

**"What is God to You?"**  
**(Psalm 119:57-64)**  
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**(Psalm 119:57-65)**

<sup>57</sup> You are my portion, Lord;  
I have promised to obey your words.  
<sup>58</sup> I have sought your face with all my heart;  
be gracious to me according to your promise.  
<sup>59</sup> I have considered my ways  
and have turned my steps to your statutes.  
<sup>60</sup> I will hasten and not delay  
to obey your commands.  
<sup>61</sup> Though the wicked bind me with ropes,  
I will not forget your law.  
<sup>62</sup> At midnight I rise to give you thanks  
for your righteous laws.  
<sup>63</sup> I am a friend to all who fear you,  
to all who follow your precepts.  
<sup>64</sup> The earth is filled with your love, Lord;  
teach me your decrees.

What is God to you? I mean really, what is God to you? For some, God is like a spare tire. You go to him in a pinch.

To others God is like the foundation of a house. You know it's there and you know that it's really important, but again, you just don't think about it much.

And finally, for some, God is everything. I don't mean that they just say that God is everything, I mean that for certain people God really is everything to them. How about with you? What is God to you? That's what we want to look at today.

This passage speaks about the emotions of the heart toward God, the commitment of the will before God, the human relationships that are centered on God, the courage and resolve that comes because of God. We see a person who is utterly focused, single-minded, and devoted to God. It might be what we would call a fanatic. You know when we look at the word fanatic, depending on the context, it can have a positive or negative meaning. We say things like, "I'm a basketball fan" or "I'm a hockey fan" or "I'm a fan of the theater" or "I'm not much of a fan of Indian food" or something like that. It's pretty harmless. But there are some contexts where we don't say fan, we say the longer version of the word, we say fanatic. When you use the word, fanatic, things are starting to get pretty serious. When you say he's a fanatic, the synonyms we might also use are lunatic, obsessive, hard-core, crazy.

For example, my favorite musical band is a Canadian band called Rush. They've been inducted into the Rock and Roll hall of fame. They've sold tens of millions of albums. They have a Toronto park named after them in Willowdale, which is where they're from. There's even a competition right now at the High Park zoo. 3 baby capybaras were recently born and the public has been asked what to name them and guess which names are in the lead? The names of the three band members of Rush. They are hands down the greatest Canadian rock band ever. And unquestionably the most musically talented rock trio in music history. I am frequently listening to them when I'm driving my car. I've liked them since I was like 10 years old. I've been to a few of their concerts. At one time or another I've owned most of their albums. I've purchased and worn one or two of their concert T-shirts. It was the name I would doodle on my folders and binders when I was in junior high school. I have even prayed for them to become Christian, which is something I cannot say I've done for any other musician. So, one might say that I'm a fan, but I'm not a fanatic.

There's a guy in Buffalo, Tonawanda to be exact, who has a shrine to Rush in his basement. There is not a square centimeter on his basement walls that's not covered in some band memorabilia. He has all the bobble-head toys, the T-shirts, the albums, the cds, the tour books. He has file cabinets filled to the ceiling with newspaper articles. He has been to hundreds of their concerts. He is by far the most fanatical fan that even the band members know about him. He was even featured in the band's latest documentary. He is the living breathing walking historian and encyclopedia on his favorite band. His name is Ray Wawryzniak.

Now, when it comes to God, would you consider yourself a fan or a fanatic? I think for most of us, we would consider ourselves fans and probably not fanatics. Most of us would say, "Everyone needs God, it's good to have God, we all need a bit of religion, a shot of morality. Many parents of small children who might have left the church for whatever reason decide to come back to church once they have kids for a reason I've heard many many times—they want their children to be taught morals. A pinch of religion. A dash of God. But please, don't make my child into a fanatic.

I hear things from people who are professing Christians. We want you to get married to anyone, except a pastor. Or be whatever career you want to be, except a pastor. Be a fan, but not a fanatic. Or, yes of course, we should give money to the church, they do good work, those pastors there deserve to be paid. But 10%, now that's being financially irresponsible. Be a fan, but not a fanatic. Yes, of course, you're young, go a mission trip, see the world, help the children, but don't you dare become a missionary. We didn't immigrate to Canada for you to waste your life being a missionary. Be a fan, not a fanatic. Yeah, go to church once in a while, once a month, sure, why not, every Sunday, but more than that... that's a bit much. Be a fan, but not a fanatic. Are you getting the picture? As we've been asking during these sermons on Psalm 119, who is this guy, what is this guy, what is it that makes him write so single-mindedly about God and his word? What does he have that I don't? And do I even want to be like that?

Again, in this section of Psalm 119 the psalmist shows us what a God saturated life looks like. Let's take a closer look.

In verse 57 he says that he promises to obey God's words.

When we make promises we are obligating ourselves to another person. We are saying things like, even if it inconveniences me, even if it costs me, I will do what I promised I would do. You are placing a supreme value on the person that you've made the promise to and that's what Christians do all the time. We make promises to God and do our best to keep them because God himself makes promises to us and never fails to keep them.

In verse 58 he makes God the object of his pursuit, but more specifically he says, "I will seek your face." What does that mean? Maybe this story will help. When I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> year of university I was really stressed out. I was trying to figure out what my career path was going to be and I just wasn't sure if I was going to pursue medicine, or teaching or research. I was open to all those things, but I just had no certainty. So, for a period of time, my prayers were consumed with the "God, show me, God tell me" prayers. God show me what to do. God tell me what to do. And I was agonizing and agonizing, wrestling with God to give me something, a sign, anything. And then one day, I heard these words in my head, "Peter, stop seeking my hands, and start seeking my face!" Man, it was as clear as day. As soon those words came into my head, I knew exactly what I had done wrong, and what I now needed to do. You see, I was treating God like a magic genie, like a vending machine. Pop in a prayer, press the button, and out comes the answer. I was using God for my own advantage and not seeking God as a person, as the treasure of my life. So I got on my knees and confessed my sin and from that moment on, I started to seek God for God. I started to seek his face. So a fanatical Christian is like that. We don't use God for our own advantage. We go to God for God. In fact, isn't that how all normal and healthy relationships are? If we go to our friends just to get something out of our friends and say things to our friends just so they'll do the thing we want them to do, then we're not really friends at all.

Then verse 60 shows us that the psalmist has a sense of urgency to obey God. He says, I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. Speed often determines importance. I'll give you an example. Some of you are terrible email responders. We look at the email icon on your phone and it says, "2432 unread emails" and you know that one of our emails is included amongst those unread emails, but I know which emails are read and responded to immediately -- your boyfriend's, girlfriend's, the one from your child, your spouse, and especially your boss. The speed in which you reply tells everyone who's really important to you. How quickly then do we obey God, which is our way of replying and responding to God. Do the requests that God makes quickly slide down your inbox or is it dealt with right away?

What else? A fanatic says, "Come hell or high water, I will not ignore God." Look at verse 61. It's pretty graphic language. "Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law." Even if I'm unjustly incarcerated, even if something unimaginable, unthinkable, inhumane happens to me, I will not forget God! If I break up with my boyfriend or girlfriend, if I lose my job, children, even if I lose my parent, even if my health fails, I will not forget the law of God. I will not forget God.

Verse 62 says, "At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws." What does that mean? I think it means this: I will sacrifice my sleep to pray. Let's say that in the time of the psalmist, because there was no electricity, people generally slept earlier and woke up earlier because for many of us modern people today, waking up at midnight doesn't make any sense, because we sleep at 1,2,3,4 in the morning. But, to wake at midnight would be to wake up right in the middle of your 8 hour sleep. To us older people who sleep at 10 or 11, it's like saying, at 2am, 3am, I rise to give you thanks. I don't know if that means he goes back to sleep or not, but you see how utterly inconvenient that would be. Let's look our lives for a second. For what would you interrupt your precious sleep and wake up? I remember when Linda went into labor for our daughter. It was the middle of the night and I think I said, "Go back to sleep." I didn't even want to wake up for my wife and soon to be born child. You'd wake up in the middle of the night for your child who calls out to you, for an emergency call, for a test or presentation you had the next day. For others, if Korea was playing a world cup soccer game in a different time zone, you'd wake up. Meaning, that we'd wake up in the middle of the night for really, really, really important things and important people, and not much more than that.

Finally, your perspective, your outlook on the world completely changes. Look at verse 64. “The earth is filled with your love Lord (your hesed, your lovingkindness), teach me your decrees.” Many people before they became Christians had a very dismal and dark view of the world. They look at the problems, the crime, the poverty and violence and they’re filled with anger and despair. Or before they became Christians, they wore glasses that on the inside of the lens had mirrors. In fact that’s what the bible tells us. You truly cannot see out of your glasses apart from God, apart from Jesus Christ. We try and we try, but we end up, knowingly and unknowingly, looking at ourselves. In fact, we can’t help it, but after we become a Christian, when we look at the world, our perspective changes. In the planet, in the creation, in people, in situations, even in evil and in problems, we can say, “The earth is filled with your love, Lord.” Why? Because of Calvary. The epitome of love is the cross. The ultimate example of love was the greatest act of evil done to a person, and not just a person, but to the God-man, Jesus Christ. And so the mirrors are removed, and as we look through our lenses, we see the love of the Savior.

Okay, so we’ve looked at what a fanatical Christian looks like, and if you like what you see, then the question is, how do I become one? How do I make more of God and less of me? How do I become more committed to God and less committed to lesser things? The answer is in the first line of the first verse. “You are my portion Lord.”

I want to use the remainder of our time looking at this idea of the Lord being our portion. What is a portion? It’s an allotment. It’s a quantity. We say, I’ll have a portion of cake or pie. Or if someone receives a just punishment, we may even say, he’s received his fair portion. So that’s what a portion means in the English language. How was it used in the bible? It’s used primarily in reference to land and property. If you remember the story of the Israelites, they were slaves in Egypt, but then they were delivered by God’s servant Moses and taken through the wilderness on a 40 year journey. After those 40 years, under the leadership of Joshua they were taken into their new home, the land of Canaan, which is modern day Palestine. And as the twelve tribes of Israel settled in Canaan, each tribe was given a portion of land in which they could settle, build their homes and live. But there was one tribe to which no portion of land was given. Do you remember? The Levites, the priestly tribe. This was the tribe who would be the designated priests, they were the ones who would serve at the tabernacle and later at the temple. Aaron and Moses were both Levites. Now there were still 12 sections of land, because the tribe of Joseph was divided into his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. So in one sense there were 13 tribes, but of them, the Levites, were given no portion of land. Why? Let’s look at a couple verses.

The LORD said to Aaron, “You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your **share** and your inheritance among the Israelites. (**Numbers 18:20**)

That is why the Levites have no **share** or inheritance among their fellow Israelites; the LORD is their inheritance, as the LORD your God told them. (**Deuteronomy 10:9**)

So, as the tribe of priests, God himself was to be their share, their portion and their inheritance. Let's look into this even more deeply. Consider how important land was back in those times:

Having land would have meant so many things. It was the source of provision for growing crops and raising cattle. It was a person's security, the place you would call your home. It's the place you would raise your family and the land, was essentially non-transferable. It always belonged to you. You might lose it due to bad economics. You might have had to sell it, but you always had the right to buy it back, no questions asked. And once the year of Jubilee came around, all land had to be returned to the original family, no questions asked. That's how important land was. And yet, God says to the Levites, there's no inheritance, no land for you. I will be your inheritance, I will be your portion. God is saying this to them. Greater than owning land is having as your portion, the giver of land. Greater than the provision that land could provide, God will be your great provider. Stronger than the security and the future that land offers, I am a stronger security, I am a more assured future.

Now, if you were an Israelite and you had the choice of which tribe to be a part of, how many of us would chose the tribe of Levi?

Just in case you think that because you didn't choose the Levites, that you're off the hook, God tells the entire people of Israel that they are all a kingdom of priests, a nation of priests and God tells us, the church, Christians the same thing. In fact the Apostle Peter quotes the Old Testament to make his point. In 1 Peter 2-9 he says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

So, whether we like it or not, whether we were born a Levite or not, the entire nation is a kingdom of priests, as are we, and for us too God should be our portion. Thus, we too, even more than any Israelite, even more than the psalmist, should be able to confess, "Lord, you are my portion."

In Psalm 16:5 it says, "LORD, you alone are my **portion** and my cup; you make my lot secure."

Then in Psalm 73:26 it's written, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my **portion** forever."

Finally, in Psalm 142:5 "I cry to you, Lord; I say, "You are my refuge, my **portion** in the land of the living.""

Only when we make much of God, only when we consider God our portion, not just a part, like a piece of cake or pie, but our everything, will we be able to live the life of a fanatic.

Jesus too looked for fanatics. Listen to what he said:

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. (**Luke 14:26**)

Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." (**Luke 9:60**)

Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. (**Luke 18:22**)

Those aren't tame words. Those are the words of a radical, a revolutionary who demands absolute devotion and loyalty to him. He demands that we make him our portion. But, how?

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The only way is to be captivated by him, to be in love with him. When you think of a person who's willing to drop what he's doing at the request of another, to interrupt and lose sleep over a person, to seek the face of another person, to go through hell or high water for another, it kinda sounds like love. Only love for another will get us to completely rearrange our lives, to re-allocate our time, to reprioritize, to even suffer for. Love does that.

How do we get that love for God? By considering the one who loved us. He rearranged his life to come to be with us. He rearranged eternity. He re-allocated his priorities, his time, he even suffered for us. Why did Jesus do that? Because he loved us, because he wanted to save us. Because he wanted to give to us what he knew would be the only thing that would truly satisfy us, himself. Are you captivated by the love of Jesus? Is he your portion? Is he your everything?

Let's pray.