

Delighting in the Lord (Quality: Average)

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Date: 28 August 1966

Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 00] As the Lord may help me, I will speak this morning from the 37th Psalm, the fourth verse.

Psalm 37, verse 4. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

The 37th Psalm, the fourth verse. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

My mind has been led to this word because it will give me occasion to speak another feature and exercise of spiritual life in the soul.

My regular congregation will know that for some time past, I've been endeavoring to speak of spiritual life in the soul as it is brought forth in its regeneration.

[1 : 28] And of those essential principles, especially of faith, hope, and love, which constitute it.

For spiritual life in the soul consists in the liveliness of those spiritual principles, living by faith and hope and love.

Now, this word, for me, the occasion to speak of the spiritual desires of that spiritual life.

For spiritual desires, as much as anything, prove whether there's been a genuine regeneration in the soul.

For without spiritual life, it's impossible that there can be any spiritual desires. And the desires intended in my text, of course, are of an entirely spiritual nature.

[2 : 47] And that is very clear because they're connected with the first part of the verse. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. And the second point consists in the satisfying of the desires of the flesh and of the mind. But these desires do not spring from spiritual life in the soul, and there's no delighting in the Lord.

But when the soul is born again by the Holy Spirit, and remember always, ye must be born again.

When the soul is born again of the Holy Spirit, there's a principle imparted, wherewith there's an ability to delight in the Lord.

[4 : 14] And where there's a delighting in the Lord, then the desires of the heart will be such as the Lord will assuredly grant.

For if we were to take the last part of the text and isolate it, we might so easily misapply it altogether. There is nothing in the Scripture to warrant us to believe that the Lord will give all the desires of every heart.

But he will give all gracious desires, and he will give the desires of every heart that delights itself in the Lord.

Now to make this a little clear, and hoping that the Lord may confirm what I have to say on the matter, I will speak a little first of the desires themselves.

And as I have said, spiritual desires are often the first indication of spiritual life at all.

[5 : 27] The Lord will give the desires of the heart, especially perhaps when the beginning of a saving work of grace in the heart has not been accompanied.

It isn't always, it is sometimes, with distinct and powerful convictions at the time. The Lord works gently in some cases, and sternly in others.

Some hearts he opens, like he opened the heart of Lydia, by disposing the heart to seek after and to desire spiritual things.

Others he breaks down with terrible ways, like he did the jailer, who came in trembling in his convictions before the apostles.

However that may be, with a spiritual life in the heart, spiritual desires will be an indication of it.

[6 : 31] For just as water will never rise above its level, so the desires of the heart will never rise above its nature.

Never. Nature affords ample scope for natural desires. By nature I mean the things of this time state as such.

Now the desires of the heart will never rise above them. But where desires arise from spiritual life, they will rise to their level.

Or seek to rise to their level. And their level is spiritual enjoyments in the soul. And then again, on this point, the desires of the heart are the same in every case and in every generation.

Now, there are great differences in degree with regard to certain experiences. Some are more deep, more definite, more clear, more powerful than others.

[7 : 53] And with regard to that, we cannot make one case a standard or measure for other cases. But when you come to the desires of the heart, now that embraces all.

There's no one ever they may have been led and taught of God and attained to an establishment in the gospel, in the experience of it in their hearts, and assurance of faith for themselves, but what still have desires.

Surely no child of God could ever say that he got as far as he desired to get. That he'd known all he desired to know.

That he enjoyed all he desired to enjoy. That he attained to all he desired to attain to. And there was nothing more to follow after.

Well, no one could possibly say that. In fact, my brethren, it works the other way. And the more that is known and experienced in the things of God always deepens the desire to know more.

[9 : 17] And at the same time, it embraces the very least in the kingdom of heaven. Whether there are real desires in the heart, they are the same desires in the newborn soul as in the man of God.

And they are the same in every generation. However different the dispensations, the desires of the heart of the people of God are always the same.

Because they always spring from the same source. And therefore they always rise to the same level. You take the case of David.

David said, My soul thirsteth for God. For the living God. You find Asaph saying, Whom am I in heaven but thee?

And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. You find Isaiah saying, With my soul have I desired thee in the night.

[10 : 24] And these were representative people. That is to say, their desires were representative of the desires of the godly in their day and generation.

If you come to the New Testament, you find that the apostles expressing themselves in the same way, and particularly the apostle Paul, saith he, I have not detained.

I am not already perfect. I follow after. My heart's desire is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings and to be made conformable to his death.

And so it is to this day. You see the footsteps of the flock in all of this? And it isn't only that these desires are the same in their nature, but they're always the same in their objective.

Always. But I want to come later to speak of the objective of the spiritual desire. And there's another thing I want to mention as I open the subject this morning.

[11 : 44] And that is that spiritual desires in the heart, the desires of thine heart, they enter into all our spiritual matters.

All of them. Do we pray? Well, do we desire what we pray for? If our prayers in their petitions are genuine and right, there's desire in them.

How do you think you doesn't appear in the sight of God that any should pray for things they have no desire for? Well, what can that be at the best but a drawing now prayer to him with the lips while the heart is far from him?

Brethren, our prayers are prayers no more and no less than our, the desires of our heart flow into them. And it's always the heart that God regards in our prayers.

not the ability with which we can express ourselves but the desires of our heart. We may not be able to express ourselves hardly at all.

[13 : 04] Like one of the salemists said, O Lord, all my desire is before thee and my groaning is not hid from thee.

As I would say, I can't express what I desire. My groaning expresses it more than any expressions I can use. take hearing the word.

Well, my friends, you'll come before God this morning to listen at this party of our worship to his most holy word. Now, God knows if you've got any desire for those things that are being set before you.

Whether you're here with a desire to know personally and savingly and effectually and blessedly for yourselves things that I desire the Lord may help me to set before you in his name.

And desires in your heart matter quite as much as ability in the pulpit. However ably the word of the gospel may be preached to you unless there were desires for it in your heart.

[14 : 26] It couldn't profit you at all. Now, desire enters into our hearing of the word. We hear with a desire to believe and receive and experience what we hear.

And, where there are those desires in the heart, this word is applicable, he will give thee the desires of thine heart. Sooner or later, in that way and that degree that is according to his way of dealing with you personally, he will give you the desires of your heart.

If you desire to know the truth, he will teach you the truth. if you desire to receive the gospel, he will convey it to your soul.

If you desire to be enriched with the spiritual blessings of Jesus Christ, he will enrich you with them, for he will give thee the desires of thine heart.

it enters into our reading of the scriptures. Now, all truth is in the word of God, and we have great cause to be thankful for the scriptures.

[15 : 51] I don't know where we should be if it wasn't for the scriptures. We should be at sea without a compass. We should be travelers on a journey without a map to guide them.

When people disregard the word of God, that's just their position. They may think they're going right, they may be going entirely wrong. They may think they're making for heaven, when they're making for the rocks.

We have great cause to be thankful for the scriptures. They're alike to us in the dark place. But the scriptures won't benefit as much if we have no desire to be instructed by them and no desire to be guided according to the word.

Any more than a compass would be of any benefit to a sailor if he disregarded it. Set it aside. It's very profitable in reading the scriptures to feel a desire for those things, those sacred and blessed things that are therein set before us.

Search the scriptures, brethren, for in them there is eternal life in Jesus Christ. the desires of the heart enter into something else very tenderly and very solemnly and very sweetly when we're enabled to feel it.

[17 : 32] The desires of the heart enter very largely into gospel ordinances. and nothing can make the Lord's table on which are set forth the sacred emblems of our dear Redeemer's broken body and shed blood than a desire to eat of his flesh and to drink of his blood by that appointed means.

The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup which we drink, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?

May the desires of the heart enter into these things and there's a real desire for communion with Jesus Christ in his suffering, in his broken body and in his precious shed blood. Now look my friends, take away the desires of the heart and what is there in it all? What is there in praying?

What is there in preaching? What is there in reading? What is there in the ordinances? If there's no desires in our hearts, there's nothing in it to us.

[18 : 59] delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

heart. Well now, I will pass over some thoughts in my mind upon the desires, because I want to come to their objectives this morning.

he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. If you were asked what the desires of your heart were, could you give an answer to the question?

Do you feel you could give an answer to the question? Well, let me put before you what the desires of a spiritual heart really are, and then perhaps you will feel, yes, yes, I feel I can put the amen of my own spirit and feelings to that.

To begin with, then, the desires of the heart of a child of God centering Jesus Christ always and invariably is the chief objective of the desires of the heart of a child of God.

[20 : 27] And just as a magnet attracts a needle because there emanates from the magnet an attractive quality that acts upon the needle and draws it to itself, so there emanates from that blessed person, Jesus Christ.

in my heart I do love to extol and to speak well of there emanates from Jesus Christ an attraction, an attraction of grace and of love and of compassion and of sweetness for how sweet the name of Jesus sounds in the believer's ear that acting upon the desires of the heart, the heart having desires, attract it and center it in Jesus Christ.

Now let me enlarge on this for a minute or two. the desires of the heart center on Jesus Christ in different respects.

First of all, to know him more, to know him, that I may know him. For the knowledge of Jesus Christ is not only eternal life, which is wonderful, but it is so satisfying to the soul.

My friends, if I speak to anyone who is seeking after the things of God, and after that knowledge of the truth that would satisfy them, I may say this to you, you'll never find satisfaction in anything in religion until you come to know Jesus Christ.

[22 : 28] nothing will satisfy you until you come to know Jesus Christ. And when you come to know Jesus Christ, you won't feel satisfied with your knowledge of him, but you'll feel satisfied with him, though not with your knowledge of him.

for the desire of the soul to Jesus Christ is very clearly and simply expressed by William Gadsby, oh that my soul could know and love him more, his beauty is traced his majesty adore.

Now to trace the beauties of Jesus Christ, we need the Holy Spirit to reveal him in our hearts through the word. In other words, to make his beauties to appear beautiful to us.

For there's a beauty in Jesus Christ. If there's any beauty in holiness, it's in Jesus. If there's any beauty in purity, it's in Jesus.

for he is fairer than the children of men. If there's any beauty in glory, it is in Jesus. For in him the God has raised, been forth with milder majesty.

[24 : 09] If there's any beauty in compassion, Jesus Christ is full of it. whatever constitutes spiritual beauty, Jesus Christ constitutes that.

Now, the desires of every living soul are to know Jesus Christ in that way. And look, my friends, the Lord knows how you're listening to me this morning.

perhaps when you hear others speak of how Jesus Christ has been revealed to them, or you read of it in some favoured cases, and the effect of it on their hearts, you can say, oh, that's just what I want.

That's just what I want, that Jesus Christ would be made to appear to me, to be that altogether lovely one, that concentration of love, and holiness, and meekness, and blessing.

You might say, Lord, that's just what I want. Jesus, reveal Thyself to me. Now, you couldn't surely question whether there's spiritual life in your soul, if you have desires like that, that respond to Jesus Christ.

[25 : 53] For no natural man can ever feel such desires as that. You see, it isn't describing Jesus Christ, will give people desires after him, unless the principle of that light is in their souls, any more than I have used my very simple, perhaps often repeat illustration, no magnetic power will attract a pin, because there's no attractive quality in the metal, and so no attraction of Jesus Christ will attract the natural heart to desire him, however well he may be set for.

spiritual desires centre in Jesus Christ, in the knowledge of his name, I want to know Jesus Christ as a friend to me, like a man knows his friend, who knows what a heart his friend has got, how trustworthy he is, who feels that friendship, has value in him, who feels he understands his friend, and his friend understands him.

Now I want to know Jesus Christ, like a man knows a close and dear friend. And if you would answer back to me from the field of the porphyria and say, well, do you feel you do know him like that?

I should say, yes and no. Yes, I feel I do, and then no, oh, I know him so little, I feel I can hardly say I know him at all.

But I can say this with a good conscience, that the desire to know Jesus Christ more is the desire of my heart. spiritual desires are much affected by the influence and power of the word of truth on the mind.

[28 : 20] The word that sets Jesus Christ poor, stimulates desires for him in the heart. for this reason, it isn't to be surprised, is it, that when you have good hearing times, the word being with life and unction to your soul, that you feel especially then to desire Jesus Christ and the things of God.

if you feel your desire stimulated and enliven when you're listening to the word of the gospel, that is to be expected, because when the word sets that before the mind concerning Jesus Christ, it acts upon the heart and its desires towards him.

This was my early experience. There were good days to me when I was first brought to feel these things for myself, and I began to understand what the gospel really was, and something of Jesus Christ.

I remember one evening when I had a good hearing time, I left the chapel and walked home, and I don't think I could describe what intense desire I felt to win Jesus Christ.

to possess him, and to enjoy him, to see nothing else really worth bidding for, than to enjoy Jesus Christ in my soul.

[30 : 02] But mind you, such hearing times are not everyday experiences. We must be very thankful if we had some of them at all in our lives.

Very. I was only thinking very early this morning about these matters, although it's not exactly relevant to this point, but I'll just give expression to it, that we mustn't estimate our spiritual life by our lowest times, nor our best.

we mustn't think that our best times will be characteristic of our spiritual lives afterwards, any more than the disciples on the mountain, when they saw the Lord Jesus Christ transfigured before them, could suppose that they could build three tabernacles, one for Jesus, and one for Elias, and one for Moses, and spend the rest of their lives there.

they were mistaken. Larry, you mustn't make your best experiences to be the average experience of your spiritual life.

And on the other hand, you should not make your darkest times to be the criterion of your spiritual life, and feel, well, I feel so low and so dark and so lifeless, I feel really can there be any spiritual life in my soul at all.

[31 : 43] No, you mustn't measure it that way either. There's a certain average in spiritual life that we come to, I feel. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

heart. Now, the desires of the heart not only centre on Jesus Christ, but they centre very much on the truth itself.

As the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

By the truth I understand especially the true doctrines and teaching of the gospel. It's a great thing to know the truth.

To know the truth in such a way as that our hearts become settled and established in it. It's not good to be left without doubting state.

[32 : 58] What is true all our lives? Well, that won't get us anywhere. Apart from an assurance of personal interest in the truth, it's a great thing to have assurance with regard to the truth itself.

To make a distinction there, my brethren, that the distinction between an assurance in the heart concerning the truth and an assurance of personal interest in it.

You shall know the truth. What else is that the desire of your heart this morning? To really know what the truth is. To know it, receive it, believe it, trust it, and feel satisfied in it.

What an age of death we live in. not living in former generations, we can hardly judge perhaps with regard to that comparatively, but this seems to be an age of doubt.

It seems now to question whether anything is true or not. well, I'm sorry for people who live in that uncertainty, for there is such a thing as truth, and there is such a thing as knowing the truth, and there is such a thing in knowing the truth as to feel you can trust it and cleave to it.

[34 : 41] But how can we have that knowledge? Study won't give it to us. Listening to this side of things, and listening to that, and then trying to assess in our judgment where the right and the wrong lies, that won't give it to us.

In fact, we can listen to too many voices, until there gets to be almost a babel in our own minds. What can give us really to know what the truth is?

Well, the teaching of the spirit of truth himself. He guides into the truth. He makes truth to people, to be truth to us.

He establishes our faith in it. He fulfills that promise. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

brethren, nothing can satisfy a living soul but the knowledge of the truth, and to believe it, and to feel the certainty of it, and to feel it's a foundation on which one can live, and presently, when that solemn hour comes, on which one can rest in their dying moment.

[36 : 07] is the desire in your heart to know the truth this morning? He will give you the desires of your heart.

Now, I'm fleeing the subject at this point. I hope I've given you some little insight into this matter, how that true desires are an essential feature of spiritual life, how they're raised up in the heart, and what they fix upon and desire.

Now, the Lord give you, oh, the Lord give you all, true, spiritual, believing, praying, hungering desires after himself.

Delight thyself also in the Lord, that he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Amen. Thank you.