

Seeing God and Satisfaction

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[0 : 00] We'll turn with me now to Psalm 17, in the book of Psalms, Psalm 17, which we read earlier. And we're going to look this morning at the final verse of the Psalm, verse 15.

As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness. When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

I've given much thought over the last week or so to the Bible's teaching on resurrection. As you know, my sister, my late sister Annie, suffered from cerebral palsy.

And that condition was increasingly getting worse as her life went on. And the thought of resurrection is almost bound to fill your mind when the Lord takes someone like that from the scene of time and into eternity.

And forward to the resurrection. And the place the resurrection has in the scheme of God's salvation of his people. So that when we come to be raised again from the dust, we shall be raised not as we were in this life, but raised incorruptible.

[1 : 24] Raised without any trace of sin or deformity or handicap. That's what David, in this great prayer in Psalm 17, is concluding with.

He has been dealing with his enemies as they've surrounded him. And the Psalm is basically a prayer to God in that context of David surrounded by these threatening enemies, these deadly enemies, as he calls them in verse 9.

And then he comes to this wonderful conclusion in Psalm 15. Where you find that in contrast to verse 14, and we'll see that that contrast is very much part of the teaching of verse 15.

Where he talks about the people that are his enemies and how they are so firmly attached to this world and don't see things beyond this life and find all their satisfaction in the things of this life.

But as for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness. For David is totally the opposite to these enemies.

[2 : 35] For them life is about this world and all that they can have in it. For him, life, security, blessing is about the world to come.

It's about being with God ultimately. It's about being in his likeness. The Old Testament doesn't say all that much to us about resurrection.

We'll see that the word awake in this verse is itself an indicator of resurrection in the Old Testament. There are some passages in the Old Testament that gave the people of the Old Testament and insight, a glimpse into the fact that there was such a thing as resurrection life.

That there was life beyond this world in a better state than you have in it. For example, the translation of Enoch without seeing death. The translation of Elijah without seeing death.

And passages such as this one here, we'll mention a few more in the course of our study this morning, that actually bring us to see not so clearly into the subject, the whole idea of resurrection, because that is only opened out for us clearly in the New Testament.

[3 : 51] And you can understand why that is. Because only after death had been thoroughly defeated by Jesus himself could we be in a position then to have the lid opened up further for us to see into it.

So it's a verse like this in the Old Testament. I like to think of it as something like an outcrop of, for example, out in the Atlantic, you know there's an outcrop of rock.

It's really effectively the summit of an undersea mountain called Rock Hall. It's an amazing thing right in the middle there of the ocean all around it. There's this rocky outcrop just sticking out of the sea.

And when you look at that rocky outcrop of Rock Hall, one of the things you can say to yourself is, this is a sample of the gigantic mountain that lies below.

I can't see everything that lies beneath it. I know it's there, but this tells me something about it. And in the Old Testament, that's what resurrection is like.

[4 : 55] God is saying, I'm giving you an insight into it. I'm just giving you a sample of it. You can't see much of what's behind that and what's below the surface, if you like. You have to await for something else to happen, for the coming of my son, for the coming of his resurrection.

And that's when you see much more of what's below the surface in the Old Testament. That's what he's saying here. As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness.

When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. In other words, we are taking the light of the New Testament. We're taking some of that back with us into this verse. But we're actually seeing the language of the verse itself is so much in keeping with what we know from the New Testament that speaks more fully about resurrection.

So what is the verse saying? Two things. First of all, the sight of God. As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness. Secondly, their satisfaction with God's likeness.

Seeing God's face, satisfied with God's likeness. When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. So he mentions, firstly, seeing God's face. Now the two things, of course, go together.

[6 : 11] We're dividing the verse up, but they're very closely connected together. The two concepts of seeing God's face and awaking in God's likeness.

As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness. Now you notice, as we said here, he's contrasting himself with those in verse 14. Those that he calls their enemies. Men of this world whose portion is in this life.

He's really describing so many millions of people that we know of in our own generation. People that are lost. People that need the gospel. People that actually are unsaved.

This is their portion. This is their condition. They're looking no further than the borders of this world. They're looking no further than the end of their life in this world. Many of them don't believe there's anything other than life in this world.

And David is saying here, these are the kind of people that surround me, Lord. They are my enemies. They're pressing in on me. This is what has happened. This is how they are. They are satisfied with their children.

[7 : 12] They leave their abundance to their infants. They're living for this world. But they're leaving it all behind. But as for me. You see the great contrast immediately in the way that David says, but as for me.

They are firmly rooted, grounded, earthed, confined to the things of this life. And when you turn to the teaching of Jesus and of the New Testament apostles, the whole of the New Testament indeed. It's filled abundantly with this contrast. How often Jesus said to his disciples, this is how it is with the ways of the world.

But it shall not be so for you. Or you go to another wonderful passage, very like this sentiment in Psalm 17.

In Paul's testimony in his letter to the Philippian. Where so often we've looked at that passage where he's giving his testimony essentially in chapter 3.

[8 : 21] How he came to know the Lord. How the Lord met him and changed his life. And how that chapter finishes when he speaks about those who are enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly. They glory in their shame. Their minds are set on earthly things.

But our citizenship is in heaven. From it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.

You see what he's saying? I'm surrounded by these people. They're enemies of the cross of Christ. They're living for this world. But our citizenship is in heaven. Our place that we belong to, our capital city.

It is in heaven. Where Jesus is. And we expect him from there, he's saying. And why do we expect him from there? Because there's such a thing following us as resurrection.

[9 : 24] He shall transform our lowly body. So that it may be like his own glorious one.

That's the hope that David is expressing in the psalm. As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness. He's not simply talking about his hope that after his life in this world is done, in his spirit, without his body, he will go and be with God and will see God.

He believes in that. But this is going further. That's the next part of the verse really shows us. It's going further beyond that. And glimpsing at something like Job did in chapter 19. Again, surrounded by those who didn't understand and were trying to convince him that he had done something desperately wrong. And therefore that's why he was suffering. No, he says, I know that my Redeemer lives.

And afterwards, when this body is done, when it's all gone, and yet from my flesh I shall see God, whom I will see with my own eyes, and not another, or not as a stranger.

[10:38] See, there's another glimpse into the resurrection. The hope of the Christian. Now, it's the Christian hope that really makes all the difference to the outlook of this man here and those others in the New Testament.

It's having a Christian hope that makes all the difference in your own life and mine. Because having a Christian hope or the Christian hope, the hope that the gospel brings to us, the hope that you have when you are set in Christ when the Lord is your Savior.

The Savior that Paul spoke of us being awaited from heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. That's the hope of the gospel. The hope the gospel brings to us.

It makes such a difference because it's the only living hope there is. Paul said to the Ephesians in chapter 2, this is how you once were without God and without hope in the world.

Firmly attached to this world and not looking beyond it. But as for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness.

[11:55] In other words, today we're being reminded, friends, that we don't live for this world. That we mustn't live for the things that we must use in this world.

That our hope must go beyond the borders of this world. That our hope as it is based on Christ carries us into a far better world. And that if we live only for this world.

As Paul himself said in that great chapter in 1 Corinthians 15, on the very topic of resurrection. If in this life only, we have hope in Christ.

We are of all people most to be pitied. Because when we die, everything finishes with that. What a poor and dishonoring view of God it is.

To think that there's nothing beyond life in this world at all. That when you die, that's it. What a dishonoring view of God.

[13:01] Who gave his son. Who conquered death in this person. So that we might live and not die. Well, I shall behold your face in righteousness.

Now of course, here he's talking about God's face. And in the Old Testament, God's face is a phrase or a word that's used to describe a personal relationship with God.

We all know that God does not have a face in the human sense. Although, of course, in Jesus he does. He is in our nature. He possesses that face. And Paul takes account of that too in the New Testament.

That God has revealed to us his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Through the human nature of Christ. But in the Old Testament, especially, it has to do with having God's favor.

His face shines upon you. Or, here, I shall see your face. It's an intimacy. It's an expression that speaks of intimacy of communion or communication.

[14:07] When you're talking face to face with somebody, especially somebody that you really love, whether it's your husband, wife, child, whoever it is, mother, face to face means you're close.

And in your closeness, you can speak to them. You know they're there. You can see them. You can look into their eyes. It expresses an intimacy of communion. A nearness of communion.

A relationship where there is that wonderful nearness. And you know, David is saying, this is my future. This is what awaits me.

He knows God in this life. He's praying to God now. At that moment, in the psalm, he was praying to God. He was in communion with God. But here he was, surrounded by his enemies.

That communion being interrupted. All of these things that hampered what he really wanted more and more of in this communion with God. As for me, he says, this is what is awaiting me.

[15:05] I shall behold your face in righteousness. When he comes to awaken the resurrection, this is what his situation will be.

The closest possible communion with God. A friendship, a communion, a relationship, where it is forevermore uninterrupted and marked by ongoing blessedness.

That's why he's saying, I shall behold your face in righteousness. Because righteousness is tied up with the likeness of God, of course. But righteousness is God's own standard.

It isn't just in terms of a formal standard, you know, justification, a judicial standard, where God makes a pronouncement over us. As you think of a record, where your name appears and God takes it off and say, that person is righteous.

I accept them as righteous. This is going much further than that. The righteousness of which the Bible speaks includes your personal righteousness in terms of how you live, your behavioral righteousness.

[16:31] In other words, it's essentially the same as holiness. Being holy in a way that's perfectly acceptable to God in your actions as well as on your record.

I shall behold your face in righteousness. So they're seeing God's face.

What is our own hope today? Does the difficulties that you have in this life, are the interruptions that you have in this life, are they themselves steering your mind today towards that which is permanent and blessed and just filled with communion with God, beholding His face in righteousness?

That's how we should seek God's grace. To deal with our problems and with our difficulties and our trials. To enable us to see them in the light of eternity because your own your own tendency just like mine is to see things more in the context of time than in the context of eternity.

That was the great failure in the life of Thomas Chalmers, that great theologian who led the movement that formed the free church that we now belong to.

[18:08] But he was preaching the gospel as an unconverted man. He was a moderate as was called in those days. People who just went on to the ministry as a career but spent most of the time doing other things like he was teaching mathematics.

Brilliant man. But when he came to write about his conversion, this is how he put it in, and I've spoken about this already but it's just so wonderful the way that he put it.

He was a mathematician or skilled in mathematics so he spoke about it in mathematical terms. He said, this was my great failure. I had forgotten two great dimensions.

I had forgotten the dimension of the littleness of time and I had utterly forgotten the greatness of eternity.

Dimensions, you see. He says, that's what it's all about. And here is David saying, these people, their dimension is time. They're taken up with the things of this world.

[19:16] This life is all there is to it. But as for me, eternity is my home. And your face is where I want to be.

Before your face, looking into your face, Lord. I shall behold your face in righteousness. And then he goes on to say, I shall be satisfied with your likeness when I awake.

Now this word, these words, when I awake, we've said already that they are indicator of the resurrection to us. And you find this elsewhere in scripture as well. For example, Isaiah chapter 26. I think I've given you the passages there in the notes. Chapter 26 and verse 19 there where Isaiah, as the prophet of God, says, your dead shall live, their bodies shall rise, you who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy.

For your Jew is a Jew of light and the earth will give birth to the dead. Now of course, that's talking about a revival for Israel, a coming back on that part to know the Lord and looking forward to the days of the New Testament.

[20:26] But it's using the language that gives us an insight into resurrection and that brings us as far as to say that God's victory for his people will include a victory over death.

There is no such thing as victory if you leave death out of it. If you leave victory over death out of it. If you do that, then death has the last word and God is assuredly telling us in his word, death does not have the last word.

I have the last word. I am the resurrection and the life, said Jesus. Whoever believes in me, even though he dies, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Do you believe this? And Martha said, Yes, Lord. I do believe. I believe who you are.

So I believe this. No, the last word isn't with death and he talks there about when I awake. Now, the Bible speaks about awakening.

[21:31] For example, New Testament talks about being asleep. 1 Thessalonians 4, they are a bit concerned for those who have died and Christ has not yet come.

What is going to happen to them? Paul is saying to them, Don't be concerned about those who are asleep. You will not be ahead of them. They will not be left out when Jesus comes.

He talks about them being asleep. You remember Jesus also in John 11. That great incident where Lazarus, brother of Martha and Mary, died. He had been four days dead.

He died four days before Jesus came to where he was. And he said to the disciples, Our friend Lazarus is sleeping.

But I am going to awaken him out of sleep. Now, the word sleep there and in the other context, it doesn't actually mainly refer to the soul at all.

[22 : 34] It doesn't really mean that sleep is soul unconsciousness. It doesn't mean that in our spirits when we have left our bodies behind that we just drift into an unconscious state.

In fact, it is not really dealing mainly with the soul at all. It is talking about the body. The body rests as the catechism wonderfully puts it. The teaching of the Bible is that the body still being united to Christ rests in the grave till the resurrection.

the body of God's people. It's resting. It turns to dust, but it's resting. That's the theology of it.

That's what's true spiritually of it. And so, that's what David is saying when I awake. When in the resurrection we awaken out of sleep, then I shall be satisfied with you likeness.

Amazing how David actually says such a detailed thing in the days of the Old Testament. But that awakening is the awakening that awaits God's people.

[23 : 47] Of course, everybody is going to awaken. Every single person who has ever lived will awaken. Those who have died before Christ comes, however their bodies have been dealt with, whether it's been laid into the ground, whether it's been lost at sea, wherever.

It doesn't matter really. It's gone back to the dust in some way or other. But we shall all awaken. But God reminds us we will not all awaken to the same experience.

In the prophecy of Daniel, chapter 12, Daniel looking forward again in prophecy says that as many of those and many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

And Jesus picks up these words in John's gospel and in chapter 5, where Jesus there deals with that issue of the resurrection. The day is coming when those who are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth some unto the resurrection of life and some to the resurrection of condemnation.

We shall all be raised. But big difference between being raised incorruptible and in the likeness of Christ and being raised to condemnation.

[25 : 25] You see some people and this is probably why they think of life as no more than confined to this world. When you die, you die and that's it. And there's nothing beyond it.

There's no judgment. There's nothing in the sense of condemnation, but the Bible tells us there is. Don't let the devil persuade you otherwise. There are millions of people blinded to the fact of resurrection and resurrection to life and to condemnation.

Make sure before you die, make sure even today that you're on the right side. Because it's as you die that you will be raised. In the sense of raised to a state of life or condemnation.

So, that's why the Bible, that's why God so often in the Bible as in Ezekiel emphasizes in his own way Turn ye, turn ye.

Why shall you die? Why should you die when there is such a thing as life in Jesus Christ? Well, he says here, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

[26 : 35] Now, that takes us into another important strand of teaching all the way through the Bible. the likeness of God in human beings.

You go back right to the beginning where God tells us that Genesis, the first chapters there tells us that God created man in his likeness.

But there was a spiritual car crash, a wreckage in the fall of man in chapter 3. But very importantly, God didn't write him off.

It wasn't a write-off. Because he had renewal in mind. And the likeness of God in which we were created is re-established in Jesus Christ.

And our relationship with Christ is how we are brought back into the proper likeness of God. It's very difficult to really describe the image of God and the likeness of God and what it consists of.

[27 : 42] It certainly includes the likes of having a mind that's able to think and rich conclusions that makes human beings different to other forms of life, to animals. But it also included in the beginning

righteousness, having the standard of God that God requires, having that true of us as we were created.

We were created with it, but we fell from that, crashed out of that. And being restored in Christ means having that put back, having us restored to acceptance with God, to having God pleased with us.

And in fact, it's actually better than the Mark 1 version, if you like, that's not in any way being disrespectful of God and his creation of us as perfect. But man was created with the capacity to choose either to obey God or to disobey him.

And he chose to disobey. In Christ, we are placed beyond another fall. We shall not go back to condemnation because Christ secures us forever in the favor of God.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. They are in the likeness of God and therefore they are always in God's favor and approval.

[29 : 17] And 1 Corinthians 15 talks about that when it distinguishes between the body that's sown in the earth, as it put it, and the body that is raised. It is sown in corruption.

It has all the traces of sin there attached. The very fact that it's dead is itself a mark of sin. It's part of the wages of sin. But it is raised incorruptible.

There isn't any corruption attaching to it. What a marvelous thought. That what's raised is incorruptible in Christ. It is sown in weakness.

It is raised in power. It is raised, filled with the Holy Spirit. Powerful compared to the weakness that we find in this life.

The likeness of God. What he's saying is I shall be satisfied with your likeness. There's another wonderful emphasis.

[30 : 19] We're just going really into touching upon these great issues. You can follow them through for yourselves. These things, the likeness of God, awakening, just find a concordance. Look up in the Bible where these words occur.

But he's saying it isn't just that he's going to awaken, as we've seen that's an indication of resurrection. It isn't simply that he's going to awaken and be in the likeness then of God, being like him.

It's that he shall be satisfied with that likeness. And that's important because all the way through the psalm, David is talking about his enemies as we've said.

And one of the things that he's praying for is that the Lord will deal with these enemies. And not only deal with his enemies by way of actually gaining victory. Arise, Lord, confront him, subdue him, deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword.

Verse 13, he also talks about himself at the beginning of the psalm, because obviously these enemies are calling David all sorts of things that he knows are not true of them.

[31 : 29] They're maligning him, misrepresenting him. So he says, Lord, vindicate me from your presence. Let my vindication come.

And he's genuinely praying for all that, for his own vindication, for victory over his enemies. And yet, supposing David had all of that in this life given him by God in answer to his prayer, it would still be short of total satisfaction.

Why? Because he sees his total satisfaction in the presence of God, in the likeness of God, face to face with God, awakening to behold God's face in righteousness.

That, says David, is ultimate satisfaction. That's what I was created for, that's where I'm destined for, that's where my satisfaction is to be found.

That's the contrast with verse 14. In fact, the same word in Hebrew, you can see the word they're satisfied in verse 14, it's the same word exactly as here in verse 15 that David is using of himself.

[32 : 37] They are satisfied with their children, they're satisfied with all the things of this life, their satisfaction is full, but it's confined to this life. My satisfaction is full, but it takes in everything of eternity.

and what my eternity will be in your presence. That's the difference. There's a great difference between satisfaction because you've got your fill of this world and satisfaction because you've got your fill of God's face, of God's life in eternal life that he gives to his people.

And that's the difference. our ultimate satisfaction there is I shall behold your face in righteousness and I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

Strange thing, isn't it, that a Christian is both unsatisfied and satisfied at the same time. You're fully satisfied as a Christian because you have Jesus as your Savior, because you have a standing in Jesus that God fully accepts of, because you have a future that the Bible tells you is glowing with life.

You are satisfied because God has come to fill your soul with his presence. You are satisfied with that because you know that you have that which is most important and yet you are unsatisfied.

[34 : 06] Why? Because you're awaiting the fullness of that, because you're awaiting heaven where that satisfaction will be increased enormously above what you presently are capable of because you will then be in the likeness of God, beholding God's face and righteousness and you shall be satisfied with his likeness.

You see, he's teaching us to look beyond the things of this world, to look especially to those things of God's presence in the world to come.

He's teaching us to lift up our eyes, not to be confined in our thoughts to the things of this life, to our experiences in it, but to look beyond into resurrection life, into life at God's right hand, in God's presence.

As I was thinking of resurrection over the course of the week with regard to Annie's passing, a wonderful picture came into my mind.

I'd like to share it with you. My mother cared for Annie until she herself was unable to continue to do so as she became older herself.

[35 : 34] she struggled with Annie's condition for her whole life since Annie was born. Annie has now gone to be with the Lord, her body has been laid to rest in the grave.

The picture that came to me was of my mother and Annie on the day of the resurrection. My mother looking at Annie's perfect body and saying something like Annie is this you.

I hardly recognize you. Our citizenship is in heaven from which we are eagerly longing for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall transform our lowly body, that it may conform to his glorious body according to the power where he is able to subdue all things to himself.

Let's pray. Lord, our God, we thank you for that glorious victory that you have achieved for your people.

We bless you that death is beneath your feet and that you show to us in your word how conclusively you have gained victory over it. Help us, Lord, to realize more and more that we ourselves through faith are brought into that victory, that that victory becomes ours, that we too shall reign over death with you.

[37 : 24] We bless you today that you are risen to the very highest place, that you will bring your people to be with you, that they may behold your glory which the Father has given you, that they shall be satisfied in your likeness.

Hear us now, we pray, for Jesus' seek, amen. Amen.