



**Growing in our Passion for God Pt 1: Seeking the LORD with all our Hearts!**  
September 6, 2020

**Holy Text: Jeremiah 29:1-14**  
**Happy September!**

September often feels like a time of new/fresh starts; a time for gearing up and getting things done. Also, we know that if the LORD tarries, cooler weather is coming with the change of season. Many people love the Fall: crisp air, red/brown/golden leaves, the start of the holiday season etc.

Much like January, September feels like a good time to reset and refocus. This September seems especially poignant, given all we have endured over the last many months.

One thought you will see this month is the “all our” theme:

- Pt 1: Seeking the LORD with **all our** Hearts
- Pt 2: Loving the LORD with **all our** Strength
- Pt 3: Obeying the LORD with **all our** Might
- Pt 4: Worshiping the LORD with **all our** Lives!

**This September, by God’s grace, I’d like CRC to focus on growing in our passion for God.** May we arrive at the end of this month with more passionate love, greater enthusiasm, higher praise, and a more heartfelt obedience to our God and King!

**2020 Encouragement**

As we have said many times in recent weeks, we believe God has providentially shaken our societal and cultural foundations, and thereby caused us to make sure our houses are built upon the rock:

**Luke 6:47-48 (KJV)** *Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: **48** He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.*

In 2020, we have attempted to “dig deep.” We have repented and forgiven others (Jan); we have worked to revive our relationships (Feb) and raise our reverence (March). We have been exhorted to reach out to our neighbors (April) and work towards biblically-healthy households (May). God has renewed our contentment (June) and given us His prescriptions to rebuild our church (July). By His mercy, He is also renewing our minds towards a biblical worldview (Aug)!

Now, we simply need more of God; we want to grow in our Passion for Him!

- We need our faith to rise! (Luke 17:5)
- We need to know He is with us and is greater than the whole world against us! (Rom 8:31; 1 John 4:4)

- We need to know He is pleased! (John 8:29)
- We need our eyes reopened to see the harvest-ready fields! (John 4:35)

**Therefore, the LORD has orchestrated this time of life reorganization and spiritual refreshing for us. May such refreshing come out from the presence of the LORD! (Acts 3:19) May this be our pattern going forward:**

- **Acts 6:7 (KJV)** *And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*
- **Acts 9:31 (KJV)** *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*
- **Acts 12:24 (KJV)** *But the word of God grew and multiplied.*
- **Acts 19:20 (KJV)** *So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.*

### **Discussion of the Text**

1. In verses 1-3, we get a sense of the context. God's people in Judah, who had walked consistent sin and rebellion, were finally judged of God. In their case, God decided to use Babylon, a pagan nation, as the instrument of His holy wrath. (approx. 607-586 B.C.) Jeremiah's letter is to a group that was already in Babylon in captivity.
2. Verse 4 tells us clearly that it was God Himself who caused his people to be "carried away." Again, why?
  - **1 Chronicles 9:1 (KJV)** *So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression.*
  - Judah's transgression was great. Read Jeremiah chapters 1-7 for the sad, vivid details.
  - Essentially, God's people forsook Him for pleasures and idols. Like an adulterous wife, she cast aside her Husband, God, for other "lovers." (Jer 3:1, 20)
  - Read Jeremiah 25 for God's judgment.
  - God's words to them read like a divorce decree. Yet even in His wrath, there was mercy; their captivity was to last 70 years. (Jer 25:12; 29:10)
3. In the midst of captivity, God encouraged His wayward people to "settle in."
  - Build a house and plant a garden (v5)
  - Encourage the children to marry and have children (v6)
  - Work for the peace and prosperity of the city in which you live (v7)
  - May these verses encourage us in the time in which we live!
4. Key to the blessings of their lives in such difficult times was their ability to discern truth from error! (v8-9) Trust God's Word!
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5. Verses 10-11 again demonstrate the love and mercy of God. Even when His people were rebellious, He had a plan to restore them. Verse 11 is quite popular for obvious reasons:

- **Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)** *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

6. In context, the LORD fulfilled His promise to return Judah to the land. We can read about it in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

7. But beloved, we too have been restored; we “have returned” in Christ. We have been reconciled to God! Of our LORD and His merciful reconciling, Paul wrote...

*"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;" **Colossians 1:19-23 (KJV)***

8. And I believe that in Christ, these promises our ours! In the time of restoration, God's people are promised a renewed, revitalized relationship with Him! (vv12-14)

- Answered prayer! (v12)
- Increased intimacy! (v13)
- A hungering heart! (v13)
- An end to captivity! (v14)
- A regathering; we might call it in 2020 “a reset!” (v14)

9. Friends, returning to the land must have be great; being reconciled to the LORD even better! Oh what a gift we have been given in Jesus Christ!

**2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (KJV)** *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

10. Oh let us Seek Him! Verse 13 of our Text says :

- **Jeremiah 29:13 (NLT)** *If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.*
- This should be our standard practice: joyfully loving and longing for God!

11. When we read of their return to the land the rebuilding of God's House, we read how overwhelmed they were at God's grace:

**Ezra 3:10-13 (KJV)** *And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: 13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.*

- **How much more should we who have been forgiven and granted eternal life in Jesus Christ (given and eternal home!) “seek” the LORD? How much more should we call upon the LORD? How much more should we do so with our whole heart?**

#### **What does it mean to “seek” the LORD?**

1. The Hebrew word often translated “seek” is *bâqash*. It means “to search out (by any method; specifically in worship or prayer); by implication to *strive after*: - ask, beg, beseech, desire, enquire, get, make inquisition, procure, (make) request, require, seek (for).” (Strongs)
2. As we consider “seeking” the LORD, we should certainly not think that He is lost! Seeking beloved, is more about us than God.
3. Our Text from a few week ago declared:

**Acts 17:26-28 (KJV)** *And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*

4. Think about other ways we use the term “seek.” What does one do when one seeks a spouse, or seeks a new job, seeks after knowledge, or seeks greater physical fitness?
5. He/she does something different than normal! Comforts are disrupted! New actions happen! Effort is required! Questions are asked, new places visited, new attempts and new things are made, more energy is expended!
6. **So then “seeking” is about the state of the heart of man: his attention, his focus, his desire!**
7. Synonyms for spiritual seeking might include words like hungering, thirsting, and longing.
8. *Seeking involves emotion; it also involves the will. Seeking implies desperation. Seeking implies that there is a deep need.*
9. **To seek the LORD is to be desperate for Him, to long for Him, to want to be close to Him more than anything else! Is your life characterized by such zeal?**
10. Perhaps David said it best:

**Psalms 63:1-8 (KJV)** *A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. 3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: 6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. 7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. 8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.*

### **Let us quickly review “the heart.”**

- Do you remember working through The Parable of the Sower in Oct 2019? It described four types of hearts: the **wayside** heart (v19), the **stony** heart (v20), the **thorny** heart (v22), and the **good** ground heart (v23).
- We also looked at what the “heart” is in Scripture:
  1. “A muscle in your chest that pumps blood!” – Voddie Baucham
  2. In my Bible software, a search for “heart” produced 833 hits!
  3. Often from the Hebrew *lêbâb* in the OT and the Greek *kardia* in the NT. Vines Dictionary says, “The word came to stand to stand for man’s entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements. In other words, the heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life. The Bible describes human depravity as in the “heart” because sin is a principle which has its seat in the center of man’s inward life, and then defiles the whole circuit of his action.”
  4. The Webster 1828 gives a 15-part definition to include “the seat of affections and passions,” “the seat of understanding,” and “the seat of the will.”
  5. The heart as used in Scripture points to “the seat of man’s emotions; his feelings and thoughts; his soul.”
- **In summary, the heart is the core our being, the inner man. To seek the LORD wholeheartedly is to seek Him with everything we are!**

### **God desires such a “whole-being” seeking of Him!**

- **Psalms 119:2 (KJV)** *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*
- **Psalms 119:10 (KJV)** *With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*
- **Deuteronomy 4:29 (KJV)** *But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.*
- **Zephaniah 2:1-3 (KJV)** *Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; 2 Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you. 3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.*
- **Isaiah 55:6-9 (KJV)** *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will*

abundantly pardon. **8** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. **9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

- **Psalms 105:4 (KJV)** Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.
- **Matthew 7:7-8 (KJV)** Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: **8** For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

### **What now?**

How do we put what we have learned into practice? How do we help our children and others do the same? A few suggestions:

1. Examine your heart. How badly do you really want to walk closely with the LORD?
2. Examine the obstacles. What is standing in your way?
3. Consider the cost. What needs to be adjusted in order to pray, study, serve, worship, and walk holy as you desire?
4. Lead the way. Who is watching you? What do they see? How might you take some along on this wonderful journey?
5. Declare the truth. Encourage others to seek the LORD too; preach the liberating, life-transforming, Good News of Jesus Christ!

Amen!