

David's Love and David's Fear

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Date: 10 August 2025

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to Psalm 26. And we read verse 8 and the beginning of verse 9. Psalm 26, verse 8.

O Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. Do not sweep my soul away with sinners.

Now this psalm is very much a psalm of devotion where David is making very clear where his heart lies.

David shows very clearly what he loves and what he hates. He hates the congregation, the gathering of evil people, of sinners, of those who don't know the Lord, don't want the Lord.

And he shows very clearly that he loves to be in God's house with those who worship the Lord, those who are like-minded with himself.

[1 : 06] And our choices will very often reveal where our heart lies. The choices that we make in life as we go about life very often will indicate to us just what our heart is really about.

And so we find that in Psalm 26, 27 and 28, David is really highlighting, it's a theme that runs through the three psalms, his love of God's sanctuary.

Now as we know, God's house at this time, in David's time, was still the tabernacle. And you remember how David had, he was saying, it's not right that I'm living in this beautiful palace.

And God's, it's being worshipped in a tent. And so it was in his heart and his mind to build a temple for the Lord. Now the Lord was very pleased with David's desire.

But he communicated to David, while your desire is a good one, I'm not going to let you build it. Because you've been a man of blood. Because your hands are red with blood.

[2 : 13] But David had been a warrior most of his days. But God said to him, though the desire is right, your son, who will be a man of peace, and that was Solomon, your son will build a temple for me.

So David devoted so much of his time after that towards planning as much as he could, and of gathering as much wealth as he could for the building of the temple.

Now David is very aware in this psalm that God is the one who proves us and tests us. He tells us that in verse 2. That God is the one who searches our heart.

He knows absolutely everything about us. Our motives, our desires, our inclinations. Why we do what we do. Our every thought, our every word, our every action.

And David is, knowing that God knows that about him, is pleading before God his integrity of life and heart.

[3 : 16] Now we know that David was an incredibly faithful servant of God. The life of David, as you read it, is a life that was devoted to God and served God and praised God.

Of course, David fell spectacularly. He fell terribly. And we know about that. But the main thrust of David's life, the main way his life was guided, was in order to serve the Lord and to follow the Lord all his days.

That is very, very clear in David's life. Now David is aware that not everybody that comes to God's house comes to worship God in spirit and in truth.

That there are hypocrites. That there are those who use religion, as it were, as a cloak to hide, to cover their evil doings. They're hypocrites.

And David was wise enough and discerning enough to know who they were. And he didn't want to keep company with them. He wanted to keep company with God's people, not with the hypocrites.

[4 : 25] And that's why he says in verse 4, I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.

So David's life was a life that tried to keep from the evil company and a life that enjoyed being with the fellowship of God's people.

And we find that in David, in fact, his walking, we find that in verses 1 and 3. He says, I have walked in my integrity. And he says, I walk in your faithfulness.

And then again, we find, as we saw in verse 4, that he does not sit with the hypocrites. And we find that his foot stands on level ground in verse 13.

So we see that whether David is sitting or standing or walking, that his life is a life of dedication to the Lord. And what an example to you and to me as well, that in all that we're about, in our getting up, in our sitting, in our standing, and in our walking, God was always at the forefront of everything that he did.

[5 : 43] And I'm sure we can all identify when David says that he loves God's house. And I'm sure most of you here would say the same. I love God's house.

I'm sure many of you would have to say there was a day when you didn't particularly love God's house. There might be some of you here, I don't know, that it wasn't your practice for a long time to go to God's house.

There might be others of you, and you've been in God's house all your life, from the time you were a little child. And often, thinking back before coming to faith, sometimes we went grudgingly to church. Sometimes we went out of a sense of duty, because we thought we'd better. Sometimes we went because maybe we enjoyed to a certain extent.

But it wasn't our real heart. And sometimes we went thinking that God owed us something. You know, there were times, maybe way back, when you thought, you know, if I go to church, maybe God will do something for me.

[6 : 55] We're trying to bargain with God a wee bit. So there were various reasons why we might have gone to church. But then a day came when that changed.

Because that day came when we began to see that we were sinners in the hand of an angry God. But the wonderful thing was that side by side with this discovery was the fact that this angry God had actually made provision for us as sinners in his Son, Jesus Christ.

And God enabled us, by his grace, to come to Jesus and to receive Jesus as Savior. And everything changed. And tonight, if it's possible that you're still here and you haven't come to accept Jesus as Savior, I would plead with you to do so.

Because time is running out. And we've got to remember, as we sang or read here, I love the habitation of your house, the place where your glory dwells.

It's an amazing thought. That the person of Jesus Christ in the Spirit that is glorious here, he has promised to be where his people gather together.

[8 : 12] It's a wonderful privilege. And it's a place above all places in the face of the earth where we're able to meet with the Lord and to call upon the Lord. And every time we gather like this, it's another opportunity to seek the Lord.

Please do, if you've never done so before, and ask him to open your eyes and to open your ears to hear, your eyes to see, and your heart to believe.

But the thing is that when we come to faith, our love is born in our heart right away. You think back. Remember when you were converted?

Our love for God and for all the things of God, his house, his day, his people, his word, everything. You've got this love in your heart for all that God is and all the things of God.

Because love, love was born there. When a baby is born into a family, there is an intense love in the heart of the parents for that little baby.

[9 : 21] But there is also, although the little baby cannot understand, it's far too young to analyze or understand in any shape or form, there is also an intense love in the heart of the baby for the parents.

And as time goes on, they're able to discern the presence, the touch. They're able to discern that their parents are there and they nestle in and they love.

And so it is in the Christian life. There is this growing love, this growing persuasion of God's love towards us.

And we love everything that belongs to him. And that's why the unbeliever cannot understand what happens when a person is converted.

Because maybe, for some of you, you think back and the Christian life was not your way.

[10:22] You might have had respect for it, you might have thought about it, but it wasn't your way. You lived for this world and what this world would give until this time that you came to faith.

And your friends couldn't understand why you didn't join with him at the weekend the way you used to. That the fun, the liveliness that was part and partial of your life over the weekend, you looked forward to the weekends, remember these days?

It shifted. Your heart shifted. And so they cannot understand why you're caught up in this life, this church life, which to them is boring and dull.

But the fact is, it's where your heart is. It's not that somebody says to you, now this is what you've got to do. It's a natural response in your heart. It's what you want to do.

It's where the Lord is and you want to be where the Lord is. So this is the way that it works. And so we find that as Christians you will stand up for the Lord.

[11:33] That's what David did. He was a kind, he always stood up for the Lord. If somebody was to trample on your father or mother's name and put it into the dirt and pour scorn on it, you would, you would, you would be so upset.

You would stand up for your, for your, for your father, for your mother's name. And so it is when we become Christians that we stand up for the things of the Lord. I'm not ashamed to own my Lord or to defend his cause.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus. We know that that's the natural response that goes on within our heart. And so it is all because of love.

And so we love God's house and that's what the psalmist is telling us because it's a place of worship. When you and I came here tonight, what was it that we came to do?

Now I know that we would say, well, I want to meet with the Lord and I want to get something for my soul. And that's quite a natural response and that's fine.

[12:40] That's what we should do. But if that's all that we do when we come to God's house, then we're coming missing what is integral to being here.

Because we've come to the place where the glory of God dwells. and as we heard this morning, praise is vital. It's not just about what we can get, but it's what we can give.

Because we've come to God's house to give Him worship, to adore Him, to reverence Him, to give to Him what is His due. And it's a wonderful privilege that we have.

love. And so if somebody comes away saying, oh, you know, I went to church and I got absolutely nothing, then you have to see there's something wrong. Because wherever we render praise and thanksgiving to God, it is inevitable that blessing will follow into our soul.

If it doesn't, we have to question whether we've come in the right spirit. Have we come with the right attitude?

[13:51] Have we come in order to praise? Not just to get, but to give. That's always how we come to God's house. And again, we come to God's house because it's a place of prayer.

As Scripture tells us, my house shall be called a house of prayer. And of course, we know prayer is the heartbeat of the Christian life. As we heard today, so much eloquently about prayer, but we know we pray for ourselves, we pray for our families, we pray for our neighbors, we pray for the congregation, we pray for the church at large, we pray for the global spread of the gospel, we pray for our rulers and all in authority over us, we pray for all these things.

And surely we should love God's house, because as it says in Scripture, it's a place where prayer is want to be made. Surely we want to be where prayer is being made.

And again, we love God's house because we come to the place where we meet with family, with new brothers and new sisters in the Lord.

It's one of the things when you become a Christian, you realize you're entering into a big family, a family of new brothers and new sisters, and we learn from one another.

[15:17] We're encouraged by one another, sometimes even rebuked by one another, but it's always, or should be, in love. And again, God's house is a place of God's word.

And great things are done through God's word. When we come to God's house, as we said, we want to be nourished, we want to be fed, we want to be built up. It is a place, as I said earlier on, where faith begins.

Faith, we're told, comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. And wherever the word is preached, wherever the word is read, then it's always an opportunity for God to speak through that word into a patient soul.

It could be the reading of the psalm, the singing of the psalm, the reading of scripture, the preaching of the word, but it's a word, it's a word, and we pray that the word will do its good. God said, my word will not return to me void.

And so, this is a place where God's word is at work. It's a place where God's word affects our souls. We're taught, you look back over your life, you were taught many things in here.

[16:38] You were reminded of many things in here. As we know, teaching, a teacher knows that teaching isn't simply about teaching something new all the time.

time. If you start to teach something, there is no way the whole class are going to grasp right away what you've taught in one go.

A lot of teaching involves repetition and reminding. And so it is under God's word. We don't remember everything we've been taught.

And even things we do remember, often we need to be told it again and again because while it's there, it's not having any impact on our lives. We're living as if we never heard it at all. And so it's important for us to be under the word, to be taught from the word, and to be reminded again and again of what the word is actually saying to us.

And God's house is a place of comfort. Many a time, I'm sure we've come in here and we felt very low, broken, grieved, sad.

[17:53] And yet, when we've come in, a change has taken place because God is at work. And through his spirit, he's, through the word, it's reaching into our hearts, it's touching us.

And so a healing begins, a healing process has started. It's also a place of refuge. Many a time we've come in here and we might feel anxious, are vulnerable, are unsure.

And we're looking out into a future that we're filled with anxiety about it, but we come into God's house. And through the reading or the singing, God brings his word to bear upon your situation and you're strengthened by it.

Sometimes when we come to God's house, we're rebuked by the word. God brings before us through his word. What we need to hear brings before us our sin.

Sin that we know about but have dismissed. Sin that is unconfessed. Sin we're ignorant of. Many a time under God's word we've been brought face to face with this.

[19:07] And God rebukes us. That's necessary. Now there's many other things we could say about God's house and love for God's house, but there's one other thing I'm going to say. It's not just David who loves God's house, not just us who loves God's house.

God loves his house. God loves this house and all the other places of worship, of worship in spirit and in truth in Stornoway far more than any other home in Stornoway.

God loves the gates of Zion. We sang it. God loves the gates of Zion. That is speaking about his dwelling place, his sanctuary, more than all the dwellings of Jacob, all the houses of Israel that were dotted all over.

The one place that God loved above all was his place. So we've always got to remember that God puts a high place upon the place where we gather together, the place where his honor and the place where his glory is.

But then we find the psalmist taking a complete change of direction and he says, do not sweep my soul away with sinners.

[20:35] Do not sweep my soul away with sinners. That is kind of gathering up what is to be thrown away. gathering away what is to be just got rid of. Now you and I know that there's a gathering of souls going on all the time, every day and every night.

Death is never silent. One after another, after another, after another is being taken out of this world. There's this constant movement from time into eternity.

eternity. And it's a very, very solemn thing. But we know that there are only two destinies.

The Bible makes it very clear that every soul that departs this world will either go to heaven or go to hell. Nowhere else. There's no total annihilation, there's no purgatory, there's nothing else.

either to heaven or to hell. And each is gathered to his own place. And the Lord is in complete control of that gathering.

[21:44] He makes no mistakes. God knows who are his. He says that in his word, I know my own. He knows everyone that belongs to him.

But he also knows everyone that doesn't. There are no errors with the Lord. This is the Lord's prerogative. He's in control of this. The church has no say in where a soul goes.

The Kirk session can admit into membership, that's what the Kirk session does, but the Kirk session can never admit any soul into glory. That is the Lord's work.

And that is why David is here saying, sweep not my soul away with sinners. Because David has a full knowledge of what sin is, how sinners live, and what their end is going to be.

And so David is coming there from God's house and enjoying the fullness of his sanctuary, having seen, yes, the hypocrites, and he's saying, Lord, do not sweep away my soul with sinners.

[22 : 59] church. Now, some people are surprised at this prayer, and they say, well, why is David making a prayer like this? But you know what? I'm sure everyone who loves the Lord has prayed this prayer or something very similar to it.

If you're a Christian, I'm perfectly sure that you have prayed, if you didn't pray these exact words, you prayed words which were very, very similar to it.

So why does David pray this? Why do you and I pray something like this? Well, is it not for the fear that we've been deceived?

Not that God has deceived us. Not that the offer of salvation deceives us. Not that the work of Christ deceives us. But that we have deceived ourselves into thinking that we're something we're not.

Christians when actually we aren't. And that's why we would pray a prayer like that.

[24 : 07] So what causes us to think like that? How is it that if you've been following the Lord for many, many years that you find yourself exactly here? Well, there are many things I'm just going to suggest to.

One is the discovery of our own heart where all we get glimpses of the sheer corruption and the vile thoughts, everything that goes on within our heart.

And we thought years ago that by the time we reached this stage that we would be so holy in lifestyle, so Christ-like that we would have grown so much.

And yet we get a glimpse in and we say, oh, woe is me, for I'm undone. Oh, wretched man that I am. And so there is this ongoing discovery of what we're really like.

But side by side with that, there is also the temptations from Satan. Now, it's very hard to distinguish sometimes the difference between our sin and Satan's temptation.

[25 : 20] temptation. But there is a difference. Because all of a sudden Satan will come to us and he'll try and deceive us. And he'll say, you're not really a Christian. You're not a Christian because of this or because of that.

And sometimes he'll get us for a while. And we believe it and it disturbs us. It really affects us deeply. And so we have this fear.

What if I come short? I'm sure there aren't too many. I know some Christians who have been blessed with wonderful assurance all their days. But a lot of Christians sometimes fear, what if I come short?

What if at the end of the day I don't make it? Well, see this prayer. I believe that this prayer can only be prayed by the godly, by the Christian.

It's prayed by David genuinely, sincerely. This is a Christian's prayer. You see, the world lives its own and the world lives its own way. The Christian lives their own and the Christian lives his and her own way.

[26 : 32] The Lord is building up his church. But despite all the faults and failings that we have, we love each other and we want to be part of each other. But you know, if you're tonight a Christian, there's nothing that fills you with more dread than that you be lost, that your soul would be swept away.

But there's more than that. There's a longing in your heart, isn't there? For when you will be rid of sin altogether. Now, there's the big difference between the Christian and the non-Christian.

the non-Christian doesn't long for sin to be removed. They might long for certain sins to be removed. They might long for quite a lot of sins to be removed.

But sin in general is more attractive to them than Jesus Christ. Because by living, by becoming a Christian, your whole future, as you see it, your whole longing, is for the day when you will be in a sinless environment, completely sinless yourself, serving a sinless saviour forever and ever, in his immediate presence.

And only the Christian wants that. Those who don't love the Lord cannot love that. And the reason I say that is because right here and right now, a person who isn't a Christian would say, I don't think I could live that kind of life where my life is lived in service to the Lord.

[28 : 13] I want to live my own life. Well, if that's how it is here, how do you think it would be intensified a thousand fold in glory?

You see, you can understand very clearly tonight where you really are. Where are your desires? Where are your longings? Are you somebody who says, I long for the return of Jesus? I long for the day when I will be forever with him. Or are you saying tonight, oh, don't come tonight, Lord. I'm not ready. Well, do you know, if you're actually saying that, you're not in a good place, but you are.

You're recognizing your need. And your need is such that you need Jesus right now. Because as we said, our days are flying by.

There are no second chances. Once we breathe our last, it's over. The destiny is finalized. So you make sure that Jesus tonight, before you go to here, ask him that Jesus will become your Lord and your Savior.

[29 : 25] And your heart will change, your desires will change. And you will also pray that prayer, do not sweep me away with sinners, and long to be in the presence of Christ forever.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks for what your word teaches us. We give thanks that your house is the house where your glory is displayed.

Your house is the place that you love. We pray that we may love it too. and we pray, Lord, that you will not sweep away any here tonight into the lostness of eternity, but that we will all be gathered, gathered together in the glory of Emmanuel's land.

Have mercy upon us, we pray. Cleanse us from our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen.

We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 84.

The 84th Psalm, this is from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 84, I'm going to sing verses 1 to 3, double verse 3. Page 338, How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts to me, the tabernacles of thy grace, how pleasant Lord they be, my thirsty soul longs vehemently, yea, faints thy courts to see, my very heart and flesh cry out, O living God, for thee.

[31 : 02] Behold, the sparrow finds out an house wherein to rest, the swallow also for herself hath purchased a nest, even thine own altars where she save her young ones forth may bring, O thou almighty Lord of hosts, who art my God and King.

The June Thompson Hawker, Psalm 84, 1 to the double verse 3. How lovely is thy dwelling place. How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord, of those to me.

The tabernacles of thy gates, how pleasant Lord may be.

My thirsty soul of swimming and live, it pains like wars to see.

By many heart and flesh I am, O living God, for thee.

[32 : 12] behold, the shadow findeth out and knows when to rest.

The swallow also for herself hath purchased said and rest.

In thy known altars where she saved, our young ones forth may bring.

O thou almighty Lord of hosts who art thy God and King.

Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 49] Thank you.