

# Psalms 66 "The Gospel and Disappointment With God"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself? The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know as I'm preaching how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Father, we ask us, Father, in all things to pray for the Lord.

And to pray for ourselves. But we ask now as we read your Word and as your Word talks about things like disappointment with you, we ask, Father, that your Word would come deeply into our hearts and speak to us. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So as you gathered from my prayer, you know, disappointment with God is a very, very common thing. It's not only common, it's increasingly common, I think, with Christians right now. Many of us probably know people who would now describe themselves as ex-evangelicals.

A lot of us probably know people who have given up on the Christian faith. I can tell you, no surprise, it's also an issue in a sense within the Hindu world, the Muslim world, the Buddhist world, of people having a profound sense of disappointment with God and ending up walking away from their particular faith. And as I said, it's also been an issue for Christians.

You know, we go through, if you listen to the stories, if you talk to people, if you watch some of the videos where people talk about their journey out of faith, or they're maybe in the process of trying to, or deconstructing their faith, really often at the heart of it is just profound disappointments, that life didn't turn out the way they thought it should, dealing with unhappiness, with unanswered prayer, with great difficulties, and it leads them to a profound sense of disappointment, and in some cases out of the faith. Some of us might be dealing with that this morning.

[ 3 : 20 ] Some of us have maybe dealt with it in the past. The Bible text that we're looking at today, believe it or not, this very ancient psalm, talks about this particular issue of disappointment with God. So whether it's going to speak to your heart right now, or whether you can take notes or whatever things to speak to others, let's plunge in and see what this ancient psalm has to say about disappointment with God. So it's Psalm 66, Psalm 66. And those of you, we normally preach through books of the Bible. We're not preaching through the book of Psalms. That would be a lot of psalms. But we are doing this summer, I'll be preaching on six psalms. That didn't hold up six fingers. I'll be preaching on six psalms this summer. In the middle of our psalm series, Steve Griffin will be preaching four sermons on different Bible texts, all dealing actually with the contrast between progressive or woke Christianity and historic Christianity. That's what he's going to be looking at. But I'll go through the psalms, six of them. And the first one we're looking at is Psalm 66. And just by the way, as you start to read this, you'll see very quickly how countercultural

God's Word is. We don't know when this psalm was written. We know if you look, I don't think it would be up there, but if you have a Bible with you, it says to the choir master a song. Oh, sorry, we do know. Sorry, to the choir master, a song, a psalm. So this was originally written so it could be

sung.

And we don't know when it was written, but the earliest it would have been written would have been three or four hundred years before Christ. And it could have even been written many, many centuries before that. But you'll see how countercultural it is. Well, let's look. Verse one of Psalm 66.

Shout for joy to God, all the earth. Sing the glory of his name. Give to him glorious praise. Say to God, how awesome are your deeds. So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.

All the earth worships you and sings praises to you. They sing praises to your name. Selah. Now, actually, if you could put up the first point, that would be very helpful. We'll go from that point back and forth to look at the text. But what this first section of the psalm, the psalm's divided up into five bits. I mean, whoever wrote the psalm divided it up into five bits. And the first bit has this very, very bold claim that there is only one God and two paths. Only one God and two paths.

[ 5 : 55 ] Both of those controversial today, but not nearly as controversial it would have been when it was written. When it was written, all the smart people in the world, all of the smart people in the world, all of the poets, all of the playwrights, all of the kings, all of the intelligentsia, the ancient equivalent of the Globe and Mail editorial board and the CBC, the faculty of McGill and of University of Toronto and UBC, the Supreme Court of Canada, the equivalent back then, the Privy Council of Canada, all of the elite, they would have all said that only dummies believe there's only one God. Because all the smart people know there's lots of gods. That's what all the smart people know. By the way, as soon as I say that, you realize that if you think whatever all the smart people think, you probably should maybe reconsider that a little bit. Because the smart people don't always have a good track record, actually, of always being right about things. But they would have just said that. And out of all of the world, there are just these few little kooky Jewish people who believe that there was only one God. And if you read the story of the people of Israel, you'll see that throughout their entire history, because everybody who knows anything knows that there's many gods, the whole history of Israel is this constant struggle between people saying there's just one

God, and people wanting to worship the gods of the lands. And this psalm here is part of this profound teaching that there's only one God, that there's only one God for the whole planet.

This is sort of on one level, it's sort of an idea nowadays that would be held. But what would be countercultural today would be to say that we know much about this God, or that there's only one way to get to God. That's very, very countercultural. People would say, you know, George Shirley, there's many paths to the same, you know, to God. I mean, people who say stuff like that, they're very, very well-meaning, but it's not very well-informed. You know, they'd say that Buddhists and, you know, Hindus and Muslims and Christians and Jews all are describing the same God. And that's very well-meaning, but it's actually, like, actually, I hope I'm not offending you, but it's actually quite ridiculous. They describe God completely and utterly differently. And so they can't all be describing the same God. It would be the same as if people said, well, George has one wife, and then, you know, some of you say, you know, and she's six foot six, and another one says, well, she's four foot two.

Another one says she has flaming red hair. The other one says, you know, she has blonde hair. One says she weighs 400 pounds. The other one says she's 90 pounds. Mom, you're not all talking about my wife. You can't have radically different descriptions of the same person. The same thing with God, if God is actually real. And the psalmist is saying, God is real. There's only one God. And, in fact, if you just look at in verse three again, all the earth worships you. Sorry, say to God, how awesome are your deeds. So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. So, you see, that's how the psalmist is saying there's, in a sense, two ways. There's the way of praising God, of shouting to God, of acknowledging God, of delighting in God, of enjoying in God, or there is the way of those who are going to cringe before God. Now, the word cringe there doesn't mean how many of us, when we see that word, we don't get the right image in our mind.

You see, probably if I was to read this in one of the coffee shops that I go to, people would cringe. They'd say that what I just said was cringeworthy. Good grief, that guy believes it, like there's only two ways to God. And, I mean, there's only one way to God, and the other way, there's no way to God. Like they'd cringe. That's not what the text means. It means that there are people standing and praising like this, and there are people who are prostrate before God, and they're all shouting and worshipping, praising. And then there's this other group that are enemies of the true God, the

one God over all of the earth, and they're cringing. In other words, it's their sort of bending over and twisting themselves, and it's this image of, in a sense, being forced to acknowledge what they resent and don't like. The book of Philippians talks about the same thing when at the end of the great hymn, Philippians 2, 5 to 11, it says, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And that literally means that Muhammad will bow his knee to the triune God. It means that Gautama, Buddha, will bow his knees to the triune God. It means that George will. It means that Trudeau will. It means that Biden and Trump and Putin will. It means the head Ayatollah of Iran will bow the knee to God. But for those in Christ, as I bow my knee to God, when I finally see him face to face, inside will spring that song of that great Negro spiritual, free at last, free at last. Praise God Almighty, I'm free at last.

[ 11 : 08 ] And for others, it will be a cry of agony, a cry of rebellion, even as they're forced to acknowledge that God is completely and utterly God.

And that's what the text is saying. But some will say, George, well, okay, you still, okay, it says that, but obviously, George, it's a completely and utterly ridiculous thing. It's nonsense. It's really funny. I've watched clips of that. I've mentioned it, of Christopher Dawkins talking to this convert from Islam. She went from Islam to atheism, and now she's become a Christian, Ayaan Hirsi Ali. And this conversation or debate that they had in New York a couple of weeks ago.

And it's so funny, because he'd keep saying to her, but, you know, Ayaan, you can't possibly have become a Christian. Like, so much of what they say is just complete and utter nonsense.

It just, I keep having that image in my mind, the way he says that with all that proper British enunciation. It's pure and utter nonsense. He'd keep saying that, and she's unflappable in terms of how she answers. But for many, this idea of just, okay, one God, we can get that. Okay, George, I acknowledge that you can't just, you know, Buddhists say one thing about God, Christians say the opposite. They can't all be just like, okay, we get that. But there can't be just two paths.

One path, which is going to end up with cringing, and one path, which is going to end up with exulting and praising. That just doesn't make any sense. Well, it makes sense if you understand the next bit.

[ 12 : 41 ] And this is also where we start to get into the beginning of the discussion about disappointment with God. Let's look. It's verses five to seven. Come and see what God has done. Come and see what God has done. He is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man. He turned the sea into dry land.

This is referring to when Egypt is, the Jewish people were brought out of slavery in Egypt, and he brings them across the Red Sea. And then it goes on, they pass through the river on foot.

And it's talking about the completion of God's act to save the Jewish people. He brings them out of slavery in Egypt. They go into the wilderness, and then they have to enter the promised land. And if you go and you read the book of Joshua, they enter the promised land with another parting of the waters.

This is now the Jordan River is parted, and they are brought by God into the promised land. So verse six again, he turned the sea into dry land. They passed through the river on foot. There did we rejoice in him who rules by his might forever, whose eye keep watch on the nations. That's every people group. Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah. And that's, once again, the rebellious are going to be the ones who are, in a sense, God's enemies who cringe before him. So how does this talk about both disappointment with God and the idea of there being two paths? If you could put up the second point, that would be handy. If God cannot truly save, then he cannot truly be God. If God cannot truly save, then he cannot truly be God. See, that's the, you see, part of the problem with the disappointment with God, and part of the, of us talking, I mean, both for those of us who become Christians, and, and maybe we had a, we didn't just sort of grow up always believing in Christ, but we had to come to a, you know, struggle with things to come to faith. And maybe some of you are in that situation right now. We have sort of fighting intuitions, but, but one of the intuitions really is, if you think about it, like, why are we disappointed with God? Well, we're disappointed with God because a hard thing is happening in our life, and God doesn't save us. He doesn't rescue us. You see, the intuition in all, you see, whether it's your, the disappointment in Buddhism, whether it's a disappointment in Hinduism, or Islam, or in Christianity, in all cases, even though, even though Islam and Hinduism and Buddhism doesn't have a God that saves, their disappointment with that God is because he doesn't save. Like, they don't realize that actually what they're longing for is the God that's described in the Bible, because this is, what we see right here is

God saving. He's saving. And by the way, if some of you ever wonder, you know, you describe, read the book of Acts, and you hear how, you know, Peter and Paul, wherever they went, they preached the gospel. And how did they preach the gospel? Well, they opened up the Bible and told people about, they opened the Bible, and from the Bible, they went and explained Jesus.

[ 15 : 55 ] And you might wonder, well, you know, I can see how they could do that with Psalm 22, or Psalm 51, or Isaiah 53, or, you know, there's a couple of places like that, but I can't see how they would do it throughout the rest of the Bible. But they could be preaching right here. They would go into Athens and say, listen, there's only one God. And that one God that actually exists, he saves by this bringing people out of, well, just as here it's described that he brought the people of Israel from bondage and slavery out of Egypt, and then into the promised land. And they would know, they would know because they'd been told that when Jesus is being transfigured, and Peter and John and James are hearing the conversation between Moses and Elijah with Jesus, if you look in Luke's account of it, they talk about his upcoming Exodus. They describe the death and resurrection of Jesus as a type of Exodus. And they would be able to say, listen, this is pointing, especially if you go on through the

Psalm and you see the riddle that the Psalm ends with, it can only be solved by the gospel. This is pointing to the fact that God really did act in history. He really did save the Jewish people. He really did call them for himself. And it's pointing to the true and greater Moses. And it's pointing to the true and greater Joshua. In fact, Jesus's name is Joshua. It's pointing to the true and greater Joshua who will deliver us from a far greater evil, which is sin, the slavery to sin and to death. And he will deliver us from that into his kingdom and into his favor. He will transfer us. We're going to see that in the next little bit. He'll transfer us in a very, very profound way. And so, you see, on one hand, then, all intuitions of all disappointment with God all come from an intuition that God should save if he's God.

And the Psalm here is reminding us there is a God who saves. He really did save. God saves us. You know, it's not just that... It's not just that... Sorry, I lost my... Anyway, he actually does save us. And because of that, that's why there's two ways. There's the way of being saved by God, or the way of not being saved by God, but ultimately wanting to be your own type of God, which ultimately means you're in some type of rebellion or enmity towards him. You maintain that because God is the one who saves. And that's why you start to see that there can only be two paths. But I said there's... See, on one hand, we have this profound intuition that God has to save if he's going to be God. But we have these other warring intuitions that once we have them clarified by the Bible, we realize that God has actually something vastly better for us than our intuitions about how God should relate to the world. Like, let's begin to look at that. It's the next section, verses 8 to 12. Right? So the declaration is there's only one God. The second declaration is that God saves. The first declaration is that there's only one God and there's two paths. The second one is that there is a God and he actually does save just as he should. And so, and then it continues on with this, verse 8. Bless our God, O peoples. Let the sound of his praise be heard, who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip. For you, O God, have tested us. You have tried us as silver is tried. You have brought us into the net. You have laid a crushing burden on our backs. You let men ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water, yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance. Now, what's going on here? If you could put up the point, that would be very helpful.

[ 20 : 08 ] The true God purifies you after he saves you. The true God purifies you after he saves you.

Now, you see, this is where we start to get into the whole problem of the disappointment we have with God. Because our intuition is that that's not the right way around. Our intuition is that we purify ourselves, and then God saves us. And then, in a sense, these bad and disappointing things don't happen to us. Well, let me give you an illustration for those of you who are familiar with Christians. Maybe you have, you know, somebody who was raised in a Christian home. And, you know, they hit whatever the age. You know, they hit 13. They hit university. They hit their early 20s, and they completely and utterly turn away from Christianity. And they live a life which is definitely not a life described or recommended by the Bible. They really turn away from Christ and live a life which is just, you know, very dissipated, maybe very debauched type of life.

And then, you know, one day, something starts to happen in their life, and they start to maybe think that they need to get back, that they've maybe made a little bit of a mess with their life, a little bit like

the prodigal son, and maybe they should be coming back. And how does that almost always work? Well, what almost always happens is that people don't say, amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found. I was blind, but now I see. What do people tend to think?

[ 21 : 54 ] I'm going to stop drinking. I'm going to stop smoking. I'm going to stop seeing the prostitutes. I'm going to try to get a bit out of debt. And then I think I can go to church.

Right? What are they thinking? I've got to purify myself. I've got to purify myself. And then maybe I can come to church. And the Bible here is very, very counterintuitive. It says, no, actually the way it works is that God saves you. He does it, not you. And then after he has saved you, and now in a sense your destiny is fixed, your identity is fixed, but now he's going to begin to purify you in a different way. And that just goes against it, right? Because we don't maybe think, for those of us who are Christians, we don't think that maybe some of the hard times in our life is something that's going on that God is using to try to change us into a different type of person, a better person. If you go back to the text, look again at what it says in this text.

It's quite profound. Notice how throughout all of it, God is active. Verse 8, bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard, who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip. Now, just two things about that verses 8 and 9. The first thing is this, what it really says in verse 9, like literally it says, who has kept our soul in the realm of life. So you see, this is once again going back to verses 5 and 7, that this saving act that God has done in history, which we see in a sort of a foretaste in how God saves Israel, but we see now in completeness in the person of Jesus, is that God moves us out of slavery to sin and to demons and and to idols and to mockery and blindness. He saves us out of that. He takes us out of that.

He translates us or transfers us into the realm of life. He does that for us. When we put our faith and trust in Jesus, in a sense, we put our lives into him. We give ourselves to him. And you don't have to know a whole lot of theology. You just have to be moved on your spirit or your soul to say, Jesus, I just want to be in you. And knowing a whole pile of other theology, that all comes later.

But you say you just have within your heart a longing to be in Christ, and he takes you in. And then in a sense, all of that stuff that he did for you, that was what, you know, he, that, that you get completely identified with it. Just pause a little bit. Okay, this isn't an argument for infant baptism. But for those of you who aren't familiar with why some Christians are in favor of infant baptism. I mean, just, just give me a bit of grace. Part of the beautiful images of infant baptism for the child of a believing parent is, I didn't do anything to get myself born.

[ 25 : 03 ] None of you did. Baptism symbolizes how you, I have done nothing to make myself right with Christ. That's partly what the symbolism of infant baptism is. If it's, if it's properly understood, if it's not, you know, just, you know, some rituals and rites, and there's all, I'm, I'm, I know there's all this other stuff around it that, that, that, like, it's like flack, it's, it's, uh, to distract you. But that's the fundamental image, that God does something completely and utterly for me, that I can do nothing, just as the baby can do nothing for themselves. None of us can do anything for ourselves when Christ saves us.

That God saves us. And so that's why it begins, right? Bless our gods, O people. Verse 8, let the sound of his praise be heard, who has kept our soul among the living, or, or literally has moved us into the realm of life and keeps us there. And then, but, but here's the thing. So that's, that's what salvation is. But then look how God is in the, his hand is in everything. So it's God who, on verse 9, keeps our soul among the living. It's God who has not let our feet slip. Then verse 10, you, O God, have tested us. You, in a sense, O God, have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net. You laid a crushing burden on our backs. You let men ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water. Yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance. And, and so it has this image that first we're saved. God does something in history that means that when we put our faith and trust in him, put our faith and trust in Christ, that we are moved into the realm of life. And then once we are in the realm of life, then God begins to purify us. And sometimes it means he moves us into a place where we can't move. That's like a net, where are hard things that we have to try to bear, or even that he allows people who have terrible motives to do things to us. And that doesn't give them a pass.

But they're all in terms of him forming us and purifying us into a different type of person. And, and this is why it's, it's, it's so important to understand that, that at the end, we come to a place of abundance. I've told the story before, but not for many years. One of my summer jobs when I was in

university was I had to help balance dollars for a summer. So I was the grunt. I would, you know, carry the wire. I'd help with, you know, some of the stringing of stuff.

They would do all the stuff that required skill. And I only discovered this afterwards, but one of the, one of the weeks that we were hiring a guy, that we were working for two other older installers, that one of them had a reputation of humiliating students. I didn't know that at the time.

[ 27 : 55 ] But he, we're having lunch. And he says, after lunch, we're in like a big movie theater. He says, I want you to run the wire from here to there. And he told me, told me and the other fellow what to do.

And I said no to him. I actually didn't know if I was going to be fired. But I said, that's ridiculous. Like, that's impossible. That's not the way you would do that. That can't be possibly the way you do that. That's, it's dangerous. It's impossible. I'm not even going to do it. I wasn't sure if I was going to be fired. And he really put pressure on me. He really put pressure on me.

The other guy was just silent. But I just was adamant that I wasn't going to do it. The other guy was just, didn't know what to do, the other student. And finally, they just dropped it. And in fact, they did do the wire, but they didn't do it the way they said they were going to do it. They did a completely different way that was safe, right? And that's afterwards I discovered, when I was mentioning it to somebody else, so yeah, that guy has a reputation. He likes to humiliate students. He gives them a task just to laugh at them at the end.

Contrast that. And this is, you see, how a lot of people think of God, that God's like that, that he gives us these tasks. But no, no, God's like that. God's like this one professor that I, I was auditing the course. And he began his first lecture by saying, my goal in lecturing you over these next, you know, weeks is that you're going to get an A+. I'm going to give the best I can.

I will answer all your questions. I'll be available out of class. My goal is for you to so master this material that I can give you an A+. And you can see that people are all a bit surprised. And he said, you shouldn't be surprised. Why should I have a lesser goal for you? Like, if I don't have that as my goal, I'm wasting my time. And then he said, but I want you to know one thing. I'm not just going to give you an A+. Some of you are going to think I'm a very tough marker. But why am I a tough marker?

[ 29 : 47 ] I'm a tough marker because I want you to so master the subject that you can do A-plus work. And if I just give you an A+, no matter how crappy your work is, that's actually not helping you.

And they'll never lead you to do A-plus work. Like, what a prof. I've never heard a prof say anything like that. But it's actually brilliant. That's what God is like. But you think the thing is there's a type of security. He's already moved you into life, the realm of life. Now he's going to begin to purify you. Now he's going to begin to purify you. But you see, part of what we have in our mind when we have disappointment with God is that we have this idea that says, no, no, God, I've been purifying myself. So, and then I've been worshipping you. And now, you see, in our heart and mind, we have this quid pro quo relationship with God. That's in our natural flesh. What do I mean by that?

True story. I'm going to use the church because the fellow I'm talking about has been dead for decades. I get ordained as a 28-year-old guy. And I go to do three years as an intern, as an assistant. And then I get my first church when I'm 31 years old. And I go up the Ottawa Valley that way. And I look after four little tiny country churches. And one of them is in Killaloo. And I meet after I've been there a couple of months. I have this meeting with the two key lay people in the congregation. And I bring them a couple of suggestions about what we could be doing in the church to maybe create a bit more lively, get a bit more lively, and maybe have more people come. I'm not making this up.

As I'm speaking, the guy goes like this. And then he starts to lean back in his chair. And he said, well, if we go along with that, what are you going to do for us?

He said, quid pro quo. He literally said to me, quid pro quo. I think, one moment, I'm talking about how to get more people in the church and have more people come to know Jesus. And you think we're having some negotiating quid? Like, like, it was completely nuts. I just said to him, no, there's no quid pro quo. We're all going to work together to try to figure out, you know, how to worship God better and reach the community for Christ. I guess we're going to know quid pro quo in it. But here's the thing. A lot of us in a relationship with God, you see, that's what happens. We say to ourselves, a lot of our disappointment with God is, whether we vocalize it or not, is we say, you know, listen, God, I stopped smoking.

[ 32 : 24 ] You know, I stopped hanging around with those guys. I stopped drinking. You know, like, I give, I gave some money to the church. I started going to church. You know, I started, I stopped, you know, I cleaned up my mouth. I, you know, I did this and this and this, and then I don't get the job.

Or my, my, my truck breaks and I don't have the money to replace it. Or I, I don't get the wife or the husband that I, I thought I was going to get or I wanted to get.

And we have this disappointment with God. Because you see, we have this, this sense that in our relationship with God, that there has to be this quid pro quo thing. But can't you see that what God is actually offering us is something vastly better? God saves us. And after he saves us, when we put our faith and trust in him, he begins to purify us. See, then he starts to purify how we think about him. He starts to purify our affections.

He starts to purify our trust in him, our hope in him. And, and it goes further. We can see that in the next bit. If you turn to, to verses 13 to 17, it's the second part of this, this whole thing with the disappointment with God. And this other aspect that we have, this negotiating, manipulating understanding of relating with God. And it goes like this, verses 13 to 17, I will come into your house with burnt offerings. I will perform my vows to you, that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals. With the smoke of the sacrifice of rams, I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah. And here, if you could put up the point, that would be very helpful. Worship of the true God comes after he saves you. Worship of the true God comes after he saves you. You see, partly what happens when I'm describing the type of disappointment that many of us have, you know, I didn't get the job. I don't have the peace. I don't have the money. I don't have this. I don't get the respect in the church. I lost my role in the church.

You know, I, you know, this and this and this. And we don't necessarily articulate it very well, maybe to our best friend, but in our own little self-talk, the way we talk, we're just filled with the things that didn't go the way that we expected. And part of all of that is that we actually think that we have done something in such a way that we put God into our debt. Like unconsciously, we think, God, you owe me. You owe me. You owe me. You know how much money I gave? You know all those times I turned the other cheek? You know all those times I read the Bible? You owe me. Now, we don't usually, you see, normally for Christians, we're all well enough instructed that if I say that, we go, okay, well, okay, then maybe that's not quite right. But that's what we, that's the internal dialogue. That's what's going on with our imagination. That's what's going on with our type of affections.

[ 35 : 34 ] I know that we lost people after we walked away from our building in faithfulness to the gospel. And by the way, it was 13 years ago today that we walked away from that big stone church up the hill and moved here, 13 years ago today. And almost half the congregation left within two years, none of them to go back to the Anglican Church of Canada. Many of them for very, very good reasons. Just basically, they really wanted to worship in a church building and this just didn't cut it for them. But I know that some people left partially because they were disappointed probably with me and the wardens. But I know why. They believed that God owed them a new church building and we didn't get one. Now, in that case, they didn't want to have disappointment with God. Disappointment was with me that if I had actually had more faith or something like that, you know, God would have, I was the one blocking. But they didn't want to acknowledge that basically they thought God owes us a building. No, no. No human being is in God's debt. That you can't ever possibly, and this, just hearing this psalm, you realize that God does everything to make me right with him. He does everything to transfer me from death into life, from blindness into sight, from rebellion to intimacy with God. God does all of that. And after he has saved me, then he begins to purify me. And after he has saved me, then I begin to worship him. And in the psalm, you'll see when it mentions, you know, the rams and all those types of things, it's, it's, it's, his response is extravagant.

By the way, worship, money is part of worship. Like money is part of worship. That's how we should all understand giving our tithes and offerings to support of the local church, the support of missions and to the relief of, of the, of the help of the poor is that it's all part of worship. It's a response to what God has done for, for us in Christ. And it's a risk extravagant, extravagant response. Now my, my time is up. Just one final thing in, in close. And it, it, uh, there's another thing here, which is sort of very counterintuitive to our culture, actually sounds wrong. And there's also a riddle and they're all very important to see as the psalm closes. Uh, just join with me, verse 16 to 20. Come in here.

So remember this, the flow of the psalm is there's only one God.

There's two paths. Either you, in a sense, acknowledge God and worship him, or you maintain a rebellion against him, but it will only end with you cringing. The rebellion doesn't work. God can't stop being gods, but there's only one God. Then God saves you. Then after he saves you, he begins to purify you. And after he saved you, you begin to worship. And then verse 16, come in here, all you who fear God, come in here. I will tell you what he has done for my soul, for me, for all of me. I cried to him with my mouth and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened, but truly God has listened. He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer, were removed his steadfast love from me. A couple of things, just very briefly in closing. If you could put up the point, that would be helpful.

The true God does not love you unconditionally, but he does love you unfailingly. God does not love you unconditionally, but he does love you unfailingly. And unfailingly is way better.

[ 39 : 18 ] See, if I said I love my kids unconditionally and I didn't really care, you know, whether they learned how to eat with knives and forks, if I didn't really care that they learned how to have showers, do well in school, because I love them unconditionally, how many of you would say I was a good parent?

Hopefully none of you. You don't know. That's crappy parenting, okay? Crappy, crappy parenting.

You know, you want them to learn to share. You want them to learn to brush their teeth.

You want them to learn grooming. You want them to learn their multiplication. That's what you want.

And you know what? You love your kids unconditionally, but you don't love them unconditionally. And that's what God is like with us. He loves us unfailingly, but he's not loving us unconditionally.

And then this little bit in about how God wouldn't do this if we had cherished sin in our heart. And that's a bit of a riddle within the whole thing. On one hand, it's profoundly true. I can't cherish God and cherish sin at the same time.

I can't cling to God and cling to sin at the same time. Part of what God does in purifying me is he sees that I cling to my sin, because that word cherish can also be translated as cling.

[ 40 : 28 ] And so part of purifying me is he starts to come to me and he takes my fingers. Then the other fingers and he takes my arms.

So I'm not clinging to sin because he wants me to cling to him. Isn't that loving God? But here's the mystery.

Only the gospel makes it clear. You see, anybody with any type of self-reflection would say, I still cling to sin and cherish sin sometime.

How did God ever make me right with him if that's the case? See, the psalm ends with a riddle. And the riddle is only solved when you understand that Jesus is the glam of God that takes away the sin of the world.

That God, the Son of God, could come and live amongst us. And that when he dies for us, he dies for the whole length and breadth of me. He does it as a complete and utter act of grace.

[ 41 : 27 ] He, you know, his life stands for mine. His righteousness clothes me. His destiny is given to me. All of this is given to me completely and utterly as a gift of grace.

It isn't that I'm so much better at not cherishing sin as all those terrible people out there. And I'm some, no, that just makes me proud and arrogant. And it sets, but the psalm ends with a riddle of the contrast between the cherish.

And so on one hand, there's a profound truth about how we are to grow in terms of putting to death our cherishing of sin. But at the same time, it's something that points us that if we're at all honest, we can never do that perfectly.

And so, God, I need you to do for me what I cannot do for myself. And part of worship and part of being purified is to come to the point where I say, only you, God, help me, only you.

And I say, thank you. It's been done. The final words of Jesus on the cross, it is finished, takes on a whole new meaning.

[ 42 : 31 ] It is finished. Let's stand, bow our heads in prayer in closing. Father, we, you know how even after we've been Christians for a long time, we still can sneak in ideas that we can somehow put you in our debt.

We know, Father, how you do things for us that are really trying to help us no longer cling to sin or rebellion or pride or arrogance or looking down our nose at others or despising others.

You do things to try to purify us and take that as not being something as part of our identity, and we end up getting disappointed with you. Father, we ask that you give us an even greater confidence and trust in the gospel and what Christ has done for us.

And in those hard times in our lives, Father, we ask that you connect us with other Christians and keep us connected in worship and in church, that we can share our heartache and our pain with others, and we can feel their, we can see their tears as they pray for us, and we can feel their hugs as they hug us afterwards, and we can talk through what's going on in our lives.

But in all things, Father, keep bringing us back to your word and what you have done for us in Christ. And we thank you, Father, that you did for us in Jesus what we cannot do for ourselves, that you, when we put our faith and trust in him, you transferred us into the realm of life, and you will keep us there, and nothing can shake that.

[ 44 : 14 ] Father, help us to grow in our confidence that you keep your word. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Amen.