

The Christian's One Desire

Psalm 27

Studies in the Psalms #28

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JESUS once entered a village and was welcomed by a woman named Martha into her house. After entering he began to do what he did best—teach. Martha and her sister, Mary, were serving their guests when Martha looked around and found herself alone in serving: Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet, listening. Martha asked the Lord to tell Mary to return to helping her in serving. Do you know what Jesus then said? "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion" (Luke 10:38-42).

What this story shows us is that it's entirely possible to have so many cares and concerns in this life that you don't notice that right in front of you is he who makes them all pale in comparison. Every week we are tempted by the allure of sports, social events, and shopping that can overwhelm us and turn the Lord's Day into just another day in the rat race of life. There are a lot of things we do in life, but Jesus says there is one thing above all else that is necessary. What is that? To with our Savior in enjoyment of his presence. A thousand years before our Lord said this, David expressed this truth of

enjoying the Lord's presence like this: **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.** I mentioned last Sunday that Psalms 26–28 focus on the centrality of the Lord's house or tabernacle for the life of the believer. We see that here, but did you notice the twist? David's one desire is to **dwell in the house of the LORD** so that he can **gaze upon** what? **The beauty of the house?** No, **the beauty of the LORD.** Why? That's what I want to emphasize this morning.

A Place of Safety

The Christian's one desire is to dwell with the Lord in his house because it is *a place of safety*. In the previous two Psalms David has prayed, "Let not my *enemies* exult over me," "Consider how many are my *foes*," "I hate the assembly of *evildoers*," and, "I will not sit with the *wicked*" (Pss. 25:2, 19; 26:5). And of course we've seen his enemies in every other Psalm as well. Here David says, **When *evildoers* assail me to eat up my flesh, my *adversaries* and *foes*, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an *army* [and the assumption is of *evildoers*, *adversaries*, and *foes*] encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I**

will be confident (vv. 2–3). We’ve all seen movies like *Tombstone* where Wyatt Earp and his friends are pinned down in a gun fight. Then Wyatt gets up and walks toward his enemies in the open and single-handedly wins the gunfight against a bunch of enemies. Or we’ve read books like *The Return of the King* where the riders of Rohan numbering 6,000 ride against an army of 200,000. **Yet I will be confident.** So how does David have such confidence? **The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?** (v. 1; cf. 25:2; 26:7).

So what does this mean for us? As always, we read the Psalms in light of the fuller revelation we have in the New Testament. Our war is a spiritual war and our enemies are spiritual. For example, I saw this week how brothers and sisters speaking the truth in love to another brother caused him to think the church didn’t care about him. That’s Satan using your own sinful nature and the world’s understanding of what love looks like to fight a spiritual war against you. And we’ve got to remember in every moment of our spiritual war that we fight clothed in the armor of *God*. **The LORD is my light and my salvation...The LORD is the stronghold of my life...For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock** (v. 5). Jesus Christ is our

confidence, brothers and sisters!

Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right Man on our side,
the Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his name,
from age to age the same;
and he must win the battle.

Being with the Lord in his place of public worship is a place of safety.

A Place of Celebration

The Christian's one desire is to dwell with the Lord in his house because it is *a place of celebration*. Last night Cyprian's baseball team lost a game, but our side was cheerful while the winning side looked like they had just come from a funeral. The coach motivated by fear and it was like everyone was walking on eggshells. Brothers and sisters, I know Reformed worship full of "reverence and awe" (Heb. 12:29), but may it never be said of our worship services that it was full of fear, full of despair, full of joylessness! In the world Jesus says we have much tribulation. But we come out of the world, out of our hand to hand combat with the devil, out of the twenty-four news cycles of doom and gloom so that we can enter into the presence of our God in public worship to hear the news once again: "Behold, I have

overcome the world!” (John 16:33) Amen?

Look at what David says in verse 6: **And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.**

Look at that image of having your **head...lifted up above your enemies.**

That’s an image of victory. They’re heads are cast down in humiliation and shame while yours is lifted up in triumph and pride. And look at how David connects this victory to worship: **I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.**

What victories had David won? He defeated some temporary foes and had some temporary peace. What had God in Christ defeated for you? The enemy of sin! The enemy of separation from God! The enemy of the grave! Satan himself! Our victory in Christ calls for even more vigorous **shouts of joy** than David offered! Are you with me? You may not have a clue about how to read music. You may be off key. You may feel embarrassed by the sound of your voice. But you’re in the presence of the God of victory. Celebrate! Sing!

Being with the Lord in his place of public worship is a place of

celebration.

A Place of Seeking

And it's because worship in the Lord's presence is the place we come for safety from the world and to celebrate victory over the world in Christ that we can ask him for help as we go back out into the world. The Christian's one desire is to dwell with the Lord in his house because it is a *place of seeking*.

Look at verse 7: **Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!** The language of crying and answering is the language of prayer. But even more so prayer is an intense experience of seeking the face of God himself: **You have said, "Seek my face."** And it's an intensely personal experience: **My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek"** (v. 8). To seek God's face is another way of saying that you're seeking the blessing of God in your time of need. Look at verse 9: **Hide not your face from me** is paralleled with **turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help**. For God to hide himself is for God to turn us away in anger. But he's been our help in the past and so David prays, **cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!** And look at how he contrasts his earthly relationships and his earthly helps with the Lord. He calls the

Lord **you who have been my help** and the **God of my salvation**. Then he says, **for my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in** (v. 10). This is one of those promises of the Word that those of us with broken families and broken relationships can cling to. I may not have a very good father but I have a heavenly Father, I have Jesus. And for those of us to whom that doesn't apply, this promise also speaks to you. It's saying that you may not have much in the world, but you have everything in the Lord. Is that what you've come to seek and find here today?

We come to seek God's face or God himself and we come to seek his guidance in our lives back in the world: **Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence** (vv. 11–12). We have victory in Christ, but like in World War II when there were Japanese soldiers dug in for years and years afterwards, so too we live in a world that is defeated but they fight a senseless and useless fight anyway. And so we need the Lord's wisdom. We come together to seek that in prayer and I would say to seek that in counsel together with your brothers and sisters.

We come to seek that eternal relationship of rest as verses 13–14 remind us: **I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!** (cf. 25:3, 5, 21).

Being with the Lord in his place of public worship is a place of seeking.

We've come here today like we've come here week in and week out: with minds filled with anxieties and hearts filled with troubles about so many things in life. But David reminds us one thousands years before Jesus of the one thing that is most desirable and most delightful above all: the presence of God in his house. We have it all in Jesus Christ already but until we see him face to face we come together for safety from the world, we come together to celebrate our victory over the world, and we come together to seek help in the world. Amen.