

Sermon #1893 — *Miscellaneous Sermons*

Title:        **“MY DESIRE IS BEFORE THEE”**

Text:        Psalm 38:9

Subject:    *One Believer’s Ambitions*

Date:        Sunday Evening — February 27, 2011

Tape #       AA-07

Readings: *David Burge and Frank Hall*  
*Psalm 38:1-22*

Introduction:

A long, long time ago a young preacher in London, England spent the afternoon with an older, veteran Gospel preacher whom he greatly admired and from whom he learned much. **The year was 1768. The young preacher was Augustus Toplady** who wrote many of our best hymns, including “Rock of Ages.”

The older preacher was a **Mr. Brewer**. I know absolutely nothing about Mr. Brewer except what he told Toplady that hot July afternoon in London more than 200 years ago. Toplady thought his words were worth writing down; and I’m glad he did. **This is what Mr. Brewer said to the 28 year old preacher,** Augustus Toplady:

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“I cannot conclude without reminding you, my young brother of some things that may be of use to you in the course of your ministry:

1. **Preach Christ crucified**, and dwell chiefly on the blessing resulting from His righteousness, atonement, and intercession.
2. **Avoid all needless controversies** in the pulpit; except it be when your subject necessarily requires it; or when the truths of God are likely to suffer by your silence.
3. **When you ascend the pulpit, leave your learning behind you**. Endeavor to preach more to the hearts of your people than to their heads.
4. **Do not affect too much oratory**. Seek rather to profit than to be admired.”

I cannot imagine four more needful admonitions. Every preacher needs to constantly remind himself of these things. I try to give heed to them every time I preach to you and I shall do so tonight.

**I am going to talk to you tonight about the desires of my heart**. In doing so, I want to speak to your

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hearts for the glory of God. **Let me tell you three things by way of introduction.** Then I will be very brief in bringing my message.

1. **I am a sinner.** I mean by that that I am fully convinced that I completely deserve the everlasting torments of God’s wrath in hell.

- I was born in sin (Psalm 51:5).

(Psalms 51:5) "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

- I chose to live in sin (Psalm 58:3).

(Psalms 58:3) "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

- I naturally love sin and hate righteousness (Ephesians 2:1-3).

(Ephesians 2:1-3) "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2)

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Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

- I despised God's grace, blasphemed His Son, and refused to seek His mercy with all the pride and rebellion of hell itself.
- I have never done and can never do a righteous thing!

2. **But God has saved me by His free and sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, His dear Son.** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11) "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor

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thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

- God the Father chose me in eternal, free love (John 15:16).
- God the Son redeemed me with His own blood. (Galatians 2:20).
- God the Holy Spirit called me by His omnipotent grace (Ephesians 2:1-4).
- I was cast out as an unwanted thing; but He came to me in the time of love (Ezekiel 16:8).
- I was dead, beyond the reach of any who might want to help, but He raised me up (Ezekiel 37).
- Like Mephibosheth, I was in the place of misery and want, hiding from the Lord; but He fetched me to himself (2 Samuel 7).
- Like Gomer, I brought myself to ruin; but He brought me to His house and His banner over me was love (Hosea 2).

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- I am by nature a worthless piece of sinful flesh, of use to no one and good for nothing; but God has saved me, forgiven all my sins forever, and made me an heir of heaven, an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ, His darling Son (Romans 8:17).
- On top of all that, he has put me in the ministry and made me an instrument of good to some (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31) "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence. (30) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That,

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according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

3. In the light of these things, it should be obvious to all, but with me it is a matter of constantly increasing conviction that **I owe everything to my God and Savior, who has delivered my soul from the lowest hell** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

These are not matters of theory and doctrinal orthodoxy, but matters of experience and deep conviction. **For almost 44 years now, I have been the conscious and constant recipient of God's infinite, amazing grace. I have not yet gotten over the wonder of this fact: The Lord God saved me. I am truly amazed by that!**

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
'Twas blind, but now I see!

**All that I have experienced of God's grace has inspired and constantly presses upon me the**

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**pursuit of five great desires.** Turn with me to Psalm 38:9. This is my text. — “*LORD, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee.*”

**Proposition:** The desires of a man’s heart are those things for which he groans and labors, without which he cannot be content and satisfied.

Let me talk to you for a few minutes about my desires. **Here are five things I wrote down in the back of a book one day years ago when I was studying a prayer I wrote out to God.** I have never shared them with anyone before. But I think the Lord has directed me to share them with you tonight. I trust He will make them the desires of your heart too.

**I long ago gave up** and nailed to the cross of Christ all aspirations and ambitions for fame, power, property, wealth, and even earthly tranquility and ease. Do not misunderstand me. My flesh craves all those things; but my heart craves freedom from the bondage of those things. I have no desire for such dead weights. **Here are the desires of my heart, the things for which my heart groans before the Lord.**



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**GOD’S FAVOR**

*First*, being convinced of my sin and condemnation before the holy Lord God, **I desire the favor of God** (Psalm 119:58). — “*I entreated Thy favor with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to Thy word.*”

**I know that God’s favor is in Christ** (Psalm 89:17).

(Psalms 89:17) "For thou *art* the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted."

**I know that I have God’s favor** (Ephesians 1:6).

(Ephesians 1:3-7) "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the

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adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

And **I know that God's favor is my strength** (Psalm 30:7).

(Psalms 30:7) "LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled."

So long as I am conscious of God's favor, I am strong. No one can terrify me. No trouble can destroy me. But there are times when the Lord God hides His face from me and I am troubled.

- We must never presume upon God's favor, making it a matter of indifference.
- We must never be content to walk in this world without the consciousness of God's favor.
- When we have lost that sweet conscious awareness

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of God’s favor, we must diligently seek it (Hebrews 4:16, Song of Solomon 5:2-16).

(Hebrews 4:16) "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

(Song of Songs 5:2-16) "**I sleep**, but **my heart waketh**: *it is* the voice of **my beloved** that knocketh, *saying*, **Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled**: for my head is filled with dew, *and* my locks with the drops of the night. (3) I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? (4) **My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him**. (5) I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped *with* myrrh, and my fingers *with* sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. (6) **I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer**. (7) **The**

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**watchmen** that went about the city **found me**, they **smote me**, they **wounded me**; the keepers of the walls **took away my veil** from me. (8) I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye **tell him, that I am sick of love**. (9) What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, O thou fairest among women? what *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, that thou dost so charge us? (10) My beloved *is* white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. (11) His head *is as* the most fine gold, his locks *are* bushy, *and* black as a raven. (12) His eyes *are as the eyes* of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, *and* fitly set. (13) His cheeks *are as* a bed of spices, *as* sweet flowers: his lips *like* lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. (14) His hands *are as* gold rings set with the beryl: his belly *is as* bright ivory overlaid *with* sapphires. (15) His legs *are as* pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance *is as* Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. (16) His mouth *is* most sweet: yea, he *is* altogether lovely. This *is* my beloved, and this *is* my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

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**CONFORMITY TO CHRIST**

*Second*, with every fiber of my soul, **I want to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Savior.** I know that one day soon I shall be like Him in glory, perfectly holy and without sin.

- I was chosen to it (Ephesians 1:4-5).
- God predestinated it (Romans 8:29).
- Christ died to secure it (Ephesians 5:25-27).
- The Holy Spirit preserves me for it (Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30).

And I know that I am, even now, perfect in Christ. But **I want to live in this world as Christ lived in this world as Jehovah’s righteous Servant, as my Substitute.**

- I want to love you (John 13:35).
- I want to serve you (John 13:15). — “*Not to be ministered unto.*”
- I want to forgive you (John 8:21).
- I want to teach you.

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- I want to help you along the way to heaven (Philippians 2:10). — “*Bear ye one another’s burdens.*” — “*Rejoice with those that rejoice.*” — “*Weep with those that weep.*”

**Illustration:** — “*He ain’t heavy. He’s my brother.*” — The lyrics refer to a soldier in the Vietnam war carrying his platoon buddy who had been severely wounded. A reporter who was doing a story on the war saw him and asked, “Isn’t he awfully heavy?” The soldier answered: “He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother.”

**GOD’S PRESENCE**

*Third*, knowing something of the tasks that lie before me as God’s child in this world, God’s servant, and your pastor, **I desire and my heart groans for the presence of God** (Exodus 33:14-15).

(Exodus 33:13-18) "Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, **show me now thy way**, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and **consider that this nation**

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**is thy people.** (14) And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest. (15) And he said unto him, **If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.** (16) For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? *is it* not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth. (17) And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. (18) And he said, **I beseech thee, show me thy glory.**"

**Nothing can give us rest in this world of trouble but the conscious awareness of God's presence.**

- I cannot **preach the gospel,** I cannot **serve your souls** without his presence.
- I cannot **endure the trials and temptations** of life without God's presence (Isaiah 41:10, 43:1-7).

(Isaiah 41:10) "Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will

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strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

(Isaiah 43:1-7) "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. (2) When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. (3) For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. (4) Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. (5) Fear not: for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; (6) I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; (7) *Even* every one



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that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

- I cannot **live peacefully** in a world of trouble without God's presence (Philippians 4:4-7).

(Philippians 4:4-7) "Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice. (5) Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand. (6) Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

- I cannot **worship** without His presence (Matthew 18:20).
- I cannot **die with confidence** without God's presence.

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**GOD’S WILL**

*Fourth*, I have learned and am continually reminded that it is never best for me to have my will. I don’t know what I need and what is best for me. So **I crave in my very soul the will of God.** I have learned from my Savior to pray, — “*Not my will, thy will be done.*” — Now listen carefully to what I am saying.

**I want to be obedient to God’s revealed will. Whatever God reveals in His Word, I want the grace to obey** (Psalms 5:8, 86:11).

(Psalms 5:8) "Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face."

(Psalms 86:11) "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."

- His doctrine must be my doctrine.
- His ordinances are my duty.
- His Word must be the rule of my life.

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**I want to walk daily conforming to His revealed will, seeking to do what He directs me to do**  
(Proverbs 3:5-6).

(Proverbs 3:5-6) "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

**I want God to bring to pass His providential will.**  
(Romans 8:28). I know beyond a shadow of a doubt the truthfulness of Cowper's hymn:

God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines,  
Of never failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.

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Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessing on your head.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour.  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace.  
Behind the frowning providence,  
He hides a smiling face.

If I had my life to live all over again and could choose whatever I wanted, I would walk the same paths, endure the same heartaches, experience the same troubles, weep the same tears, and visit the same graves as I have because all this has been done by the good and wise will of my heavenly Father! I wouldn't change a thing, if I could. He knows and does what is best. I don't and cant!

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Moreover, **I want God to perform all the good pleasure of His eternal will.** I want God to do exactly what he has predestinated that He will do (Ephesians 1:11). This is how our Lord taught us to pray: “*Thy will be done*” (Matthew 6:9-11).

**GOD’S GLORY**

*Fifth*, unless I am deceived, **this is what I want above everything in this world — The Glory of God, “the Lord be magnified”** (Psalm 35:27, 40:16, 70:4).

(Psalms 35:27) “Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.”

(Psalms 40:16) “Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.”

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(Psalms 70:4) “Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.”

**Let my doctrine be the doctrine that glorifies God.**

- Divine Sovereignty
- Blood Atonement
- Salvation by Grace

**Let everything in the house of God be done for the glory of God** (1 Corinthians 10:31).

- Every Song
- Every Prayer
- Every Sermon
- Every Ordinance
- Every Activity

**Let my home be a place where God is glorified** (Ephesians 5:18). — “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”

**Let my life be lived and let it be ended for the**

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**glory of my God.**

**Indeed, I rejoice to know that all things shall glorify the Lord my God** (Romans 11:33-36).

(Romans 11:33-36) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen."

- You will and I will glorify Him, either His justice or His grace (Ephesians 2:1, Revelation 19:1-6).
- All things will glorify Him (Revelation 5:13-14).

(Revelation 5:13-14) "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour,

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and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. (14) And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."

**Application:** “*LORD, all my desire is before Thee; and my groanings are not hid from Thee.*” This is what I desire. These are the things for which my very heart groans....

1. The Favor of God
2. The Image of God
3. The Presence of God
4. The Will of God
5. The Glory of God.

These are the aspirations of my heart. Here’s a hymn I wrote several years ago, when meditating upon these five things.

I would be weaned and emptied, too  
Of earth and self, and all but You  
Surrendered to the crucified,  
Only in love with Christ, Who died.



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Preserve me from the noise and strife,  
The boast, the pomp, the pride of life.  
For heav'n alone my heart prepare,  
Let all my affections be there.

My Savior's steps force me to trace  
Pursuing grace and righteousness.  
This path, with Jesus Christ in view,  
By grace to heaven I'll pursue.  
Nothing but Jesus would I know,  
Nothing but Your will would I do.  
Lord, take my heart, assert Your right,  
And put all rival loves to flight.

My dearest idols, Lord remove  
By violent grace, and make me love  
Nothing but Christ, who lived for me  
And died from sin to set me free!  
The sins I hate, help me to slay,  
And consecrate myself tonight  
To live for Jesus Christ alone,  
Until my work on earth is done.

AMEN.