

Windows to the Heart of David #3 His Longing to Know God

Intro: King David was one of the great characters of the Bible. But what made him great? So far we have seen he was great because of his:

*Dependence upon the Lord
Commitment to holiness*

If you will turn tonight to Ps. 27 for another window into the heart of David.

Circumstances of the Psalm

Though the psalm has no chronological text note, it does affirm that the psalm belongs to David. And it is clear that this psalm also seems to be written during a time of crisis and perhaps while David was fleeing from enemies. Delitzsch suggests that it was written possibly during the time of Absalom's rebellion, on which occasion David was forced to flee from Jerusalem where God's presence was manifested by the ark of the covenant enshrined there. Under such circumstances David gives us this window into his heart:

One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to meditate in His temple. (Psalm 27:4)

David's Request

One thing have I asked of thee and that will I seek...

"One thing". The language is interesting here. Are not David's psalms filled with requests of God? Does he not ask God for many things: Save me! Vindicate me! Teach me! Forgive me! Yet, here he reduces all his longings to one request.

One thing I have asked—David knew that this longing was to come from God. In this phrase we see his dependence upon God, his desire to be blessed by God.

One thing I have asked and that will I seek—David had no conception of God that said, "Lord, I'll write out the check and you cash it!" That's the way a lot of people look at prayer. David was willing to put forth the effort to attain what he longed for with this important principle: He would depend on God to provide it as he expressed the faith in seeking it!

Now what is this thing more important than all other things?

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord...

David's whole longing centered in his relationship with God. David's thoughts are derived from the symbolism of the tabernacle. When God called Israel from Sinai he made a covenant with them that He would be their God and they would be his people and that he would dwell among them. His presence was symbolized in the "tent" they made for Him and where he caused his glory to shine for all to see that He had

come to the tent to dwell. This was “God’s house” and there the priests in behalf of the nation went in and out keeping its altars of incense, its tables of bread, its lights, signifying Israel ongoing association with God. There the people went to present their offerings to God and to observe the festivals of the Lord.

David could not go into the tabernacle; but he thought of the tabernacle in personal terms. He extended the conception of God’s dwelling from the physical place, to a spiritual place and relationship. If the Lord dwelt among the people, then he, one of the people, could dwell with the Lord and enjoy his company and presence. There he could listen to his words and there he could offer to God his praises and prayers.

What would be your one wish, if you could have just one thing from God? (money, job, health, fame) David’s prayer was for something deeply spiritual and religious. I want to always have a life of intimacy and association with God. I want to live with him! For many people, the concept of dwelling God’s house is foreign to their thinking; instead they may pay him a visit occasionally.

Note the last part: *all the days of my life*. It was David’s life goal to have the deepest spiritual relationship with the Lord of all things all the time! Is such an idea a part of your thinking and planning?

But what exactly does David have in mind? Why did he want to live with God?

To behold the beauty of the Lord & to meditate in his temple

Two words in the expression will help us see what David means by the phrase “to behold the beauty of the Lord”.

The first word is “behold”. David does not use the ordinary word for “look” or “see” as we might describe a casual glimpse at something. The word means a “clinging, lingering, chained gaze” at God. It is to look with attachment, a look that captures the heart and keeps it loyal. This is what David wants—to look upon God with attachment.

The second word is “beauty”. It communicates the “gracefulness” of God, the “pleasantness” of understanding Him, of knowing him.

David wants to dwell with God so that he may say, “I know my God. I see him as he has revealed himself.” And rejoice in the experience of seeing him.

To meditate in his temple.

This adds an important thought. David’s desire was not only to know God but to think about him, to reflect or contemplate his features and make them his own personal treasure. To be lost in the wonder of all that God is.

Here the temple refers to any place set apart for such devotion since the physical structure called the “temple” was not built during David’s life.

The value of these things is made evident in the phrases that follow, v. 5-6.

For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me; and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord. (Psalm 27:5-6)

Here in the presence of God, lost in the wonder of all that He is David found refuge from all life’s anxieties and troubles. Here he found deliverance from all enemies. They could not touch him here in the presence of God. If only we too could learn that lesson—that the only solace we have from life’s trials, toils, grief, loneliness and despair is to be found in the presence of our great God and Savior.

The key to all David’s actions

This attitude expresses the core of David’s heart. It explains why he read the Scriptures so much and talked about them; for they revealed Him to him.

It explains why he wanted to go the tabernacle; for there his thoughts could be turned to God.

It explains why he prayed to God so often and fashioned those prayers into songs that he could sing and teach to others; for in these activities he could turn all his anxieties and troubles into moments of joy and peace.

The key to all our actions

The goal of all our Bible study is not merely to win an argument with someone at work, but to better appreciate the knowledge of God, personal sense of His love and greatness and goodness, to love him as our creator, and provider, and redeemer.

The goal of our worship is not merely to check off another command of God, but to be in His presence and to reflect upon His qualities.

The goal of our prayers is not merely to solve our problems, but to find comfort and solace in times of trouble.

Conclusion: What is Christianity all about? I fear for many people it’s about who’s right and who’s wrong? About all the arguments we’ve been in and the “stand” we’ve taken? About whose side we’re on! But if all our faith is an institutional attachment to a group of people, we’ve missed the whole point! David’s words well capture what our faith should be about.

Do you have such a relationship with God? Since David’s time, God has only multiplied the evidences of his greatness, goodness and love. We have even more reasons to say “One thing I have asked of you and that I will seek...”