LORD

Part 1

Religion, at its very core, is a seeking after God . . . a longing to know God . . . a longing to know who He is and what He is . . . a longing to have intimate relationship with Him . . . a longing to be with Him where He is.

- a. God wants and expects us to have such longing for Him, and seeking after Him.
 - ▶ **Ac 15:13-17** ~ “And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me: 14 Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 16 ‘After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; 17 So that the rest of mankind may **seek the LORD**, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ Says the LORD who does all these things.”
 - ▶ **Ac 17:22-28** ~ “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed any- thing, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has deter- mined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should **seek the Lord**, in the hope that they might **grope for Him and find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His off- spring.”
- b. And godly men do have a longing for God.
 - ▶ Isaiah: “Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the **desire** of our hearts. 9 My soul **yearns** for you in the night; in the morning my spirit **longs** for you” (Isa 26:8,9 NIV).
 - ▶ David: “Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 2 When You said, “Seek My face,” My heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will **seek**” (Psa 27:7,8)
 - Psa 63:1 ~ “O God, You are my God; early will I **seek** You; my soul **thirsts** for You; my flesh **longs** for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.”
 - ▶ The Psalmist who wrote Psa 119: “With my whole heart I have **sought** You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!”(Psa 119:110).
 - ▶ The Sons of Korah: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God” (Psa 42:1).
 - “How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! 2 My soul **longs**, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God” (Psa 84:1,2)

The wicked are the very opposite.

- a. **Psa 10:4** ~ “The wicked in his proud countenance **does not seek God**; God is in none of his thoughts.”

1. There ought to be, within our hearts, a longing for the Lord.

Without this longing for God religion is useless and worthless.

- a. True worship is the spirit of man communing with the Spirit of God.
 - ▶ The song, “Break Thou the Bread of Life” expresses that truth very well:
*“Break Thou the bread of life, Dear Lord to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves Beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee, O Living Word!*
- b. **Jn 4:23-24** ~ “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father **in spirit** and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship **in spirit** and truth.”

You can do a lot of religious things and still not be truly religious -- true religion begins with, and springs from, this longing for God within the heart.

2. Only the soul that is longing for God can truly worship God.

LONGING: **Psa 63:1** ~ “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul **thirsts** for You; my flesh **longs** for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.”

WORSHIP: **Psa 63:2** ~ “So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. 3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. 4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.”

3. But what is it that produces within our hearts such longing for God?

God's revelation of Himself in **nature** -- the sun, moon, stars, and planets, human life, and all living things -- causes us to want to know the One who made it all.

- a. Even the little child asks: “Mommy, where did I come from? Who made me?”
- b. **Isa 40:21-26** ~ “Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22 It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. . . . 26 Lift up your eyes on high, And **see who has created these things**, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing.”
- c. **Psa 139:14** ~ “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.”

The terrible **injustices** that occur in this life cause us to long for things to be made right – and, therefore, a longing for the One who can make things right.

- a. There is within us a longing for the scales of justice to be balanced . . . for injustices to be set right.
 - ▶ Horribly wicked and cruel men have too often escaped punishment in this life
 - Murderers . . . thieves . . . extortioners . . . terrorists . . . serial killers . . . rapists . . . child-molesters
 - Adolf Hitler . . . Joseph Stalin . . . Osama bin Laden . . . Saddam Hussein . . . etc . . . etc
 - ▶ On the other hand, many very righteous men and women have experienced terrible hardships and been terribly mistreated in this life.
- b. **Psa 73:2-14** ~ “But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. 3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm. 5 They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men. 6 Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment. 7 Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish. 8 They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily. 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth. 10 Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full cup are drained by them. 11 And they say, ‘How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?’ 12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches. 13 Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. 14 For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning.”
- c. **Hab 1:2-4** ~ “O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, “Violence!” And You will not save. 3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.”
- d. **Psa 10** ~ “Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble? 2 The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. 3 For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire; He blesses the greedy and renounces the LORD. . . . 7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue is trouble and iniquity. 8 He sits in the lurking places of the villages; In the secret places he murders the innocent; His eyes are secretly fixed on the helpless. 9 He lies in wait secretly, as a lion in his den; He lies in wait to catch the poor; He catches the poor when he draws him into his net. 10 So he crouches, he lies low, That the helpless may fall by his strength. . . . 12 Arise, O LORD! O God, lift up Your hand! Do not forget the humble.”
- e. **Isa 40:27-31** ~ “Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel: ‘My way is hidden from the LORD, And my just claim is passed over by my God?’ 28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the weak, And to those

who have no might He increases strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 31 But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”

When we see **true godliness** (godlikeness) in the lives of other people it causes us to want to know the God who has influenced them to be like that.

- a. The disciples saw godlikeness in Jesus and it produced within them a longing to see God: “Show us the Father,” Philip said (Jn 14:8)
- b. **2 Cor 8:16** ~ “I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you.”
- c. **Gal 2:20** ~ “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
- d. Hymn: We Would See Jesus (v4)
*We would see Jesus: this is all we are needing;
Strength, joy, and willingness come with the sight;*

An awareness of **our own sinfulness**, and the sense of guilt that awareness produces, should produce within us a longing for cleansing and forgiveness--therefore, a longing for the only One who can cleanse and forgive us.

- a. **Psa 119:174-176** ~ “I long for Your salvation, O LORD, And Your law is my delight. 175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise You; And let Your judgments help me. 176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Seek Your servant, For I do not forget Your commandments.”
- b. **Psa 38:9-22** ~ “Lord, all my desire is before You; And my sighing is not hidden from You. . . . 15 For in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God. . . . 17 For I am ready to fall, And my sorrow is continually before me. 18 For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin. . . . 21 Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, be not far from me! 22 Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!”

4. But longing to know God also means longing to know God’s will, longing for God’s commandments.

1Jn 2:3-6 ~ “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

Psa 119:131 ~ “I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for Your commandments.”

Psa 119:40 ~ “Behold, I long for Your precepts; Revive me in Your righteousness.”

Psa 119:10 ~ “With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!”

Psa 119:17-20 ~ “Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word. 18 Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law. 19 I am a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me. 20 My soul breaks with longing For Your judgments at all times.”

Psa 119:129-131 ~ “Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them. 130 The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. 131 I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for Your commandments.”

Eph 5:8-10 ~ “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”

- a. NASB: “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”
- b. ASV: “For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord;”

Psa 43:3-4 ~ “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle. 4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And on

the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.

What I'm talking about in this sermon is far beyond having a desire to be a part of some kind of religion or some kind of church and having a desire for some kind of religious instruction – I'm talking about **longing** for the Lord and **longing** for His teaching and His commandments.

Setting aside the commandments of God and submitting to the commandments of men makes our religion worthless -- no matter how much we may feel that we long for God.

- a. **Matt 15:8-9** ~ “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

5. Longing for God also means longing for the assemblies where God is worshiped.

Psa 84:1-4 ~ “How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! 2 My soul **longs**, yes, even **faints** For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. . . . 4 Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; They will still be praising You.”

Psa 25:8,12 ~ “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house, And the place where Your glory dwells. . . . 12 . . . In the congregations I will bless the Lord.”

Psa 42:2 ~ “My soul **thirsts** for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”

Psa 122:1 ~ “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’”

Psa 43:3-4 ~ “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle. 4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.”

NIV: “ Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. 4 Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God.”

Conclusion.

If there truly is a longing for the Lord within your heart. . . then there is also a longing for His salvation.

- a. **Psa 119:174** ~ “I **long** for Your salvation, O LORD, and Your law is my delight.”
- b. But you must act upon that longing for the Lord and His salvation in a timely fashion -- you must seek the Lord now.
 - ▶ **Isa 55:6-7** ~ “**Seek the LORD** while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him **return to the LORD**, and He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”

If you truly long for the Lord and His salvation, and you seek Him diligently with your whole heart, you will find Him.

- a. **Matt 7:7,8** ~ “Ask, and it will be given to you; **seek**, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who **seeks** finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”
- b. **Deut 4:29** ~ “But from there you will **seek** the LORD your God, and you will **find** Him if you **seek** Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Closing thought:

- a. **1Chr 16:8-11** ~ “Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! 9 Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! 10 Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who **seek** the LORD! 11 **Seek** the LORD and His strength; **Seek** His face evermore!”

LONGING FOR THE LORD

Part 2

Let me briefly summarize what I said in the lesson this morning.

Religion, at its very core, is a seeking after God . . . a longing to know God . . . a longing to know who He is and what He is . . . a longing to have intimate relationship with Him.

- a. **Ac 17:26-28** ~ “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should **seek the Lord**, in the hope that they might **grope for Him** and **find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’”

1. There ought to be, within our hearts, a longing for the Lord.

Without that longing for God religion is useless and worthless.

- a. **Jn 4:24** ~ “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Passages like **Jn 7:38** and **Psa 42:1** and **Psa 63:1** help us to understand what it means to worship God “in spirit.”

- a. **Jn 7:38** ~ “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’”
- b. **Psa 42:1** ~ “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.”
- c. **Psa 63:1** ~ “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. “

True religion begins with and springs from this longing for God within the heart.

2. Only the soul that is longing for God can truly worship God.

LONGING: **Psa 63:1** ~ “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. “

WORSHIP: **Psa 63:2** ~ “So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. 3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. 4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.”

3. But what is it that produces within our hearts such longing for God?

When we consider the magnificence of the universe and the immensity of the universe . . . and all that is in it, it ought to cause us to long to know the One who created it all.

- a. **Isa 40:26** ~ “Lift up your eyes on high, and see Who has created these things, . . .”

When we consider our own human existence (body, soul, and spirit) -- uniquely different from all other living things -- it ought to cause us to long to know the One who made us in His image.

- a. **Psa 139:14** ~ “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.”

When we consider all the injustice in our human experience, it ought to cause us to long for the only One who can right the wrongs and balance the scales of justice.

- a. **Psa 10:14-18** ~ “But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief, To repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless. 15 Break the arm of the wicked and the evil man; Seek out his wicked- ness until You find none. 16 The LORD is King forever and ever; The nations have perished out of His land. 17 LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear, 18 To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, That the man of the earth may oppress no more.”

When we consider our own sinfulness and dirtiness it ought to cause us to long for the One who can cleanse us and forgive us and give us newness of life.

- a. **Psa 119:174** ~ “I long for Your salvation, O LORD, . . .”

4. But longing to know God also means longing to know God's will, longing for God's commandments.

Psa 119:131 ~ "I opened my mouth and panted, For I **longed** for Your commandments."

Psa 119:40 ~ "Behold, I **long** for Your precepts; Revive me in Your righteousness."

5. Longing for God also means longing for the assemblies of the saints where God is worshiped.

Psa 84:1-4 ~ "How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! 2 My soul **longs**, yes, even **faints** For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. . . . 4 Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; They will still be praising You."

Psa 25:8,12 ~ "Lord, I have **loved** the habitation of Your house, And the place where Your glory dwells. . . . 12 . . . In the congregations I will bless the Lord."

Now, with that summary of this morning's lesson in mind, . . .

I WANT TO TALK ABOUT WHERE THIS LONGING FOR GOD IS INTENDED TO LEAD US

The Lord intends that our longing for Him ultimately leads us into His presence.

1. Longing for the Lord also means longing to be "in His presence".

Psa 42:2 ~ "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"

Psa 100 ~ "Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; **Come before His presence** with singing. 3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. 4 **Enter into His gates** with thanksgiving, And **into His courts** with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations."

Psa 23:4-6 ~ "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For **You are with me**; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will **dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.**"

2Cor 5:8 ~ "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be **present** with the Lord."

NIV: "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and **at home with** the Lord."

1Th 4:17,18 ~ "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall **always be with** the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words."

2. For anyone who believes in God and longs for God to be separated from God is the worst feeling there is.

Example: David

- a. **Psa 22:1** ~ "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? 2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent."

Example: Jesus, just before He died on the cross.

- a. **Matt 27:46** ~ "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

I certainly agree with the sentiment expressed in the 3rd verse of the hymn: "Be With Me, Lord"

*Be with me, Lord! No other gift or blessing
Thou couldst bestow could with this one compare --
A constant sense of Thy abiding presence,
Where e'er I am, to feel that Thou art near.*

BUT YOU NEED TO REALIZE THIS: Your spiritual life is going to be one of peaks and valleys.

- a. You will not always have a sense of God's abiding presence . . . You will not always feel that God is near . . . You will not always feel close to God -- that is a simple reality.
- b. The same David who was so confident in saying, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; . . ." (Psa 23:4) also said, "How long, O Lord? How long will You hide Your face from me?" (Psa 13:1)

The times when we are most likely to feel separated from God:

- a. When we are in terrible distress
 - ▶ As when Jesus was dying on the cross . . . experiencing excruciating pain, and crying out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?"(Matt 27:46)
- b. When we are in trouble and we feel helpless to do anything about our troubles.
 - ▶ **Psa 22:11** ~ "Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help."
- c. When we have sinned and we are feeling a terrible sense of guilt.
 - ▶ **Isa 59:1-2** ~ "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear."
 - ▶ **Eph 2:1-3, 12** ~ "And you . . . were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, . . . 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

3. Question: How can this longing for the Lord bring us into the presence of the Lord?

Afterall . . . God is in heaven . . . and we are on the earth.

- a. **Ecc1 5:1-2** ~ "Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. 2 Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily **before God**. For **God is in heaven**, and **you on earth**; Therefore let your words be few."
 - ▶ **NASB**: "Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. 2 Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter **in the presence of God**. For **God is in heaven** and **you are on the earth**; therefore let your words be few."

4. Before I answer that question, I need to point out that there are 3 senses in which we can be "in the presence" of the Lord.

(1) WE WILL BE "IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD" WHEN WE ARE WITH HIM WHERE HE IS – IN HEAVEN.

This is the ultimate goal of everyone who truly loves God.

Zec 6:5 ~ "And the angel answered and said to me, "These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from **their station before** the Lord of all the earth."

- a. **NIV**: "The angel answered me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from **standing in the presence of** the Lord of the whole world."

Lk 1:19 ~ "And the angel answered and said to him (Zacharias), "I am Gabriel, who stands **in the presence of** God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings."

2Th 1:9 ~ "These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from **the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power,"

Heb 9:24 ~ "For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear **in the presence of God** for us;"

Jn 12:26 ~ "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and **where I am**, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Jn 14:2,3 ~ "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to

Myself; that **where I am**, there you may be also.”

Jn 17:24 ~ “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me **where I am**, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

(2) WE LIVE “IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD” WHEN WE LIVE OUR LIVES WITH THE CONSCIOUS REALIZATION THAT HE SEES AND KNOWS EVERYTHING WE DO

I’m saying: “in the presence” often means “in the sight of” or “before”

“In the presence of” is a translation of the Greek word, enopion (*en-o'-pee-on*).

- a. The KJV translates it “before” in 64 occurrences, “in the sight of” in 16 occurrences, and “in the presence of” in 7 occurrences.
- b. Thayer and Bullinger define enopion: in the presence of, in the sight of, before.

The righteous are conscious of the fact that God sees and knows all that we do: “**And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account**” (Heb 4:13).

The wicked are the very opposite. They say to themselves: “How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High? (Psa 73:11) . . . “He has said in his heart, ‘God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see it.’” (Psa 10:11).

Jas 4:10 ~ “Humble yourselves **in the sight of** the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

- a. **NASB** -- “Humble yourselves **in the presence of** the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

Ac 10:33 ~ “So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are **all present before God**, to hear all the things commanded you by God.”

- a. NIV: “. . . Now we are all here **in the presence of God** to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”
- b. ASV: “Now therefore we are all here present **in the sight of God**, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord.”

2Cor 2:17 ~ “For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak **in the sight of** God in Christ.”

- a. NRSV: “For we are not peddlers of God’s word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and **standing in his presence**.”

1Th 1:3 ~ “remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ **in the sight of** our God and Father,”

- a. NASB: “constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ **in the presence of** our God and Father,”

1Tim 6:13 ~ “I urge you **in the sight of** God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate,

- a. NASB, NRSV: “I charge you **in the presence of** God, who gives life to all things, . . .”

Ac 8:21 ~ “You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right **in the sight of** God.”

Ac 10:31 ~ “and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered **in the sight of** God.’”

(3) WE ARE “IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD” WHEN WE MEET TOGETHER WITH HIM FOR WORSHIP

Psa 43:3-4 ~ “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; Let them **bring me to Your holy hill** And to Your tabernacle. 4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.”

Ex 23:17 ~ “Three times in the year all your males shall **appear before** the Lord GOD.”

Psa 95:1,2 ~ “Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. 2

Let us **come before His presence** with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.”

Psa 100 ~ “Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; **Come before His presence** with singing. 3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. 4 **Enter into His gates** with thanksgiving, And **into His courts** with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.”

Matt 18:20 “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, **I am there in the midst of them.**”

Matt 26:26-29 ~ “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new **with you** in My Father’s kingdom.’”

5. Again, the question: How can this longing for the Lord bring us into the presence of the Lord?

ANSWER: When our longing for the Lord leads us to respond to the voice of God in the Scriptures calling us to holy, righteous living.

2Th 2:13,14 (NASB) ~ “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through **sanctification** by the Spirit and faith in the truth. **14 And it was for this He called you** through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- a. JBP: “But we must thank God continually for you, brothers, whom the Lord loves. He has chosen you as the first to be saved, **to make you holy** by the work of His Spirit and your own belief in the truth. **14 It was for this that he called you** when we preached the gospel you, and he wanted you to possess the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Col 1:21-23 ~ “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has **reconciled** 22 in the body of His flesh through death, **to present you holy**, and **blameless**, and **above reproach in His sight**-- 23 **if** indeed you **continue in the faith**, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, . . .”

- a. NASB: “And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order **to present you before Him** holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.”
- b. WEY: “And you, estranged as you once were and even hostile in your minds, amidst your evil deeds, 22 He has now, in His human body, reconciled to God by His death, **to bring you**, holy and faultless and irreproachable, **into His presence**; 23 if, indeed, you are still firmly holding to faith as your foundation, without ever shifting from your hope that rests on the Good News that you have heard, which has been proclaimed in the whole creation under Heaven, and in which I Paul have been appointed to serve.”

Earlier in the sermon we considered the 3 ways in which the phrase, “in the presence of the Lord,” is used in the Scriptures.

- a. Now I want you to see the connection between them:
 - ▶ **If** our longing for the Lord leads us to **live** “in the presence of the Lord” in this life (living with the awareness that He sees and knows all that we do) . . .
 - ▶ **And if** our longing for the Lord leads us to joyfully **worship** “in the presence of the Lord” in this life (worshiping with the awareness that He is with us in spirit)
 - ▶ **Then**, we will ultimately **be** “in the presence of the Lord” . . . where He is . . . forevermore.
- b. Another way of saying it would be this:
 - ▶ Those who have lived “soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world”(Tit 2:11) . . . and have worshiped the Lord “in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:24) . . . will ultimately be “in the presence of the Lord” . . . where He is . . . forevermore.

Conclusion

Psa 145:18 ~ “The LORD is **near** to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.

Ac 3:19 ~ “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

2Th 1:9 ~ “These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”