

A young man kneels before his beloved, engagement ring held tightly in his hand. Offering the ring he expresses his love, asking her to marry him. He concludes, 'I may not have a fancy car and lots of money like Tony Brown but I love you with my whole heart.' His girlfriend replies, 'I love you too but tell me more about Tony Brown.' In the words of the prophet Jeremiah, *'The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?'* 17:9 Biblically, our heart, is the centre of the will, intellect, feeling and longings. So we speak of the desires of our heart. Exposing the longings of our heart, even as Christians, is a messy business. We avoid opening the can of worms. Brothers and sisters open the can of worms we must if we are to grow the heart of a true worshipper. Many of our longings reflect God given desires: love, security, significance, relationship, peace. Because our heart is deceitful we seek to satisfy longings our way, not God's. We sing to God, *'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.'* while our soul longs independently of God. For that which fails to fully satisfy the hunger within: human love, worldly success, acceptance, recognition. The aching pain of unfulfilled longings opens the door to counterfeit deadeners of pain like alcohol, drugs, chocolate, caffeine, television, computer games. The disappointment of unfulfilled longings awaken in us a desire for relief, excitement, danger. Fantasies capture our thoughts taking us places we fear to go but are enticed to. Feelings of excitement or anticipation rise up within and crowd out the worries and stresses of life. Fed by gambling, pornography, fast powerful cars, extreme activities, reality TV. It is confronting to have the longings of our heart laid bare. There is healing and hope in rediscovering the longings of a true worshipper. Job, the true worshipper, expresses the longings of his heart to his God and his friends. For readers of Scripture a revelation to teach, correct, rebuke and equip us for righteous living. I find the longings of Job's heart uncomfortable reading. Putting the spotlight on my own. Job's longings are shaped without the revelation we have in Jesus Christ. Yet they point us to Jesus. Because he is a true worshipper, Job's longings ought to shape the heart of every Christian. **First**, Job longs for God. He longs to stand before God a free man, a justified man enjoying fellowship with his sovereign Creator. Given the unbridgeable gap between human beings and God's strength and wisdom, Job is unsure how his longing can be satisfied. *'But how can mere mortals prove their innocence before God?'* *'Though they wished to dispute with him, they could not answer him one time out of a thousand.'* 9:2b-

**3** Uncertainty does not quench his longing for God. **Chapter 29** focuses on Job's longings. He speaks of a longing for intimacy with God crowned by the abundant favour of the one he calls the rock. *'How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, when his lamp shone on my head and by his light I walked through darkness! Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house, when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me, when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.'* **v2-6**

The New Testament describes Jesus as the rock. Remarkably his longing: friendship with Jesus. Sisters and brothers, is the longing of your heart to know God intimately? To enjoy fellowship with him in Christ? As a Christian, Job's longing to be a justified man is already fulfilled in you. A forgiven sinner clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Rejoice in that. Even as we enjoy the fruit of this gift our heart for God can grow cold. Crowded out by other longings. The absence of personal prayer and Bible reading becomes the norm. Depression, grief, major illness sometimes impair our strength and ability to pray and read the Bible. If that is you, don't be burdened by guilt. God's grace is not conditional grace. But if we lose our desire to know God better, ask God to ignite a fresh fire in us for him. **Second**, Job longs to make a difference for God. **29:7-17** on the surface reads like the nostalgic ramblings of a man past his prime. Once citizen of the year, now discarded and forgotten. **Verse 14** reveals something deeper, *'I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban.'* Job longs to once again stand for righteousness and justice as a servant of God. To make a difference for God as a leader and saviour figure. Brothers and sisters, is your longing to make a difference so people honour you or so people see God more clearly? **Third**, Job longs for resurrection. The renewal of humanity; the end of the devastating impact of sin. *'If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then remember me! If someone dies, will they live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made. Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin.'* **14:13-17** In **29:18-20**. Job speaks of a long life. A whisper of a longing the righteous will live forever. *'I thought, 'I will die in my own house, my days as numerous as the grains of sand. My roots will reach to the water,*

*and the dew will lie all night on my branches. My glory will not fade; the bow will be ever new in my hand.'* Sisters and brothers, are you so consumed by this world you have lost the longing for eternity with God? **Fourth**, Job longs for a mediator. Unable to argue his case before God. Condemned as an unforgiven sinner by the religious system of his friends. Job longs for someone to testify before God to his genuine faith. Job's words are profound, echoing the truth of **Genesis 4** that God himself avenges the shedding of the blood of the innocent. *'Earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest! Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as one pleads for a friend.'* **16:18-21** Job appeals to God his friend to testify on his behalf to God. Divinely inspired insight foreshadowing the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ. The good news that God in Christ took upon himself the judgement of God on our sin so we stand before God righteous in his sight. Jesus is our mediator, our advocate at the right hand of God. Job's longing for a mediator has been fulfilled for every believer since the beginning of time. Praise God. Finally, brothers and sisters we see in Job's longings the longings God gave Adam and Eve before the Fall. Longings expressed throughout the Old Testament. Longings fulfilled in Jesus. As a man enjoying intimate fellowship with the Father. The perfect leader/saviour making a difference for God. Raised to life and ruling at God's right hand. Sisters and brothers, Job's longings express the yearnings of a Spirit filled heart. To diminish, crush, hide or replace those longings is to grieve the Spirit. Ask God to reveal the current longings of your heart and any ungodly means of satisfying them. As he exposes that which leads you away from intimacy with God, confess and repent. Job discovered at the end of his traumatic journey, the longings of a Spirit filled heart will not be disappointed. We will discover that too.