

THE LEANNESS OF SOUL
Psalm 106:1-15

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Text – VERSE 15 “He gave them their request and sent leanness into their soul.”

I want to begin my message by asking you a question that may sound odd to begin with, but is, I think, a reasonable one to ask of every Christian from time to time.

The question is this: “How lean is your soul?”

Now, it may be that you have never thought about your soul in this way, yet there are two particular verses in Scripture that have caught my attention and refer to this idea.

Turn with me to Isaiah 58, verse 2 - the last part of the verse. We read, “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

The prophet sends out the invitation in verse one with some very familiar words:

“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come ye to the waters,
And you who have no money come, buy and eat,
Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.
Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And you work for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And let your soul delight itself in FATNESS.”

Note: it is the soul not the body that delights itself in FATNESS!

And then, on the other hand, we see the opposite condition of the soul in Psalm 106 vs 15: “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness unto their soul.”

Now, here the Psalmist was writing about Israel, God’s Chosen People, and the way they acted and lived in response to his mercy which is referred to in verse one of this One-Hundred Sixth Psalm.

He said, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is Good; for his mercy endures forever.”

Verse 7 - Our fathers understood not God’s wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of his mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.

Verse 13 - They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel;

Verse 14 - They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.”

Then comes this most unusual comment in verse 15:”He gave them their request, and sent leanness into their soul.”

This sermon could very well have been titled: “THE DANGERS OF PRAYER”, for here we find god’s chosen people asking in prayer the desires of their heart; but because they

were not HOLY DESIRES, they resulted in the leanness of their souls.

Now, my friend, you may be priding yourself in your answered prayers, but never forget this:

Your prayers, if they are not according to the will of God for your life, may be the cause of the leanness - the starvation - of your soul.

You may be possessing what God simply allows, rather than what he wills for you, which would make your soul to delight itself in Fatness. What a difference!

As we remember all that happened in the experience of Israel, we think, in particular, of the day when Samuel, God's appointed Judge and prophet of Israel, was near death.

It is recorded in I Samuel Chapter 8, verse 1: "Samuel was old, and he made his sons judges over Israel."

Verse 4: "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel, and said unto him: 'You are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now make us a king to judge us like all other nations.'"

Verse 7: "And the Lord said, they have not rejected you,[Samuel], but they have rejected me - that I should not reign over them."

Now in Chapter ten, verses 17 to 19, Samuel said to the children of Israel, "The Lord says, 'You have this day rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversaries and your tribulations.'"

You see, no longer did they want God's first best - they would seek to satisfy themselves with something else, and something less.

These three things I find:

1. They failed in FAITH in God.

No longer were they able or willing to say that the way of faith was best.

2. They failed in LOVE for God.

They preferred rather to fulfill their selfish lusts.

3. They failed in SERVICE to God.

They chose to be in servitude to a man - a king - rather than to the almighty God.

Now, there is no reason to concern ourselves with what happened so many, many years ago unless that experience has some bearing upon the present.

I believe it does, for the temptation to take God's second best is forever before us. And we must guard ourselves, lest in our own private and personal lives - as well as in the church - we become guilty of the same sin.

"HE GAVE THEM THEIR REQUEST - BUT SENT LEANNESS UNTO THEIR SOUL."

Psalm 106:15

Think with me now about these three signs of a lean soul.

I. FAILING IN FAITH IN GOD -

It is the easiest thing in the TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MATERIALISM to completely forget about Faith.

We want to see - to hear - to feel - and to touch!

And if that is not possible, then we often wonder what value there is in anything where there is no sensory perception..

We are so used to talking about the tangibles - like automobiles, television sets, houses, money, furniture and freezers.

And though there is nothing wrong in these things in themselves - they become harmful to us if we forget such things as Love - Honesty - Purity - Justice - Dignity - Prayer and God!

THESE ARE THE IMPORTANT THINGS WITHOUT WHICH LIFE CANNOT REALLY BE EXPERIENCED AND ENJOYED IN ITS FULLNESS!

Each time I attended a Junior Chamber of Commerce meeting in Philadelphia - where I served as Chaplain - I saw there on a banner, the Creed which stated: "WE BELIEVE THAT FAITH IN GOD GIVES PURPOSE AND MEANING TO LIFE." It hung there before us as a rebuke to anyone or any church, or any of its members who refuse to believe that we advance by FAITH in a Living God, who not only created mankind, but did so for his own glory.

And I would never want anyone to get the idea that Faith is a substitute for work! It isn't - and it never has been.

But any Bible student will tell you that faith coupled with hard work can do far more than hard work alone.

That is exactly what we are facing in the Christian church today - and in almost any church in any place.

Many are working as hard as the possibly can.

That is evident in numerous ways in and about our church right here.

But all our hours of labor are not enough to reach the high goals we have set;

Goals that we refuse to lower because we want God's very best for our church.

These goals can be obtained - only as we combine our physical strength with the **STRENGTH OF FAITH -**

FAITH IN A LIVING GOD who is able to touch men's hearts and bring them into submission to his will.

Most of our problems, tensions and difficulties in a church result from Lack of Faith.

We lack the faith to believe that God can touch the heart of a man or woman who is needed to teach a Sunday School Class, and we may ask everyone we know and they refuse us. But why not ask God? Is this too much to expect of Him?

We lack the faith to believe that officers can be found for our church organizations. Everyone seems to be so busy and we know they are. But why not ask God to touch the heart of someone who will be willing to lay aside a less important activity to take up one that will reap eternal dividends.

We set before ourselves certain financial goals that are determined solely by what we believe we **MUST** do for the Kingdom of God, at home and abroad. But then we lack the faith to believe that God will supply the necessary amount. We ask, but do we ask - faith believing that God will answer?

We could very easily lower the amount of our budget and make it a very easy one to reach. We could do this, I say, if we wanted to cut back our programs and take God's second best. But God has placed upon our hearts a burden of work that calls for our very best, And by Faith in Him, we can do all that we have set out to do.

We must beware, lest God gives us only what **WE** want - the easy path - and then sends Leanness unto our Souls.

II. THE SIGN OF THE LEAN SOUL IS ALSO SEEN IN FAILING TO LOVE GOD.

Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments. Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you."

Love is relational - It is communion with another person. It is a coming-together union.

As my young daughter was riding along with me in the car, she leaned over against me and said, "Daddy, I love you." I asked, "Why do you love me, honey?" She replied, "Because you love me."

Isn't that what we find in the Epistle of John, chapter 4 verse 19? Speaking of God, the writer says, "We love God, because he first loved us."

And if we do, there are going to be unmistakable signs of that love in our daily walk, for we will be laboring not for the meat that perishes but for the meat which endures unto everlasting life.- meat that will show itself in the Fatness of our souls.

III. AND THE THIRD EVIDENCE OF THE LEAN SOUL IS IN FAILING TO SERVE THE LIVING GOD.

Have you ever thought about the cost of real discipleship –
Of truly identifying yourself with Christ?

Read again the story of the Disciples and see the price they had to pay. Go to Korea, to Spain, to South America, and *count* then the cost of serving Christ.

The Israelites of old thought they had already paid too much of a price. They seemed to be fed up with their different way of life. Now they wanted a king like any other nation. They were tired of being a peculiar people. And even though God did not forsake them, *he gave them their request* and sent leanness *into their soul*.

Oh, My Friends -

Let us unite ourselves together in hard work, in fervent prayer, in simple *faith*, and believe that *God's way* is the best way. And let your soul delight itself in fatness - by walking in Faith, in Love, and in your Service for Christ.

AMEN.