

Our motives for seeking the Lord in sincerity

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Date: 09 September 2007

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[0 : 00] in dependence upon the Lord, I ask your prayerful attention to Psalm 27, and especially verse 4.

Verse 4 in Psalm 27. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

And then these two motives, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple.

We are told this is a psalm of David. And David here expresses his spiritual desires.

Are they yours and are they mine? But I feel we should say a few things concerning the psalm.

[1 : 30] Unlike some psalms, we are not told at the heading the circumstances in which it was written. But in the psalm there are certain indications.

David had seven brothers older than himself, and clearly two of his three sisters were older as well. The mother of Joab, Abishai and Asahel, and also the mother of Amersa.

So David had at least nine in his family, possibly ten older than himself. So his parents must have been middle-aged when he was born.

And he speaks of them as still being alive. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.

So clearly he must have been a young man at this time. And then he speaks of his enemies, of the wicked pursuing him and camping against him and so on.

[2 : 46] It would seem almost certainly it was while King Saul was hunting David as a partridge upon the mountains. So David began to reign, of course, at the age of 30 after Saul's death.

But what about his spiritual condition? What confidence? What trust in the Lord he shows? The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Whom shall I feel? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afloat? This is the same man who on one occasion said, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.

After he had already been anointed by Samuel to be king, then he expressed that unbelief that Saul would one day kill him and that promise that he'd received in that anointing by Samuel would never be fulfilled.

David was not always in full confidence and trust in the Lord any more than you and I are.

[4 : 21] We do not excuse his unbelief though we know what it is like in our own hearts. And though we cannot dwell upon the circumstances, I remind you that he fled to Gath, to Achish the king of Gath.

And what trouble he brought upon himself. He lied to Achish and Achish gave him that city.

The name escapes my memory for the moment. And then of course, he returned. He almost got involved in fighting the children of Israel.

But the lords of the Philistines objected to him. And when he returned to his own city, it was burnt with fire. His wives and children taken captive.

Well, we cannot dwell upon that. But coming to this fourth verse. One thing have I desired of the Lord.

[5 : 41] We read of many prayers of David. In a later psalm, we read of his prayers for Solomon. But one thing was paramount.

One thing he desired while he was in this life above other things. And he desired it of the Lord.

He had made it a matter of prayer. And he describes it as that will I seek after.

To seek is to search diligently. We read in one of the prophets, they shall seek me.

And they shall find me when they search for me with all their heart.

[6 : 48] The heart, of course, in Scripture sets forth our emotions, our desires, our motives. The mind sets forth our understanding.

Do you search for the Lord with all your heart? It just comes to one's mind how we read in the Gospel recorded in Luke of that occasion when the Lord at the age of twelve was taken up to Jerusalem to the feast.

And he tarried behind in Jerusalem and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey. How many days' journey of life have you and I gone supposing the Lord was with us?

We haven't heard his voice. We haven't felt his touch. We've supposed he was with us when he wasn't. When he wasn't.

[8 : 12] They, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey. And they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

They were so taken up. They were so taken up. We often fear of this concerning our annual meetings and special services. We can get so taken up with meeting old friends and so on.

And they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance and they found him. And then they turned back to Jerusalem seeking him.

And after three days, they found him where they should have looked for him first of all. in the temple.

In the temple. Wished ye not that I must be about my father's business? They understood not that saying which he spoke unto them.

[9 : 19] We know the Lord can bless his people's souls wherever they are on earth. But how well the poet puts it.

His mercies visit every house that pay their night and morning vows but makes a more delightful state where churches meet to praise and pray.

At Hokington, we used to have an elderly gentleman. Well, he hadn't always been elderly but he was stone deaf from the age of 14.

And initially, he stayed at home because he couldn't hear a thing. And even when hearing aids came out after the war, they were of no use to him.

But, he eventually came back to jail. And he could lip read and converse though his voice was very strange. Especially with my father for whom he used to work at one stage.

[10 : 32] And he said, if he stayed at home, he might try and read the scriptures and pray but his thoughts so easily got distracted. But coming to the house of God and his knees showing him the reading and the text, he could then meditate better upon the subject though he couldn't hear a word than he could if he was at home with the distractions of the heart.

And I often felt what an example he said. because some people sadly need little excuse to stay on. I hope that doesn't apply to anyone here.

Now I read in Psalm 84 there of the psalmist there having that longing and fighting for the courts of London.

It is true in so many things providentially and spiritually we don't appreciate them until we lose them.

It wasn't until I was in the army and not near any place that I knew of when the truth was preached that I really began to appreciate the blessing of gathering in the house of God.

[11 : 58] And the psalmist there goes on to say a day in thy courts and remember the court is where a king is a day in thy courts is better than a thousand that is in the things of time in the world.

I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Look at the small print. The house of my God the tents of wickedness. A house has foundations a tent has none.

A house will withstand the storm a tent will be swept away. Which would you rather be? The house and are you able to say of my God that it is better than the thousand days in the tents of wickedness.

Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord will give grace in this life and glory in that which is to come.

[13 : 27] No good thing will he withhold from them that walk up lightly. We have been singing concerning walking up lightly and what grace it needs for the world is ever on its watch before the fall of the people of God.

I was speaking last Lord's Day morning at Oakington concerning David's fall. Just in passing you remember in the 51st Psalm written after Nathan had come to him and said thou art the man that was full of repentance wash me thoroughly from my sin cleanse me from my iniquity and so on and then he seems to break off build thou the walls of Jerusalem what the walls of Jerusalem got to do with David's repentance it came to me like this and the Lord teaches my parables to this very day years ago I was walking on the walls of the city of Chester in North Wales one of the few cities with the walls still almost complete and I that word came to my mind and I considered how the walls made a clear distinction between those in the city in safety and as it were the world outside the walls of the kings of his generation taking another man's wife causing that man to be put to death had made a breach in the wall he blurred the distinction in his walk between those that fear the

Lord and the world that lies in wickedness build thou the walls of Jerusalem make up the breach keep me Lord because I cannot keep myself but we must return that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord where we dwell is where we live where we feed where we rest where loved ones are those of the same name we don't knock on the door of the house in which we live we open the door and walk in it is our home is this house of God or another one as it were where you dwell and not only that when we are absent do not our thoughts continually turn to where our loved ones are these days of course we may telephone or text them to find out how they are and this is so in our dear family if they are on holiday the grandchildren constantly text us and I reply and we want to know how each other lives to dwell in the house of the

Lord again you see a house with foundations that will withstand the storm we have heard much in recent months of floods and my thoughts went to that parable that the Lord spoke who so heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them each of us are hearers this morning and we also doeth and doeth them is like a man that built a house and dug deep and laid the foundation upon a rock and the winds came and the rain and the floods beat upon that house and it fell not because he dug deep never never the digging deep was needful to find the rock but we might say if he dug a mile deep and built upon sand the house was not astray and it fell not because it was built upon a rock and there solemn was the end of the other one dwell in the house of the

Lord all the days of my life we are not to shut ourselves away in monasteries as it were I do not think this means that literally we must be in the chapel every day of the week though if we have a love to the house we shall be there every time the doors are open if circumstances permitted but I remind you of that dear prophetess Anna we read let me just find it widow of about four score and four years which departed not from the temple and served God with fastings and prayers night and day and she coming in that instant so she must have been outside to come in so although it says she departed not from the temple it clearly was in her spirit in her desires in her prayers and so

[19 : 50] I believe with David all the days of my life not just on the Lord's day or on the week evening service but our thoughts and prayers especially being for the prosperity of Jerusalem to build up and to bless the ministry and preaching of the word I you hear in spirit all the days of your life and notice days I think of psalm 90 prayer of Moses the man of God where he prayed teach us to number our days with this with this object that we may apply our hearts and affections unto

Wesley if we are asked how old we are we naturally say so many years if Moses had meant years he would have said years but he didn't he said days do you number your days here's a thought for you dear younger ones when I was in the army abroad and I believe my great desire to return home was that I could again sit under the preaching of the gospel like many others I hung a series of numbers on a card at the foot of the man 100 99 98 down to zero because we've been told the day we were to be demobilized each night as I got in bed I crossed off one more day the next night another day the time seemed to go slowly in the 90s and 80s seemed to be quicker in the teens and units but when you go to bed tonight remember cross off one more day you are one day older but you have got one day less remaining this is one more

Lord's day and it is one less Lord's day however young we are and this thought has often been upon my mind in recent years as we get older each period of time is a bigger proportion of our remaining life the newborn babe with perhaps 70 years before them a year is only one 70th part of their life when we've got two years one year is half when we've got two days one day is half Queen Elizabeth the first is reputed to have said on her deathbed she'd give half her kingdom for another hour of time clearly if that were true she didn't want to depart

I heard this week of the passing of an esteemed friend Miss Patterson from the Bethesda home at Harpenden where I hope to visit tomorrow and each time I've seen her recently she has said she longs to depart to be with Christ she wouldn't give half her possessions for another hour of time would she be sure she wouldn't but how about you how about me set your affections on things above and not on things on the earth all the days of my life and then I said there were two great motives especially you dear younger friends look well to your motives why do you want to study this subject why do you want to be friendly with that person why do you want to live here go there do this there should be two great motives in our lives and in our prayers firstly

God's glory secondly his people spiritual God we may say more in that act and when we come to inquiring or praying in his temple look well I say to your motives now David's first important motive was to behold behold the word behold means not only to look or glance at but to look upon and to consider what we see no doubt like myself you have perhaps been on a journey with the family and perhaps held up on the road and you look about you and you suddenly see something a house castle or whatever you haven't seen it before you've been concentrating on your driving and you say oh look at that house over there and the family say it's been there years you must have seen it many times you had but you hadn't considered it you hadn't beheld it have you compared

[26 : 17] Pilate's view of Christ with that of John the Baptist Pilate we read marveled marveled that a man could suffer so much uncomplaining and Pilate said of Christ behold the man behold the man John the Baptist looked upon Jesus as he walked and said behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world which do you behold John Newton in that searching hymn writes what think ye of Christ is the test to try both your state and your scheme you cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly he describes various people's view of

Christ and then continues if asked what of Jesus I think though still my best thoughts are but poor I say he's my meat and my drink my life and my store and so on and he's all in all if asked what of Jesus I think though still after these years still my best thoughts are but poor I say he's my meat and my drink my life and my strength and my store my shepherd my husband my friend my savior from sin and from throne my hope from beginning to end my portion my lord and my own to behold the beauty of the lord it is a true saying that beauty is in the eye of the beholder what one person thinks is beautiful another thinks are plain or uninteresting you may have seen a young couple clearly in love walking hand in hand on the other side of the road and have thought whatever can she see in him whatever can he see in her and yet their eyes are up to one another eyes sparkling and so on because of love that makes the difference love

I remind you of that which we read in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah that chapter commences with two searching questions who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed have you believed this report of the gospel and especially of Christ as it goes on to describe his sufferings for his peace have you believed it and in those days of manual work and physical combat the arm often sets forth the work has the work of the Lord been revealed the work of salvation and if something is revealed to us by implication it was previously hidden or we wouldn't say it is now revealed has it been revealed to you and then in the next verse describing that person to whom the arm of the

Lord the work of salvation has not yet been revealed he Christ shall grow up before him as a tender plant a weak plant a root out of a dry ground he hath no form nor comeliness and when we shall see him with our natural eye there is no beauty that we should desire him our friend asked me for a hymn and I gave him 975 in him the world no beauty sees but he had already chosen it for another hymn our thoughts and meditations on the same line to behold the beauty of the

Lord to as it were sit and look upon him do we not see that with a young courting couple how they will sit and gaze at one another but I say beauty is in the eye of the behind them my wife may be wrinkled and grey headed and stooping through osteoporosis but still beautiful in my eyes because of love you see that's what makes the difference that's make the difference in the song of Solomon we have the bride groom who sets forth Christ we have the bride who sets forth the church and we have the daughters of Jerusalem setting forth young inquirers and we read I think it is in the fifth chapter where the daughters of

[32 : 52] Jerusalem say to her what is thy beloved more than another beloved what special about the one you love oh thou fairest among women what is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou do so charge us she describes her loved one in beautiful figurative language how often a young couple do use various figures and things that might seem silly or soppy to an outsider but as a token of love and endearment to the recipient hymn 22 or 23 I think it is describes these beautiful figures but she sums it all up his mouth is most sweet not only his kisses but his words of love his mouth is most sweet yea he is altogether lovely this is my beloved and this is my friend oh daughters of

Jerusalem elsewhere described as the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely to behold the beauty of the Lord and is not that beauty as it were manifested in this work of salvation in giving his life a ransom for many if someone saved our lives naturally speaking perhaps from drowning or some other death wouldn't they be lovely in our eyes wouldn't we speak well of them to behold the beauty of the Lord in Isaiah 33 we have set forth that which awaits the

Lord's people after speaking of those tokens and evidence of one that has the fear of the Lord hating evil and bribes and so on thine eye shall see the king in his beauty at the judgment day every eye will see him but some on the left hand will see him only as their stern judge to condemn depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels but those on the right end come ye blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world heaven is not wages for good works and yet thousands are still asking that foolish question what must

I do to inherit eternal life heaven is an inheritance through salvation we read in Hebrews 9 it is appointed unto when once to die but after this the judgment so Christ was once offered a time appointed for him to die and unto them that look for him shall he appear with unto salvation are we looking for if we have a love to a person we look for their return and long for their coming mourn their absence to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire or pray in his temple we cannot dwell upon prayer now it is a great subject but

I did say how that it should be our chief motive God's glory and we have it in the so called Lord's prayer though I feel his prayer is really the one before his sufferings began he did not need to pray forgive us our trespasses but we should pray after that manner and the first three requests in that prayer do not ask for anything for the person who is praying they seek God's blood hallowed treated with love and respect be thy name thy kingdom thy gospel kingdom come in our hearts in the hearts of each of thy people thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven and the person praying after that manner hasn't asked for anything for themselves has you in a gospel sense we have the two great commandments thou shalt love the

[38 : 43] Lord thy God with all thy strength with all thy might and him only shalt thou say and the second is like unto it thou shalt love thy neighbour thy spiritual neighbour as thyself to to inquire we often read how David and others went up to inquire of the Lord solemnly we read how Saul inquired of the Lord and the Lord answered him not and what was the result did he wrestle with the Lord more fervently in prayer no he went to the witch at end off he didn't continue in prayer the Lord seldom answers prayers immediately I could mention one or two we have one or two in the scriptures but not many not many for the most part he tarries off till evening late to try our faith to see how diligently we are to prove us to inquire in his temple but just in conclusion notice this fact in his temple the first temple which for distinction we refer to as

Solomon's temple wasn't going to be built for many years but he didn't say in the tabernacle did he I know he mentions the tabernacle in the fifth verse and then again in the sixth in scripture generally speaking the tabernacle sets forth worship of God under the law the tabernacle had no foundations it was a temple building you read of the mortise and tenon joints the sockets of silver and the covering was badger skins and no doubt by the time of David much of it had been renewed the temple was a permanent building built upon a rock and a threshing floor of a rawn of the Jebusite of which much might be said built of stone made ready before it was placed in position no sound of a hammer or a tool of iron covered with boards overlaid with gold in much many parts the beauty of the gospel compared with the law the law serves its purpose the law is our school master to bring us unto

Christ but we pray now in gospel days in the temple and I remind you what we read in Corinthians know ye not that ye are the temple if the spirit dwell within you ye are the temple read of building upon the foundation no other foundation than that that is laid which is Jesus Christ if someone were to say to us can we use your chapel for a bingo or a dance or something of that sort we would say certainly not we wouldn't dream of allowing our chapel to be used for that how about the temple of your heart how about the temple of your heart do the things of the world creep into that temple mine heart is often full of well perhaps not full is the right expression but many of them in it many of them in it and

I remind you how the Lord came into the temple and he found the buyers and sellers the money changers those that sold doves and he cast them all out and he said my father's house shall be called the house of prayer and ye have made it a den of things he drove them all out with his whip of small cords and how we desire that to be driven out of our affections from our heart and then we read the blind and the lame came to him in the temple in a cleansed temple that was where the healing power was put forth not while the buyers and sellers were there the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them well

I leave these thoughts with you may you and I be as David in that spirit more often one thing have I desired of the Lord that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to see the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple Amen