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"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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"Longing" – along with ["Defining the Presence of the Lord"](#), ["Experiencing the Manifested Presence of God"](#), ["The Presence of God in Light of the New Covenant"](#), ["The Shekinah"](#), ["Times of Refreshing"](#), and ["Worship, Prayer, & Music"](#) are excerpts from the book ["The Manifested Presence of God"](#) – all of which are freely accessible on our website: <https://www.AtChristsTable.org>

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As Christians, I think we are all aware that there are times when we need some “refreshing” in our personal walk with the Lord. And in the collective sphere, many seem to be always looking for “the next revival”. Yet, incongruously, we who live in the context of the material comforts, conveniences, and entertainments of Western Christianity are **insufficiently aware of the extent of “fallenness” of the world in which we live.** The lyric of the old Jim Reeves country gospel song, *“This World is Not My Home”*, just don’t seem to fit our Christian lives. Like the utilitarianism of the secular humanists, to varying degrees, we also tend toward the perspective that *“the greatest good for the greatest number of people”* can be achieved through science, technology, the economy, the “right” political party, and “good” government policies. As I study Scripture, it becomes increasingly clear to me that **the Old Testament and first century saints were much more aware of the “fallenness” of this life.** It occupied a larger part of their worldview. This “fallenness” is mentioned in passages of Scripture which we tend to gloss over.

Futility

“If I make my bed in Sheol¹, behold, You are there.”

Psalm 139:8

¹⁸ “For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time** are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the eagerly awaiting creation waits for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God. ²⁰ **For the creation was subjected to futility**, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope, ²¹ that **the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption** into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that **the whole creation groans and suffers** the pains of childbirth together until now. Romans 8:18-22

“For the creation was subjected to futility....” This is some of what Greek scholar, M.R. Vincent, has to say about the word translated “futility”: *“Vanity (ματαιότητι) Only here, Ephesians 4:17; 2 Peter 2:18. Compare the kindred verb became vain (Romans 1:21), and the adjective vain (1Corinthians 3:20; 1 Peter 1:18). Vain is also used to render κενός (1 Corinthians 15:14, 58; Ephesians 5:6; James 2:20). Κενός signifies empty; μάταιος idle, resultless. Κενός, used of persons, implies not merely the absence of good, but the presence of evil. The Greek proverb runs. “The*

¹ Place of the dead

empty think empty things.” Μάταιος expresses aimlessness. All which has not God for the true end of its being is μάταιος. Ezekiel 13:6, “prophesying vain things (μάταια),” things which God will not bring to pass. (Compare Titus 3:9) Here, therefore, the reference is to a perishable and decaying condition, separate from God, and pursuing false ends. By reason of Him who hath subjected (διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα) God, not Adam nor Satan.”

This perspective of futility has been echoed in the arts:

“The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry.”²

“Every earthly plan that be known to Man, He is unconcerned. He’s got plans of His own to set up His throne, when He returns.”³

In other words – specifically, the Scriptures - in spite of the promises, plans, and purposes of science, technology, and political parties, this world system is none-the-less doomed to futility.⁴

² A phrase in Robert Browning’s poem of 1785, “To a Mouse”, popularized by John Steinbeck in his novel of 1937, “Of Mice and Men”.

³ Bob Dylan, “When He Returns” from his album of 1979, “Slow Train Coming”.

⁴ Cf. 2 Peter 3:10-13; Cf. Psalm 2:1; Acts 4:25; Isaiah 8:10, 14:24-27



Longing

“What the eyes see [enjoying what is available] is better than [craving] what the soul desires. This too is futility and chasing after the wind.”
Ecclesiastes 6:9 AMP

There is a German literary term, *Sehnsucht*, which means **longing, yearning, an intense desire pointing to something which cannot be attained on earth in this life.** This concept is a major theme in the life, and writings of C.S. Lewis. In his autobiographical

work, *Surprised by Joy*. Lewis speaks of joy as “an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction.... It might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world. But then Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is.”

And in his classic work, *Mere Christianity*, he wrote this about “longing”: “Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do *want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world*. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise *If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.*”⁵

Longing in the Psalms

Again, such thoughts are based in Scripture. There is a particular Hebrew word, *arag*,⁶ which is found

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. Suggested Reading for more on C.S. Lewis and Longing: <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/argument-from-desire/>

⁶ Strong’s # H6165. The Greek equivalent is *epipotheo*, Strong’s # G1971.

throughout the Psalms. This is what the *Strong's Lexicon* says about this word:

“Usage: The Hebrew verb “arag” conveys a deep, intense longing or yearning, often used in the context of a soul’s desire for God. It suggests a strong emotional and spiritual thirst, akin to the physical need for water. This term is used to express a profound desire for communion with the divine, reflecting a heart that seeks after God with earnestness and fervor.

Cultural and Historical Background: *In ancient Hebrew culture, the imagery of thirst and longing was a powerful metaphor for spiritual desire. The arid climate of the Near East made water a precious and life-sustaining resource, and thus, the longing for water became a natural symbol for the soul’s longing for God. This metaphor would have resonated deeply with the original audience, who understood the desperation and necessity of quenching one’s thirst.”*

Particularly in the Psalms, we find both a personal and collective longing for the manifested presence of God:

¹As the deer **longs for** the water brooks,
So **longs my soul for You, O God.**

²*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*
When shall I come and appear before God?

³My tears have been my food day and night,

While they continually say to me,
“Where is your God?”
⁴When I remember these things,
I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go with the multitude;
I went with them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise,
With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.”

Psalm 42:1-4

¹“O God, You *are* my God;
Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.
²So *I have looked for You* in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory.” Psalm 63:1-2

¹How lovely are *Your dwelling places*, LORD of armies!
²**My soul longed and even yearned** for the
courtyards of the LORD; my heart and my
flesh sing for joy to the living God.
³The bird also has found a house, and the swallow a
nest for herself, where she may put her young: Your
altars, LORD of armies, My King and my God.
⁴Blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are
ever praising You. (Selah)

⁵Blessed is the person whose strength is in You, *in whose heart are the roads to Zion!*

⁶Passing through the Valley of Weeping⁷ they make it a spring; the early rain also covers it with blessings.

⁷They go from strength to strength, every one of them **appears before God** in Zion.

¹⁰For a day in Your courtyards is better than a thousand elsewhere. (Selah)

Psalm 84:1-7, 10

"You will show me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Psalm 16:11⁸

Longing in the New Testament

Such longing is also found throughout the New Testament:

"And not only *that*, but also we ourselves, having *the first fruits of the Spirit*, even we ourselves **groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly** for our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our body."

Romans 8:23⁹

⁷ Hebrew, *Baka*, Strong's # H1056.

⁸ Cf. Psalms 17:15, 21:6, 36:8-9

⁹ Cf. Hebrews 6:5

“The first fruits of the Spirit” cause our spirits to “groan, eagerly awaiting” **“to be present with the Lord”**. 2 Corinthians 5:8 *KJV*

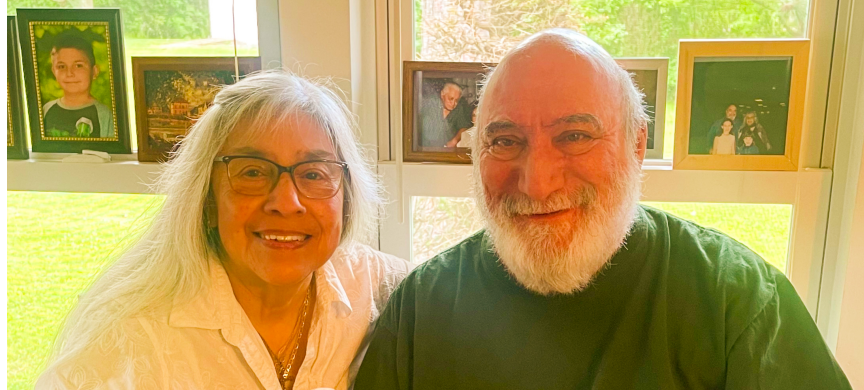
“¹For we know that if our earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have **a building from God**, a house not made by hands, **eternal in the heavens**. ²For indeed, in this *tent* **we groan, longing** to be clothed with **our dwelling from heaven**, ³since in fact after putting it on, we will not be found naked. ⁴For indeed, we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. ⁵Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us *the Spirit as a pledge (first installment)*.”

2 Corinthians 5:1-5

“The Spirit as a pledge” (first installment) causes our spirits to “groan, longing” **“to be present with the Lord”**. 2 Corinthians 5:8 *KJV*

This is my point. Although we have become expert at masking it, there is a deep dissatisfaction lying beneath the surface of our lives which causes our spirits and souls to “groan within ourselves”. **We long for the presence of the Lord – “to be present with the Lord”**.

Bill & Frances Furioso
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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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“Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

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with a view to

REVELATION of Christ

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