

Seek the Lord and His Strength

Psalm 105:1-4

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July 27, 2014

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I have a friend whose sister was dying of cancer. She told him, "I'm praying less but talking to God all the time." I wonder what she meant by that. Is that possible? Is it a good thing? I think it is and I think this psalm deals with that very question.

Here's an overview of those rich commands given to us in the first four verses: 1) Give thanks, v. 1. 2) Recite and testify (repeat God's good deeds and share with others); vv. 1 and 2. 3) Enjoy the Lord, v. 3. 4) Seek the Lord, v. 4. 5) Seek the Lord continually, v. 4.

Let's go back through those for a moment. **Giving thanks** is a command. That removes it from an emotion, "feeling thankful." It's often in obeying the command that the emotion follows! **Reciting and testifying.** *The Message* reads: "Tell everyone you meet what God has done." Have you noticed that when we rehearse (to ourselves and others) what God has done, it brings it nearer? God's power seems possible in new situations. In fact the full sweep of Psalm 105 ranges from Gen. 12 through the Book of Joshua.

Then there is v. 3. We are to **enjoy God**, revel in, take pride in God. Glory in God's name. Jurgen Moltmann has written that to glory in God is to love God for God's own sake, to enjoy God as God is [*The Coming of God*, p. 323]. Every parent and grandparent knows what it feels like when the children get accustomed to the gifts we bring them after a trip. "What did you bring me?" replaces "I missed you and love you." With that in mind, the last two commands in vv. 1-4 make sense: **Seek Yahweh and seek Yahweh continually!**

It's about the real presence of God in our lives. Read v. 4 carefully. God's presence. I remember when it first began to dawn on me that God was interested in a real, personal relationship with me. I was a youth. And it changed everything. God is person. Not an "it" or a force. Real. Personal. Relationship.

As someone said, too many of us are Mr. Potato Head Christians. All head, no heart or body. Following Jesus is not so much about a set of beliefs as it is a new intimacy with God, intimacy that leads to transformation. And the key verb to notice here is the word "seek." It's used three times in vv. 3-4. I can tell you from experience. Seeking leads to seeking leads to seeking. Spiritual hunger leads to spiritual hunger. Anselm of Canterbury, who lived from 1033-1109, offered this prayer: "Teach us to seek You, and reveal Yourself to us as we seek;...Let us seek You in desiring You; Let us desire You in seeking You. Let us find You in loving You; let us love You in finding You" [*Proslogion*, 1974, 92].

Verse 4 from *The Message* read, "Keep your eyes open for God, watch for his works; be alert for signs of his presence." What a great way to begin each day. What a great way to end each day. Where have I seen God's presence today? . St. Patrick and the Celtic way of worship teaches us to be awash each day in God's presence, rising each day in the real presence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, knowing Christ beside, above, before, behind and within us.

But we're not quite done with these beautiful four verses. We are to seek God's presence...and God's strength. We seek God's strength because we are weak. Broken. Frightened. Those moments come when we realize we are not in charge of our lives. Brokenness and weakness. It is our weakness which creates a vacuum, a place for God to move into. Believe it or not, God can use our brokenness. God doesn't cause it, but God can use it. It occurs to me that Jesus knew this psalm. He knew it well. And remember? One of the most frequent words on his lips were, "Do not be afraid! Fear not!" We need to get to know Jesus better!

Years ago a member of my church told about his preparation for a 10-hour surgery. He said a nurse came in and said, "I'll be attending you after surgery. I want you to put your hand in mine." The man asked why. She replied, "After the operation, you won't be able to see, walk or talk. But you will be able to hear and feel. I want you to get used to my hand and my voice now, so you can respond to my care."