

641
LaC 691

Sermon preached by Mr. G.J. Collier at Jireh Chapel,
Tenterden on the morning of the 18th May, 1983

Text: "One thing have I desired 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 behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple."- Ps.27.4

These are great words. This is a familiar text. We may become so familiar with certain texts and be in danger of losing sight of their intrinsic value and preciousness. But however familiar one may become with the Word, there is always a depth of unfathomable wonder beneath.

We have four things in our text of outstanding importance, and they consist in the main with what we would call 'One' things. David says that he desired 'One thing'. A worldly mind believes that the most desirable thing is versatility. Some may specialise, but for the most part the acquiring of knowledge of this, that and the other is in their eyes the only important thing. They have no interest in the 'One thing' that the Psalmist speaks of here; they range over a wide field and grasp nothing. The 'one thing' to seekers is a real concern over their soul, and its relationship to a vast eternity. Being the effect of God's grace upon the soul becomes the one thing needful while all other matters fall into insignificance, and an ever increasing interest rises within to seek and find the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

David says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord". Paul may seem to put it in even stronger terms: "But this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3. 13/14). People may think they have a great many things that are worth hanging on to, and put them forth as supposed marks of life. But this is the great mark of life 'One thing'. All other marks, imaginery or otherwise, must be put on one side in the pursuit of the all important thing. This desire that David speaks of, wherever it is found, cometh alone from the Lord, and some of you know as you look back into your earlier days there was never a desire in your heart for the things of God, not about your soul and its destiny, nor for the truth of God. You may have had a passing thought here and there, when perhaps some strange or calamitous thing occurred in your experience, which may have made you think seriously about eternity without creating a real desire. And why? Because a real desire must come from the Lord. My friends, what a great thing it is when the desire cometh. The wise man says, "that when desire cometh it is a tree of life" (Prov. 13.12). There is a word in the 18th chapter of the book of Proverbs, the first verse, "Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom". That is a striking word to my mind. It tells us that through desire a man separates himself, it begins the separation from the world. God will teach him, through the planting of this desire in his heart, that he cannot have the world in one hand and the things of God in the other. He must separate himself, and when he does so, he then seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom; which, as I understand it, is to seek after and become sweetly involved with Christ, whom the Old Testament sets forth under the title of Wisdom. He is made wisdom to all His people, and they, through divine grace have their affections drawn out to His Person, and their thoughts intertwining with His Word, and ways, and His thoughts in His gracious dealings with the children of men. Your desire is very important; without it we have no real evidence of having been born again, and thus having the life of God in the soul.

But you will never be satisfied with your desires. If you are a real believer you will never be quite without them, but you will never be satisfied with them. You will not say to yourself, 'well I believe I have a right desire, and that is all I expect'. That will never be a satisfying factor in the life of a real believer.

No, the more the desire, the more a yearning for its enlargement. You will be saying at times, "These feeble desires, these wishes so weak, tis Jesus inspires, and bids me still seek." (Gadsbys 804).

Now, these are the important things. I may be speaking to those who are anxious and concerned about the validity of their religion, or their experience of it. Well, it is a good thing to be concerned about this; we should take nothing for granted; we need everything confirmed by the Lord, every step we have taken we need to have that step verified. The way we can find that is from the godly characters that are revealed in the Word of God. They walked with the Lord; in faith they sought the Lord, who revealed to them the truth of it, the reality of it. Abraham walked with God; he knew not where he was to go, or where he would eventually find himself; but he walked with God; his confidence was in God, and it was confirmed by the Lord Himself.

Yes, a desire is a vital part of a true religious approach to the real presence of God. You see when people become so insipid, as there are so many today, and themselves believe so lightly, and they can easily find things to excuse them from attending the means of grace, and their profession is really a very loose one. What is the cause? There is one great thing that seems to be lacking in their religion. It is a real desire, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after". O, when the Lord comes and stirs up our poor hearts, and teaches us the desires of our hearts are to Himself, and after His Word, makes us willing to bear anything and all things for His sake, and gives us a sweet impetus in our hearts to go on earnestly seeking after Him. One thing - One thing then is the only thing, the greatest thing, the all needed thing, the good thing - to know the Lord, and His Throne of Grace.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after". You see the determination of the seeker in the word 'THAT'. What a tremendous force is this word 'that'? O yes, nothing else comes into his outlook or thoughts. There is only one thing to seek after, and you know it is the desire that is under threat. David tells us very clearly why this was his desire. It is not an easy thing to entertain. You can say it is a desire under threat, and I believe every child of God will experience the same thing in their own experience. If they find the things of God rising in their esteem, then they will find a great deal of opposition also arising, and sometimes the opposition seems greater than the power of the desire in the heart. Now that was the case with David; he says here, "Though an host should encamp against me - an host - my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired." You see he held on to this despite of all these threats and oppositions that were surrounding him, and bearing on him, and seeking to drive him away from this blessed position which he was occupying. But he was confident in this 'one thing'. I know this, no one can take this principle from me that I have desired of the Lord to seek after Him.

This may help you when you wonder when the things of God seem to be rising up in your heart, thoughts and prayers, you should be told this, other things rise up, afflictions, oppositions, disappointments, frustrations and every kind of thing. The enemy knows how to strip you, and to insert all manner of impediments to deter the real believer. There is one thing - his God.

Now we come to the verse in this Psalm, his desire, and what he sought after. He had an objective, a very wonderful one indeed. He had an objective - one - one way, not amongst the multitudes, one dwelling, he knew the place that he desired the Lord that he might dwell in "that I may dwell in the House of the Lord" all

the days of my life". God never forsakes His Church, although sometimes they disobey Him and depart from His ways, yet God is always near. And He took a particular servant and put him in a place that he never expected to be found in. It was like a 'little sanctuary' in the belly of the great fish. And in that place Jonah learned more than he ever learned in his life before that moment. He learned the greatest truth that ever was, "Salvation is of the Lord", and he also learned this, and he said this, "I am cast out of Thy sight, yet will I look again toward Thy holy temple". You know, for a man in that position and that place, it was a tremendous thing. Do you believe that Jonah hoped that one day he would see the Temple, the bricks and the ornaments on it. No! He had a greater temple in his heart than that, he had the temple of the Lord, the dwelling place of the Lord his God, and he believed he would be brought to it. He would be brought to it, delivered out of all his troubles; he would be brought then to see the one place where he could dwell - one place. Christians know only one place.

Whilst we are speaking about the oneness of a christian's experience of the truth we must not forget that when God's grace comes into the heart it will make a person care about others, it will make a person sympathise with others. They may not be able to see what they see, it will enable them to be very tender to those who have not been so far enlightened. I believe it will make them love the souls of others. Now one thing. You know we feel sometimes that we do nothing in the churches of God today unless we do all in love; it is a love for the souls of the people. I have several of my dear colleagues here this morning in the ministry. The one great thing that has come increasingly into your experience as the Lord has sent you forth on the walls of Zion, that is a love for the souls of men. You do not preach simply to entertain, you preach with the souls of men on your consciences, and that God's good favour be accomplished in them, that they might be enlightened, liberated and brought to know the great and glorious realities of salvation in Christ through divine grace. O, how wonderful it is when we see poor sinners moving in the direction of this before us now - One thing. When we can see people have to leave other things, and let them fall out of their grasp, and when they go forth with one purpose, one desire. You go forth labouring, labouring in the Word, and wherever you go you remember the experience of the children of God.

David says there is one place where I want to dwell, and it is not a selfish desire that he wanted to dwell there:

"One with them I would be
Now and through eternity."

You love the people of God because God is such a loving God. Ah, not because they are totally acceptable or desirable, but because they have got something in them that you love and feel a correspondence in your own experience, and you say:

"There my best friends, my kindred dwell;
There God my Saviour reigns." (Gadsbys 361)

Yes, one place, one people.

"That I may dwell in the House of the Lord for ever". That is why we love the brethren, not only because they are the people of God, but we can find our companions and friends, those whom we hope to spend eternal glory with, and praise Him in the family of God. But he wanted to dwell there because God is in it. You were singing, you know, that beautiful hymn. One remembers his first visit to Gower Street over forty years ago. It was made such a sweet blessing to my soul that day. It took away my fears:

"When we live on Jesus' merit,
Then we worship God aright,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Then we savingly unite." (Gadsbys 180)

Have you ever come to this? Have you ever found a sweet spot? When you realise that God is there, within that place, within this chapel, or in this circumstance, or in this path, you have got to kiss the rod, and as you kiss the rod you know who is responsible for all.

"That I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life". One great thing - 'continuation'. What a great truth this is!

Some do not insist upon this truth - the final preservation (perseverance) of God's saints. Why? O there are those who are taught - the Romish way - that man can be one day in grace, and then lost; or that when God blesses He can take that blessing away and institute a curse. You will never find, if you search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, anyone whom God has blessed should ever be cursed.

You remember when Noah came out of the Ark, he built an altar and sacrificed on the altar, and there came up before God the odour of a sweet savour, and God said, "I will never again curse the earth" (Gen. 8.21). And then you know how one of the sons of Noah committed an offence, and Noah, knowing that God had blessed the sons of Noah - He blessed Noah and his sons and one of them committed an offence - Noah said cursed be Canaan, the son of the one who committed the offence, because he knew when God had once blessed there could be no reversal. Well, my dear friends, when God says He will preserve His strength, and when He blesses, He will never curse. You see Balaam went all the way from the place where he lived, he went all the way to the hire of Balak for the greatest wages that perhaps any man had ever been offered; he went all the way with one great object and purpose, and that was to curse the people of God. Could he do it? He said, "Who can curse whom God has blessed." (Num. 23.8).

David says in that beautiful 23rd Psalm, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord for ever". O dear friends, do we not find goodness and mercy following us? O yes, when we come to sort out the Scriptures, and put on one side those severities of Judgment, what do we find? The goodness and mercy of God overshadowing all. O may we have some sweet realisation and experience of God's goodness. I said just now, man who is taught by the grace of God, it makes him sympathetic to others. Look how David behaved in regard to the posterity of Jonathan, his great friend. He said on one occasion, is there any of the house of Saul still alive? What did he want to know for? Most kings wanted to know of the posterity of their important rivals to put them off the face of the earth. But David said, No! I want to show the goodness, the kindness of God. I want to be kind. Ziba says, there is one, there is Mephibosheth, but he is lame on both his feet. I always think of that man, Ziba, he had a cruel spirit. Why did he have to tell David that there was an impediment in the man Mephibosheth? People are very ready to tell the failings of others; far more ready to tell their failings and faults to others, than to tell of their good deeds and courage. If Ziba thought David would say he is lame in both feet, I should not wish to have much to do with him, he was mistaken. David said bring him here, and when he came he said Mephibosheth, all the lands that belonged to thy fathers will be restored to thee; thou shalt have everything at my expense for the rest of thy days. Thou shalt feed at my table. There is nothing that could be wanting.

O, he loved the dwelling place where His honour dwelleth. He loved the Courts of the Lord's House. When I look back now on my own life, my early experience, I loved to come to the House of the Lord, I could not wait for it. The days that intervened between the services seemed to be wearisome, and I longed for the days to pass.

"There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Saviour reigns." (Gadsbys 361)

Well, we must come to the fourth point - it is the occupation, "to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple". What an occupation? We shall never come to the ultimate conclusion of the beauty of the Lord. It is a sea, an ocean without bottom, brim or shore, incomparably glorious. But he says, "That I may behold the beauty of the Lord". What a glory there is in the divine Son of God? He was from all eternity co-equal, co-existent with God the Father and God the Holy Ghost. O may we behold a beauty in Him, a beauty that ravishes the soul of the believer. If you can get one sight of the sufferings of the dear Redeemer, any wanton eye will be closed. It could

never look at Jesus. David knew something of this. In the 110 th Psalm he said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," and he goes on to speak about the power of the Lord; and the beauties of holiness.

And then "to enquire in His temple". Well we have a great scope, a vast field here, 'enquiry in the temple of the Lord'. We want to know all things; we want to know our way; we want to know how to walk; and how to live; and how to deal with those matters that come into our pathway. Enquiring - Lord speak to me; Lord teach me; Lord get hold of me and lead me out and lead me forth in the right way, leave me not to myself.

You know people talk a great deal today about counselling. Well, that is a good thing, but I wonder whether it is not over-emphasised, because after all, man what is he? Maybe a good counsellor to a point, but if he is not the best counsellor, he is far from being any real good. David knew where the best was to be found. He did not go to ask of man. He had had a good deal of experience about leaning upon man, fretting himself because of the prosperity of the ungodly, and suchlike things. But he knew that the best counsel was the counsel of his God.

My dear friends, I hope that our meditation of this morning may be profitable. I am inadequate, but the Word of God is not inadequate, and if the Lord is pleased to make it a blessing, you will know something of these four great points.

Amen