

## **02 | A Thirsty People**

Loving Like God

Welcome and good to have you back, as we really talk about that whole pathway of learning to love like Jesus loves. And of course, then very specifically, just walking with the Lord. I want you to imagine your day and your path in front of you and remember that Jesus wants to be with you on that walk, but He wants also for us to learn to walk with Him. What is He doing on that walk and how does He see people? How does He see your next-door neighbor? How does He see the people that you work with? How does He see the people you live with? How does He see the people you have community with? In the culture that many of us live in, there are times when we see certain people as a part of our community and we see others as not a part of our community at all, even though we're interfacing with them. Well, there certainly are concentric circles. There are people that are very, very close to us. There are people then that out a little bit and then the other group that's out a little bit more. But I want to be aware of how the Lord would use you and me as an influencer into those situations.

So, I want to talk to you today about the thirst that God put within people. Regardless of how they talk and regardless of the jokes that they tell or regardless of the subjects that they choose to talk about, regardless of

their opinions that can be so polarizing, or drawing you in, that people have something going on inside. And that is they have an inborn thirst that God has given them, that somewhere in every person's soul they know that there is a God. I want you to pay attention with me. If you want to open your Bibles, it's certainly worth seeing for yourself. But in the book of Romans, and this was written by the Apostle Paul, he's writing a letter to a church that he dearly loves and he wants them to do really well. Well, that's us, too. But he was writing to the church at Rome, and this would have been a letter. In fact, if I could say this, he was motivated by the Holy Spirit and he was motivated out of care for the people that he was writing to. And in the middle of it, of course, he says, (this is Romans 1:16), "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also to the Greek." And it's also where it says in it, you know, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, and the just will live by faith." That's where that comes from. Right after that, Paul begins to address what we now know is that we have built-in almost like DNA. You know, like somebody might say, "Oh, you have the eyes of your father, or "You look just like your mother," or whatever the case would be. We have a DNA that is by the Lord Himself; when He created Adam and Eve and ever since then, so Adam would be our great, great, great, great grandpa times, times about 50, and so on. But in that DNA is also a knowledge of who God is. So it's also the reason that every human being

on the face of this earth is held accountable to what they know about God. So, listen to this. You know, there are certain things that when I read in the Bible, they're the rough part there, they're the painful part that sometimes that we read and I want to say this, I don't think pain is necessarily a bad thing. If I was going to the doctor and I had a numb hand, and he was sticking the needle in the end of my fingers and I felt nothing, that would be a sign of not being healthy. So, in that case, pain would be something of health. In this case, the Bible is meant to promote us to be more like Christ. And, you know, I've heard people through the years say, oh, there is the milk of the Word and there is the meat of the Word. The milk of the Word is that which brings comfort. And quite frankly, most of us need comfort on a regular basis. I love to open the Word of God and begin reading, almost doesn't matter where, but I usually like reading an entire book of the Bible just for my devotion that morning. And one of the things that I become aware of is that the Lord addresses places that you and I have need for comfort in our life. Everybody has it. Everybody has that need. But the Bible also is there, the Word of God, to provoke us to grow. And that is the meat of God's Word. And this is one of those it starts off with a lot of meat and then washes it in comfort, you know, both before and after it. So it says this, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

Now, let me point out two things about this. I want to simplify what God is against. He will set Himself against anything that is not loving. And we can almost just put a period right there. So, if you have areas in your life that are not loving towards God, you can know that there's going to be a conflict there. But also, if there are areas in our life that are unloving towards other people, there will be conflict between us and the Lord there, so that we stop that which is unloving. We actually change our ways--confess, repent. And all that does is it gets us in the right flow of the presence of the Lord, because that is His goal, that the manifest presence of the Lord, that would be the Bible calls it the glory of the Lord. You know, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of the Lord." All have sinned and fallen short of the manifest presence of the Lord. But what did Jesus do? He died to restore. As He became the propitiation for our sins, He paid for our sins, so we don't have to. We can enjoy the great presence of the Lord. But the second part of this verse number 18 talks about people that suppress the truth. And it's interesting. It's referring to the truth of who God is and who God is to us. And it's always referring to a personal relationship that you and I have with God. It's you and I loving Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength. It's daily seeking Him to find Him, to love Him. And it's in that relationship where the truth of God reigns, doubts flee. But there are people who, through sin, (that's what it talks about, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness); sin can cause a callousness

that begins to form on our heart. Now, the neat part about it is when we're forgiven, it's like the Word ripping off that which was covering the calluses. But, over time, that sensitivity comes back to who the Lord is. So, for some of you, maybe you're going through a difficult walk and maybe you've just felt the consequences. So many bad decisions. Today, you make a great decision. And that is, I am not going to suppress the truth in righteousness anymore. I'm going to allow my heart to be tenderized coming over the next days and weeks and months. And by the way, even years where we grow a more sensitive heart to the Lord. So, it goes on to say this "because what may be known to God is manifest in them." So, what's known of God has already in your DNA; it's manifest in them "for God has shown it to them, for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." So I want you to be very, very aware today. And how about even this coming week, maybe even praying right now that the Lord would give you a new awareness of this? And that is that for every person that you are around, whether you talk to them or not, whether there's an intersection that the Lord's bringing about in your life with them or not, that every person that you are around has been given this DNA, that somewhere God has already shown them His reality. That in of course, I think getting away from asphalt and concrete and getting up in the forest or, you know, somewhere in the beauty of the desert is pretty sweet, too,

because those are some of the things that cry out of the reality of the Lord. But the reality is that somewhere inside God has created that person with the knowledge of His reality. And so, the majority of people that you'll ever talk to about the Lord will know somewhere in their heart that God is real. Now, some of them have suppressed it. Some of them buried it a little bit further, but He's real.

The joy that we have is that the Lord has already prepared people's hearts and there is a sensitivity that everyone has been given by God. Sometimes it's hidden, but they have a sensitivity to respond to the reality of who God is. If you know the Lord yourself, you remember when someone shared the gospel of Christ with you and you responded, and somewhere in your heart, you knew this is true. "I want to know the God of truth," and you began to follow Him.

So, I want to share a story or two as our time allows. I was aware just a few weeks ago, you know, one person waters, and maybe one person sows the seed of the gospel, and maybe today you or I will be a part of watering something that somebody else added to somebody's life to build their faith in Him. Or, maybe you're the person that actually gets to pray with them, and they step into the kingdom of God and get translated from the kingdom of darkness. What a joy that was for me in my life, and I still give great praise to Him. But I was thinking about a guy that came to help me. We were working on a relative's house recently, and the person was a bit of a hoarder, and they

had a lot of neglected maintenance that was due, and I called one of my kids and asked him if they would come help. And it's a couple of hundred-mile drive one way. And one of them said, can I bring my friend with me? And I knew the guy from where I'd been a chaplain at a racetrack before. So, they came and we were helping. And I knew the guy had no faith in God. In fact, I knew that he was of the mind that there is no God. And so anyway, he was so helpful, helping us build a gate and part of a fence that had rotted down and doing just a wonderful job. Well, we had to go over to the local hardware store, get some more lumber, and we brought it back, and he was helping me grab it out of the truck and take it up to where it belonged while we were building. And I stopped, and I thanked him, and I called him by name. And I just told him, I said, I want you to know something, we love you, and you've been our friend for a while. And it really means a lot to me that you would drive the 400 miles round-trip to come and help us do these things today. I just wanted to thank you so much. And he said, "Rob, you know, I'm more than happy to." I said, "I've learned a couple things in life the older I get. I've learned that when certain elements are going good in our life, the rest of our life goes well; it's okay. And that is if we have the love of God in our heart, but also the love of family and friends." And he said, "Well, you know, I agree with part of that, but that first part, I'm having trouble with." And I said, "Well, I want to share something," and I just put my hand on his shoulder. And it's what older people can get away with. And I said, "I want

to tell you something, whether you believe in Him or not, God's real, and whether you've discovered it yet or not, He loves you, and I welcome you into that process." Now, that would be planting. Now there will be a day, somebody--maybe me, maybe another family member, maybe someone at his workplace--someone will come along, and they will water that seed, and someone else will come along and they will be a part of actually helping him acknowledge Jesus as Lord of his life. It's a wonderful process.

How would the Lord use you today? Use you in reaching people that are thirsty. That's what I want to talk about--they're just thirsty! I had a person, and I just leave them unnamed, you know, because they're still in their journey. But I led two family members of this one person to the Lord, and they have left their ways that were not serving the Lord and now they're loving Him. And they have a daughter, and she is studying to be a psychologist, and she kind of thinks I'm the king of psychology, just because of my age and I think I've been doing this over 80,000 hours. And anyway, so she was troubled one day and came and talked to me. And as we talked, she was really in need of doing some forgiveness of another family member. As we talked further, she said, "You know that I'm an agnostic." And I said, "Well, I didn't know that for sure, but tell me your background." She said, "Well, I was raised in a Buddhist home and then really kind of went the route of being a Taoist. And then I'm now an agnostic." And, of course, I'm remembering Romans 1, and



that every human being has been given the knowledge deep in their heart that there is a God, and that aims them towards the Lord. And so I said to her, "Do you pray at all?" And she said, "I do." And that's what I've learned about even some atheists, as well as agnostics, is many of them, they pray. They're on this secret journey of trying to figure things out. And she said, "I do." I said, "What do you pray over? What do you say?" She said, "I give thanks for the day and good things that are happening, and health." And, you know, whatever she's wanting to experience. And I said, "Well, who do you pray to? What do you pray to?" And she said, "Well, when I'm praying, when I'm giving those thanks ... probably to the universe." Well, I gave my heart the Lord was in college, and if you'd asked me what I believed before then, I was a pretty mixed-up individual. And we had, you know, kind of the hippie era, and people were praying to rocks and trees. Honestly, I had friends that back then, before we all found Christ together, if you had said, "Who do you pray to?" They'd say rocks or trees, you know? I mean either or, but it was the two most common. And so, I said, "Well, who do you pray to?" She said, "Well, I pray to the universe." And I said, "You know, I had friends that were praying to rocks and trees. So you're kind of lifting your eyes up there, you're doing well. You know, I'm proud of you. You're lifting your eyes and you're seeking. I want to encourage you to just lift them one more notch." And she said, "Well, what would that be?" I said, "When you pray tomorrow morning, when you're out walking around and praying, I

want you--in fact, I kind of dare you to try this--instead of praying to creation, why don't you pray to the Creator?" She said, "I wouldn't even know how to do that." I said, "Just the same way we're talking here, but while you're walking along, say, "Lord, God of all creation, I want to talk to You and bring You blessing today." She texted me the next morning. She said, "I'm real scared right now." I said, "Why? Why are you scared?" (I hadn't put it together yet.) She said, "I'm out praying. And when I prayed the way you told me to pray, I felt something." Well, that was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wasn't going to acknowledge while she's praying to the universe that that's where to pray to, but He sure acknowledged as she began to turn her eyes towards Christ. So, what a tremendous time we can have when we know, that we know, that we know, that just like we have instincts built in for us to breathe in and build in for us to blink our eyes or get some rest at night, that sort of thing, God has also built in that person's DNA that they would be thirsty for Him.

So, I want to ask you just briefly, as you look to your day, would there be someone in your path that you could say, boy, the Lord has made them thirsty? And maybe it's a short word, maybe you just need to plant something and then leave it at that. Let's see how it grows from there. And you don't want to overwhelm someone, but where would that salt and light be in truly adding flavor without being overwhelming, but also never mocking, never belittling, never making fun of, but

caring deeply for people while walking in your own sense that you are an empowered influencer who's ministering to thirsty people. Alright, enjoy your journey. God use you, God give you eyes to see and a heart sensitive to those people around you. In Jesus' name, amen.