

Living With God

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[0 : 00] If you would now turn with me please to Psalm 27, Psalm 27 and at verse 4, we can look at this verse for a short time and take in a few of the other points around it in the Psalm as we've read through a moment ago. Psalm 27, book of Psalms and verse 4.

One thing have I asked 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 gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. The heresy which loves or the orthodoxy which hates, which of these would we prefer. Well, the fact is, neither is good, whether it's the heresy which loves or the love, the orthodoxy which hates. But in a sense, the heresy which loves is preferable to the orthodoxy which hates. Because love is essential to the Christian life and to the Christian's dealings with other people. And where love is wanting and where love is absent, the orthodoxy, understandably then, is under question. Whereas on the other hand, heresy, even if it's false teaching, if there's love in it, at least there's a warmth to it. That's not to say it's commended, it's not to say it's something we would praise, but it's at least got something in its favor.

The second, of course, is a contradiction of itself. Our orthodoxy, our commitment to God's truth in its entirety has to be accompanied or done in love and presented in love. But we are to beware of both. Because warm heresy has the tendency to suck you in under its false teaching.

It's a dangerous thing when you find pleasant heretics presenting the truth as they see it, which of course is not the truth of its heresy. On the other hand, cold orthodoxy has very much the tendency to keep people at a distance, to cause that instead of unity you find disunity.

So both are to be avoided. And the Christian faith is both for mind and heart, something which feeds the mind and warms the hearts. That's basically what David is doing in this psalm and especially in this verse. He's not just looking for God to warm his heart, he's looking for God also to inform his mind. One thing I've asked of the Lord, that's what I'm seeking, that's what I will seek after, I will continue to seek after, is what he means. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. That's the one thing that he's seeking, that's his priority. Why is that?

[3 : 22] Because he has a dual purpose in that. To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, firstly, and secondly, to inquire in his temple. To inquire means to have the mind given, to meditate, to study the truth of God.

Those are two points really, as the verse divides itself. First of all, David's singular aim. There's a singular aim here, which he refers to when he's saying, one thing I have desired of the Lord.

This is what he's giving priority to. This is something he puts above all else. One thing that takes precedence over all alternatives to it. He's saying, one thing I have asked of the Lord.

That's what I am seeking after. What is it? Well, he says that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Now that means that your life and my life must set a priority. We must have something that takes precedence over everything else. Something that you have a singular attention given to. And of course, what we're going to see in this verse itself is that that involves our relationship with God. A proper relationship with God. A living relationship with God. That's basically what David is setting out. This is the one thing that really matters to him. This is why when he's finding himself away, as it was at that time, from the temple, from the sanctuary. It wasn't the temple, the tabernacle. The temple came later, of course, in Solomon's time to be built. But the sanctuary of God, the tent of God, the tabernacle of God, where God is worshipped, where in those days God revealed himself to his people through his word in the sanctuary, where David was hounded by enemies, where he was at times having to leave Jerusalem, where he was a refugee. He longed to be back there. He longed to be back where the word of God, where the revelation of God was situated. And that's why he lamented times when he was away from that, like Psalm 63, where we sang of a psalmist longing to be back, and where he's in the wilderness and conscious of the pain that he's experiencing, being away from his usual place of worship. So that's where we too have to have a priority. One thing that we will seek after, one thing that we will pursue above everything else, our relationship with God, our relationship with him as our God, as our Savior. And this is what he's saying, that he's seeking after this, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Now it's interesting, Psalms 26, 27, and 28 all make references in different ways to the house of the Lord, the sanctuary of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, all of these ways to refer to what's essentially the same thing.

Psalm 26 is very much to do with sincerity, the desire to be sincere and pure before God. Psalm 27 here is especially to do with security, shelter, hiding him from his enemies, covering him in his tent. Verse 5, security in relation to God and relation to his dwelling place. And in verse 28, you find the psalmist really a psalm of supplication. He's seeking the Lord there. He's appealing to God to hear the voice of his pleas as he's crying to him for help. So the temple, the sanctuary, the house of God is related to these issues in these three psalms. But what does that actually mean? Well, it's not so much the place itself. It's not so much the physical place in Zion, in Jerusalem, temple or tabernacle, whatever it would be. It's what it resembles, what it's associated with, what it represents.

[7 : 18] Not so much the place itself, just the same indeed as this building here. It's not just simply the building. It's not mainly the building of what's important in its own right. That's not what's most important to us. It's what it resembles. It's what it represents. It's what it's associated with.

It's associated with a living relationship with God. That's why David is saying what he's saying. There's one thing I've desired. That is what I'm going to continue to seek after. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. That my relationship with the Lord will be maintained, will actually be advanced, will be improved upon, will be built upon. That's what matters most to him, he's saying. And that's really, for ourselves, so important. This living relationship with God, the presence of God, the companionship of God, the assurances God gives us through the instruction of his word. The way that we find so many things coming to our minds as we read the word of God, as we listen to the word of God preached, as we gather together in fellowship around the word of God, this is the priority. This is the one thing. This relationship with God, this dwelling with God, this being in companionship with him. What is the main aim of your own life today?

What's the main aim of my life? Just because I preach the gospel doesn't necessarily itself mean that everything is in the right place in my life. Just because somebody stands in a pulpit doesn't mean that their priority is their own personal relationship with God. One of the dangers for us as preachers of the gospel is that we would make the priority the very act of preaching itself, which of course is a very stimulating thing. It's something that God has called us to, but it mustn't be the priority for our own personal lives. Our own relationship with God has to be the one thing that we will seek to maintain, just as for you as well. And isn't that really how it must be for yourselves today as well? And indeed, it's the best antidote or counter to what you find him saying in the first few verses of the psalm, because he's obviously surrounded there by enemies. And he's beginning with this note of confidence. The Lord is my stronghold, of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and my foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. Why is he saying that he has such confidence? Why is he so robust in his thinking, in his outlook? Because he knows that underneath the whole of his life and all of his experiences is a living relationship with God. It is God who matters to him. It is who God is that matters to him. It is what God has done that matters to him. It is what God is doing now in his life that matters to him. It is what God has promised yet to do in his life that matters to him. This one thing above all else is where David finds his confidence and rests confident in this relationship that he has with God. And when you in your life have, and I in my life have so many things that you might say are distracting fears, fears that cause us to be distracted from this priority, from this one thing in life. This is what we have to come back to. We have to come back to this living relationship with this living God and to confidence in him, in his provision, in his very being, in his promises and everything else to do with him. That's why David is confident. That's why he's saying he's confident because he's asked this one thing of the Lord and he's going to continue to seek after it.

This one thing, this priority. Do you have this singular aim in your life? Is there anything in your life today that's more important than having a living relationship with God? Than having God as your companion in life? Than having God to be your foundation, your stay, your support? The one that you most confide in, the one you most rely upon, the one that you know is not going to fail you when everything else fails.

The singular aim. And especially when you're related to the dual purpose that he now mentions. One thing I have asked that will I seek after? What is it? That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Well, that's this living relationship with God that he's talking of.

[12 : 29] Why is that? What is it about that that's precious to him? What does he want to do? What's the purpose of this dwelling with God, of this living relationship with God? Well, there's a dual purpose in this verse. First of all, to behold the beauty of the Lord. In other words, to admire what God is like.

And secondly, to inquire in his temple. Or you might put it, to adopt what God wills or what God's will is for me. To admire what he's like. To adopt what he wills. Let's deal with them in turn. To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

Perhaps we don't think about the Lord as much as we should in his beauty. Where do you see the beauty of the Lord? We very often refer to the power of the Lord.

We refer to many other attributes of the Lord. But all of the attributes of the Lord, when they combine, and as you see the Lord's works, they combine into beauty.

The beauty that you find, wherever you find what you can call beauty, is derived beauty apart from the beauty of God. Everything that's beautiful in your life, in the life of everybody else, in the world in which you live, is a beauty that originates with the beauty of God himself.

[13 : 55] And there is no beauty to match the beauty of God. The Bible tells us in Psalm 19 and elsewhere that the beauty of God is seen even in the very creation.

Because even as you go around in the creation, you can see as Psalm 19 begins, the heavens declare the glory of God. The sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours out speech. And then he goes on to speak about this, the matter of all that he sees around him in the creation, not just the beautiful things, also the things that are impressive.

The thunder, the storms, as well as the sun and the sky. all of these things have their own beauty and they derive from God, their creator. And don't you remember how Jesus spoke in Matthew chapter 6 as part of his sermon on the mount where he's talking to the disciples today, where he's saying don't be anxious, don't be anxious about what you're wearing, what you are to wear.

In other words, the provisions, the ordinary material things of life, don't be over anxious about that. God is going to provide for his people. Don't make these things your priority is what he means.

[15 : 14] Make God himself your priority. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things will be added to you. But he invites the disciples to look around them. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.

They don't toil, they don't spin like human beings in their toil, in their labor. And yet I tell you, he says that Solomon, not even Solomon, in all his glory was arrayed like one of these.

You look into the face of a lily or any beautiful flower and you can see something there of real stunning beauty that derives from the beauty of its creator.

You see God and the beauty of God and then you go from that to God in terms of his redemption and his redemptive acts. The beauty of God in salvation.

What is so beautiful what is as beautiful as pardon, forgiveness of sins, the cleansing away of your sin, of its guilt, of its defilement, and making you into the likeness of Christ in holiness, in your justification to begin with, where you are accounted righteous through faith in Christ, where God is saying about your record, there is no blot on it, it's as if you've never sinned.

[16 : 30] isn't that beautiful? That ugliness, stain, defilement, guilt has been replaced by righteousness.

And what is God doing in our sanctification? What is God through the Holy Spirit doing in the life of his people in each and every one of them individually and collectively?

He is sanctifying them. He is making them increasingly holy. Maybe it doesn't feel like that at times to us, but that's what the Bible teaches us. That the Spirit of God is sanctifying us, taking us from one stage of glory as it were, to the next, as Paul says to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians, until finally God, just like somebody polishing jewels, has them ready to be placed in the display cabinet.

Where heaven will be the display place of God's people. The beauty of holiness. The beauty of being sanctified.

The beauty of being finally like Christ. Because that's what God has in view. That's what God is working towards in the life of everyone here as a Christian. And everywhere else.

[17 : 51] And all the way through time, this will be the case. that God, as Romans chapter 8 reminds us, whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate, whom he did predestinate, he also foreknew.

He had them in his mind always. Why? That they might conform to the image of his Son. man. That is your greatest privilege and mine.

To be made like Jesus. To bear the image of Christ in perfection. Which is what God is saying will be the case with the beauty of heaven.

The beauty of holiness. The beauty of that glory. Now that wasn't really how it always was for us, was it? Even looking at Jesus himself as one who is altogether beautiful in every aspect of his being and of his works.

It wasn't always like that for you and for me, was it? It was like Isaiah chapter 53 at times. He was like a root out of a dry ground. There is no form, nor comeliness, there is no beauty, that we should desire him till God opened your eyes, till God opened your heart, till God gave you to see Jesus as he really is.

[19 : 15] Not as you thought him to be, not as your own sinful prejudice saw him to be, not as the world actually had its opinion of him, but the way God shows you Jesus after he opens your heart and renews your mind, there is no one then like him for beauty.

That's what God is saying, you're going to be like him, perfectly in the image of Christ, despite all that you encounter in this life, or we might say even through all that you encounter in this life.

And that's what David is praying about, it's not like that for David at the present time, he's not there gazing on the beauty of the Lord undisturbed throughout his life, or even while he's writing this psalm, he's surrounded by enemies, he's crying out to the Lord to hear him.

In verse 8 he says, you have said, Lord, seek my face, my heart says to you. This is his response, your face, Lord, do I seek? And then he appeals, verse 9, hide not your face from me.

In other words, David is really placing his confidence in the fact that God has made the first move towards him in requesting David to come and seek his face.

[20 : 27] And this is David's response to that first move on the part of God, your face, Lord, I will seek. I am seeking. And then he's appealing, hide not your face from me.

In other words, David is saying, when God requests or even demands our love for him to be shown, to be given out to himself directly, or in the way we treat other people, to show the love that we have for God through that, God is not then going to say, well, you've done that, but I'm not going to give you my love.

In return, he is not going to withhold his love from those who love him. That's really what David, as well, is saying that.

Even in verse 10, when human relationships fail, even the most precious ones, father and mother, have forsaken me. Maybe he's speaking hypothetically when this happens.

Maybe it's something that's already a reality, because for most of us it will happen, throughout the course of our life, that we will outlive our parents. And loving parents are always such a great loss, such a great void left in our lives, but here is David saying, but the Lord will take me in.

[21 : 52] The Lord himself is more than compensatory for this. This is my priority, he's saying, and it's never going to fail me. This God, this relationship with him, even when the best of human relationships and human qualities come to an end, God's best goes on.

God's love continues. God's promises keep on being fulfilled. God's companionship never ends. one thing for this dual purpose, to behold the beauty of the Lord, but secondly, to inquire in his temple, not only to admire what God is like and to have our confidence in him, but also to adopt what he wills.

Because you see, David is a traveler. The Bible speaks about God's people as traveling spiritually on a journey through life and on into eternity. And the path that David is following is a path that has been set for him by God.

It's the will of God that governs his life. And that's why whatever happens in his life, he is seeking God's face, God's further direction, God's further counseling of him and teaching of him.

This is what he's saying in verse four here. This one thing for this dual purpose, not only to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, but also to inquire in his temple, to study in his temple, to study himself, to get further direction from him, to get further teaching from him, to fill my mind with more truth.

[23 : 36] See how important truth again is? We've been thinking of that over the last few weeks, the importance of truth, truth foundationally. Well, here is truth foundational to David, foundational to his progress.

What he's saying is, this is what my aim is, this is my singular aim for this purpose, that I might further inquire in his temple.

Get more information, he's saying, about God's will for me. Because he's under assault. You can see that verses two to three that we've read.

Verse six, you find the same thing as enemies refer to. You find in verse 12 as well, give me not up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have arisen against me, and they breathe out violence.

They're lying in wait for him. They're waiting for David to slip up, just as the world out there is waiting for Christians in our generation to slip up, so that they can find something to say against them, and against what they believe, and against the God that they testify to, just as it was with Jesus himself.

[24 : 44] That's exactly what it was for him. The Pharisees went about seeking an opportunity to find fault with him, to bring him into custody, and to accuse him justly, which they never found, of course.

But that was their aim, that was the way that they went about, seeking to catch him out, seeking to find accusation against him. That world out there is waiting for that.

Don't be afraid of testifying to Jesus, but be aware of what is out there seeking to find in your life something on which to pin their accusations against Christ, against God, against a life of believing.

And that's why he speaks here, verses 11-12, about, teach me your way, Lord, lead me on a level path, because of my enemies, give me not up to the will of my adversaries.

He's saying, teach me further of your will, show me more of your will, teach me the right path, this level path he talks about, and he's not talking there about level in the sense of taking away all the lumps or all the hills, all the difficult parts so that he'll have more comfort.

[25 : 57] It's actually not about comfort, it's more to do with progress. Teach me your will, teach me your way, lead me on a level path, bring me further on in the path that I'm on, is what he's saying.

Give me further progress in my believing life. That's really where the will of God, through his word, is so important for you and for me as well.

That's why we're here today, isn't it? We're here today to worship God, we're here today to see the beauty of the Lord through his word, through the teaching of his word, through his blessing, through his spirit, as that comes to warm your heart, to inform your mind, you want to see more of the beauty of the Lord, you want to admire the Lord and his beauty, you want to admire more of his forgiveness, of his redemption, of his salvation, of all the things that we've referred to earlier in terms of his beauty, but you also want to adopt his will, you want more of his will to be made known to you, you want to know that you are actually in that path, that pleases him, that you are kept by him from the sin that comes so closely at times to you, that you see in the ditch on each side of this path, when temptation calls you to place your feet in that ditch, and to diverge from the path of obedience to

Christ, and of honesty to God, and to his word, sometimes that voice can be very strong, especially if it's the voice of the majority of the people that are in this world, but you come to God, and you say, teach me your way, Lord, help me to adopt your will, when we're away just now, one of my ambitions for a few years, although I'd been before, was to attend the Royal Highland Show, show, and we went to the Royal Highland Show on the Friday, and took the tram out from Edinburgh, we went into Edinburgh by train, then caught the tram, and back out to Ingolston, to the stop near the Ingolston showground there, and we were told, as we were given the tickets, that there would be signs for you to follow, green signs as you came off the tram, and that these green signs, if you followed them, they'd take you to the showground, to the entrance, one of the entrances to the showground, and we wanted the entrance that had the least queues, and we were told, if you follow the signs, you'll come to where the queues are smaller, and you'll get in more quickly, and of course, when we came to leave the tram, there were hundreds of people coming out of the tram, with the one aim of getting into that showground, and sooner rather than later, the signs that we saw at the beginning, when we came off the tram, yes, we'll follow the green sign, but then everybody ahead of us just went in the one direction, so we said, well, we'll just follow them, they know where they're going, obviously, we'll get to the ground, if we just follow them, that was a much longer way around, yes, we ended getting into the showground eventually, but the point is, you don't follow the crowd, thinking that they must be right, what David is saying is,

I don't want to follow the crowd, Lord, I want to know your will, I want to be in your path, I want to know that I'm in the way in which you teach me and you keep me safe, and the way that is pleasing to you, one thing I've asked of the Lord, this living relationship with God, and he's saying, Lord, keep me in that relationship, keep me straight in that relationship, keep me true to you, help me to resist temptation, to take me in another direction, give me to see the green signs of your word, and of your will in that, so that I don't end up in my enemy's grasp, don't follow the crowd, the majority of people in Stornoway right now are not in church, they're not interested in Christ, they're not interested in

[30 : 23] God's way of truth, you and I could easily follow that crowd if we wanted ourselves to do so, but we don't, because we know they're not in the right direction, so we want them to come into this path, Jesus spoke of the two paths, remember, the narrow path and the broad path, the broad path in which he says many walk, is the path that leads to destruction, but the narrow path, which few walk in, is the way that leads to life, don't follow the crowd, and I'm saying this especially to the young people who are here today, and it's great to see young people always at the services, services, what I'm concerned and what we're burdened for is that our young people will themselves increasingly learn that the way of life that is pleasing to God is not the way of the majority necessarily, though we'd want the majority to be Christians, they're not, don't follow the crowd,

I say to you, don't think that because the majority of people think a certain thing is advisable, or harmless, or the right way to live your life, don't think that because most people think that, that is right for you.

The way that's right for you is the way that's right for us all, the way that God's will sets out in the Bible, the way of faith in Christ, the way of obedience to Him, the way of seeking to dwell within this living relationship with God, and however many people will say to you, well, you're a fool for doing that, the only person in the Bible God calls a fool is the one who says there is no God, it's never foolish to choose the way of God.

May God bless these thoughts to us today. We're going to conclude our worship now singing in Psalm number 90, Psalm 90, again it's from the Scottish Psalter, on page 350, from verse 14, and this time we're singing to the tune Lingham, with thy tender mercies Lord, as early satisfy, so we rejoice shall all our days and still be glad in thee.

That's Psalm number 90, on page 350, verses 14, to the end. Oh, with thy tender mercies Lord, as the earth is satisfied, as the earth is satisfied, so we rejoice, shall all our days and still be glad in thee and still be glad in thee and still be glad in thee and still be glad in thee.

[33 : 54] According to the days of being, when we grieve apart, when we grieve apart, and years when we ever have seen, so do thou make us die, so do thou make us glad, do thou make us glad, do thou make us glad.

O, let thy work and power appear thy seven days before, thy seven days before, I show and show unto their children dear, thy glory evermore, thy glory evermore, thy glory evermore, thy glory evermore, thy glory evermore, thy glory and let the beauty of the Lord, our God be us upon, our God be us upon, our heavenly words this

God wish the peace of all, the peace ever, the peace of all, the peace of the peace I'll go to the door to my left this morning.

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen.