

O God, there is too little of You down here.

So very few seem to know You well;

so very few wish to know You well.

But there is within me a desire

to be filled to overflowing with You,

to let my soil-bound life become enveloped in Yours.

I want to look up into Your sanctuary

and let Your majesty and strength wash over me,

cleansing that part bound to the earth,

and elevating that part bound to You.

Too Be Filled With God



To Him who rides upon the highest heavens,
which are from ancient times;
Behold, He speaks forth with His voice, a mighty voice.
Ascribe strength to God;
His majesty is over Israel
And His strength is in the skies.
O God, You are awesome from Your sanctuary.
The God of Israel Himself gives strength
and power to the people.
Blessed be God!

Psalm 68:33-35



There are few benefits to rising before dawn. Comforting slumber must be beaten away as it clings tenaciously to the reposed form like a warm downy quilt. The eyes are glued shut, and behave like an old wooden cellar door soaked from a late-summer rain: swollen in its frame, unwilling to swing free. The floor is hard against legs that have atrophied from their lateral rest, and, overnight, heavy furniture has moved into the path to the bathroom, barking shins and stubbing toes. But then, once the eyelids have been pried open, and at least a measure of the senses have returned, there is one benefit in store for the poor fool so rudely rung from bed.

The eastern sky, so long dark and anonymous, stirs at first with a grayish tinge barely perceptible against the thick night so reluctant to leave. But then it glows brighter, announcing the inevitable birth of a new day. Yet there is still little about the dawn to invite the chilled early-riser's embrace; gray and distant, it seems only to remind the sleepy of the warm comfort just left.

But then the scattered clouds that reach toward the eastern horizon begin to glow with the candied pinks and purples of the dawn—at first only faintly at the edges, but then gradually shifting from gray to white, to the rainbow colors of an awakening sun. And soon, as the gray dawn is replaced by the Technicolor spectacle of a new sky, the somnambulant riser is wide awake, exulting in the splendor of that which he, surely, is the sole spectator: a private showing of God's early rising.

He Rises Early

As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness;
I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.
Psalm 17:15

They say a good breakfast is a healthy way to begin a day. They say a glass of orange juice is just the ticket to jump-start a lethargic mind and body. Some may opt, instead, for a bracing cup of hot, strong coffee and the morning news.

But nothing throws off tenacious slumber quite like the glory of the Lord. Nothing braces the mind and heart for a new day quite like an early-morning audience with His splendor. It is to fill the heart with unbounded joy; it is to begin the day parting the blinds of the earth's sky, to peer into the brilliance of heaven. It is to begin the day being filled to overflowing with the Lord's goodness, and majesty, and empowering strength.

"Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
And all flesh will see it together;
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."
Isaiah 40:5

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.
Ephesians 3:14-19

*Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee; Thy love the law and impulse of my soul,
Thou art my God, in Thee I live and move; Thy righteousness its fitness and its plea,
Oh, let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth Thy loving Spirit mercy's sweet control
Into the land of righteousness and love. To make me liker, draw me nearer Thee.*

*My highest hope to be where, Lord, Thou art,
To lose myself in Thee my richest gain,
To do Thy will the habit of my heart,
To grieve the Spirit my severest pain.*

(John S. B. Monsell)

We have just finished the month that marked the one-year anniversary of the radical-Muslim attack on the United States. In September 2001 four domestic airliners, filled with passengers and fuel, were commandeered and flown into the towers of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and, through the bravery of those aboard, a field in Pennsylvania.

In keeping with American tradition our airwaves have been filled with television and radio programs revisiting this heinous event from every conceivable angle. Repeated throughout the month, the Public Broadcast Service (PBS) presented a two-hour Frontline program entitled “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero,” in which representatives from just about every religious tradition but evangelical Christianity philosophized over the impact the events of September 11 had had on their faith in God.

While the program did indeed portray a variety of responses—from a renewed dependency on God, to a renewed cynicism, to outright rejection of His very existence—one recurring theme was evident. Because God does not meet people’s expectations of a god, they declare Him to be unfeeling, unsympathetic, too distant to care. As a result, they reject Him, or, at best, become smirkingly cynical about Him and His effectiveness in their lives.

But when man failed to meet God’s expectations of what he should be, instead of turning away from them—as they turn against Him today—He loved them, and sent His very Son to die for them.

When people do not know God, thus believing what they think He should be, rather than who He really is, they ultimately define Him in human terms, expecting Him to be someone as grossly fallible as themselves. In good times and tragedy people expend great quantities of time and energy wondering who God really is—or whether He is even real.

But God has never hidden Himself from man. There is no reason to agonize over wondering who He is, or why He acts as He does. There is no reason to doubt that He exists. He has presented Himself in print, in flesh, and in supernatural visitations. Indeed, all of creation shouts His glory.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...

Romans 1:20-22

God understands grief—even man’s anger. But because He has offered the Way, He cannot excuse disbelief.

The Truth

Then He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll. He said to me, “Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you.” Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth. Then He said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.”

Ezekiel 3:1-4

HIS CHOSEN SOULS, THEIR EARTHLY DROSS
CONSUMED IN SACRED FIRE,
TO GOD’S OWN HEART THEIR HEARTS ASCEND
IN FLAME OF DEEP DESIRE;

THE INCENSE OF THEIR WORSHIP FILLS
HIS TEMPLE’S HOLIEST PLACE;
THEIR SONG WITH WONDER FILLS THE HEAVENS,
THE GLAD NEW SONG OF GRACE.

(GERHARD TERSTEEGEN)

O Lord, my earnest prayer is this: So fill me with Your righteousness, Your personality, Your words, that when the lies and arrogant conceit of those who do not know You become as pervasive and common as a noxious smog about me, my feet will stand on an unmoving foundation of truth—Your truth, the only truth. And then, my God, give me the courage to dispense this truth according to Your sovereign will.

Most every morning, as part of the devotional way in which I begin the day, I read a psalm, taking them numerically, as they are ordered in Scripture. Since I believe in the providence of God, it was no coincidence that on one morning—the morning of September 11, I turned the page to discover that the next psalm in order was number 11, which reads:

In the Lord I take refuge;
How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain;
For, behold, the wicked bend the bow,
They make ready their arrow upon the string
To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.
If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?"

The Lord is in His holy temple;
the Lord's throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.
The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked,
And the one who loves violence His soul hates.
Upon the wicked He will rain snares;
Fire and brimstone and burning wind
will be the portion of their cup.
For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness;
The upright will behold His face.

Psalm 11:1-7

This description of someone who places his trust in a righteous, and righteousness-loving God seemed particularly apt that morning as I remembered what happened in our country one year ago that day. Not given to mawkish sentiment; not wishing to join in the memorializing, even pedestalizing of those who died in the attack, I simply thanked God for those who gave their lives to save others, those brave individuals thus reminding us all that cynicism does not yet rule in every heart. After that I prayed for His supernatural wisdom to be heavy on those leaders who must make hard and fateful decisions in the coming days.

But the words of David's psalm kept ringing in my ears: "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven."

We are living in a time of tumult and anger—a time in which evil individuals think nothing of strapping bombs onto children for the purpose of killing other children, or making bombs out of airliners filled with innocent people. In such times the wise person does not pretend to know the answer to the question of "Why?" He just fills himself up with God, and trusts that He knows what He is doing.

The Providence of God

How precious is Your lovingkindness,
O God!
And the children of men
take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance
of Your house;
And You give them to drink
of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.

Psalm 36:7-9

THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT MUST CROWD OUT PAIN, DOUBT, FEAR AND SORROW, AND BRING THE JOY OF CHRIST TO FILL OUR BEING. WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES THE MELODY IN AN ORGAN? IT IS NOT THE TOUCH OF SKILLFUL FINGERS ONLY ON THE KEYS, BUT IT IS THE FILLING OF THE PIPES BY THE MOVEMENT OF THE PEDALS. I MAY TRY IN VAIN TO PLAY THE MOST SKILLFUL TUNE, UNLESS THE ORGAN IS FILLED; AND SO OUR SONGS OF PRAISE ARE DEAD AND COLD UNTIL THE BREATH OF GOD FILLS ALL THE CHANNELS OF OUR BEING. THEN COMES THE HEART-SONG OF PRAISE AND THE OVERFLOWING FOUNTAIN OF GLADNESS.

(A.B. SIMPSON)

Blessed are those who hunger
and thirst for righteousness, for
they will be filled.

Matthew 5:6 niv

WHAT GOD IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY MAY YET DO ON A WORLD-SCALE I DO NOT CLAIM TO KNOW. BUT WHAT HE WILL DO FOR THE PLAIN MAN OR WOMAN WHO SEEKS HIS FACE I BELIEVE I DO KNOW AND CAN TELL OTHERS. LET ANY MAN TURN TO GOD IN EARNEST, LET HIM BEGIN TO EXERCISE HIMSELF UNTO GODLINESS, LET HIM SEEK TO DEVELOP HIS POWERS OF SPIRITUAL RECEPTIVITY BY TRUST AND OBEDIENCE AND HUMILITY, AND THE RESULTS WILL EXCEED ANYTHING HE MAY HAVE HOPED IN HIS LEANER AND WEAKER DAYS. ANY MAN WHO BY REPENTANCE AND A SINCERE RETURN TO GOD WILL BREAK HIMSELF OUT OF THE MOLD IN WHICH HE HAS BEEN HELD, AND WILL GO TO THE BIBLE ITSELF FOR HIS SPIRITUAL STANDARDS, WILL BE DELIGHTED WITH WHAT HE FINDS THERE.

(A.W. TOZER)

We live in a world that is big on filters. The practice goes by many high-sounding names—the more common of which would be “post-modernism” or “relativism.” Different from healthy discernment, this is the practice of rejecting absolute truth in favor of a self-defined truth—and self-defined “truth” tends to filter out anything unpleasant, to reject anything that challenges the individual’s personal comfort zone.

In San Diego we used to live near a “soup and salad” restaurant. Here one paid a flat fee, then helped oneself to a bounty of salad fixings and a selection of homemade soups. The salad bar in this restaurant was probably fifty feet long, double-sided, and replete with every imaginable companion to the chilled plate.

I would begin with the basics of lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, onions and grated cheese—passing by the pickled beets and cucumbers. Moving further down the line, I would grab a large spoonful of the crab salad, but give a wide berth to the three-bean salad. The potato and macaroni salads were favorites, but not the grated carrot. The creamy Jell-O and pineapple salad would be added to my plate, but never the one containing raisins.

From the salad bar, I would move on to the simmering pots of soup, passing up the vegetable or chili to help myself to a bowl of hearty turkey noodle. Across from the soups were the breads—fresh baked and still warm from the oven. The muffins were a favorite, usually choosing the apple-nut over the cornbread—unless, of course I was having chili, in which case the cornbread would be the perfect companion. Later I would waddle back to sample the slices of cheese pizza or sweet almond cakes, but never, ever, anything that contained coconut.

This is the kind of pick-and-choose relationship some Christians have with God. They move down the line, pushing their tray before them, selecting only those parts of Him they think they’ll like. “Let’s see, I’ll have some of that grace and forgiveness—but I think I’ll pass on the correction. How about just a little light Sunday School—but none of that heavy Bible study. And give me plenty of that ‘old-time religion’—but go easy on the conviction and wrath. For dessert, I believe I’ll have a large helping of that love and compassion—hold the holiness.”

To be truly filled with God we must take everything that He is. We cannot pick and choose what we want of God. He is not broken down into compartments, bins filled with His various character attributes, bins from which we may either select or reject. He is of a piece, unified, inseparable. He is to be taken as a whole.

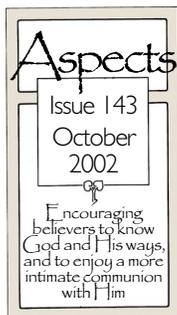
But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Philippians 3:7-9 niv

Everything
That
He Is

*Heavenly sunlight, heavenly sunlight,
Flooding my soul with glory divine;
Hallelujah! I am rejoicing,
Singing His praises,
Jesus is mine.*

(H.J. Zelle)



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