

Notes of Sermon Preached by Pastor Henry Haddow at Brockham Green
on Lord's Day morning April 30th 1911

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 inquire in His temple. (Psalm 27:4)

How true, beloved, as you have been singing: *'Tis Christ that conquers, not to die.* The child of grace cannot die – He has conquered through the Lamb's redeeming blood. There are moments when one has the victory here below, and we overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and through the word of God's testimony. How it endears Jesus Christ – there is no other like Jesus Christ. It enables the soul to approach to Him and say: *Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. (Psalm 73:25)* Jesus is the one thing needful, the perfect among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. I have known what it is to speak to Him, and to tell Him all my heart. How my heart beats after Him, and what desires I have after Him, and the knowledge of Him – *that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death. (Philippians 3:10)* Christ is all and in all to the believer.

It must be so when Christ has the heart of the believer, and the affections of the believer. He comes and takes possession of the heart, and He says: *Give Me thine heart, and I will give thee a kingdom,* and the heart is given to Him.

*Take my body, spirit, soul,
Only Thou possess the whole. (F.R. Havergal)*

O what an unspeakable mercy to know the Christ of God, and to know the love of God, and to say with the great apostle of the Gentiles: *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)* O the love of Christ! Does it ever warm your heart? Does it ever cause you to seek Him, and to long to be where He is, and to be in His presence? O, I know it does, if you know these things by gracious experience, and if you have ever been enabled to say: *The Lord is my light and my salvation.* There comes a time in the soul's experience of those in whose soul the work of grace is begun, when they are brought to know the Lord as their light. Light comes from Him. *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)* David could make his boast in the Lord as being his light and his salvation, and he could say, and did say in the language we have read in your hearing: *Whom shall I fear?* The Lord is on my side – in election, in predestination, in calling me. He is on my side as my wisdom, sanctification, righteousness, and redemption. If God be for you, child of grace, or poor sinner in soul feeling, who can be against you? He that is for you is more than all that can be against you. He will bring you safely along, and honourably through, and land you safely on Canaan's shores of bliss.

Even when enemies come upon me to eat up my flesh, I shall not fear. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord.* Thou art my light and salvation; Thou wilt never leave me nor forsake me; and thus Thou wilt perfect me. *One thing have I desired of the Lord.* He was confident of this, and that he said he would seek after. I want to bring the matter right home. This portion of God's Word has been sweet to me. I felt I could say in the sight of the Lord "that one thing have I desired of Thee." O can you honestly say it? Now mark this: the desire of the righteous shall be granted. It must be granted, because it is of God. All holy desires are of the Lord. I may have desires, it is true, but not desires of the righteous. The desires of the righteous must be granted; God has declared it. He will fulfil the desires of them that fear Him; He will hear their cry, and save them. He will regard their prayer; He will not despise their prayer.

You know, sometimes God gives a man his desires, but they are not God-wrought desires in the soul. There are many solemn things mentioned in the Word of God. You know, sometimes God withholds His hand. He does not give us what we ask, and it is our mercy that it is so, because it is not of God. *He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. (Psalm 106:15)* O have you not sometimes dreaded the leanness being sent into your souls as you have come before God? And perhaps you have said to Him, “Unless it is for Thy glory and my good, do not give me this, for Thou knowest what is best.” *Ye ask, says James, and receive not. Why? Because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:3)* Would you rather have it, and consume it on your lusts, or would you rather have what God gives? Now, as in the sight of God, would you not rather that He should withhold, and not give it? Then you may say, “Well, how am I to know whether my desires are the desires of the righteous, that God will grant, and whether these desires will be for my good, and for His glory?” Well, I believe this, friends, the Lord who begins the work in the soul will so work that the soul will not be satisfied without these desires being fulfilled.

*Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek. (Joseph Hart)*

But what I want to bring before you is this: We may have right desires, but there is one desire at times that seems to swallow up all other desires. The Psalmist says: *With desire have I desired Thee.* In *Isaiah* we read: *With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early. (ch.26:9)* O can you come in here, friends? O what an unspeakable mercy if it is so! *One thing* – O, your heart is set on **one thing** – *One thing*, said the psalmist, *have I desired of Thee.* But he goes further than that. His soul desires one thing, and he knew what that one thing was. *One thing is needful*, says Christ, *and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:42)*

Now friends, can you honestly say that you have desired one thing of the Lord? Are you desiring one thing of the Lord? Is there one thing that you desire above everything else? If so, you know it, and you feel it. O yes, you do! And the Lord knows it, and you can tell Him all your feelings towards Him, and this is it: *One thing have I desired of the Lord* – and that is His presence. That was what David desired – to be where the Lord was, and to have communion and fellowship with Him. This was what his soul desired above everything else. This one desire, like Aaron’s rod, swallows up all other desires, and comes to this one thing.

Now, this **one thing** God will give you, but He will be enquired of by the house of Israel. O I do love the precepts of God’s Word! It says: *The soul of the diligent shall be made fat. (Proverbs 13:4)* Are you a diligent seeker? Do you seek after that one thing you ask of the Lord? Now, it is possible for a person to go on asking for that one thing of the Lord, and yet not seek after it. Now do you go before Him and ask Him for that one thing, and then go away and forget all about it, and have no desire after it? Now, the psalmist goes further than asking for it. He says: *That will I seek after.* He seeks that one thing he has desired of the Lord. O my friends, I do not know how to find words to express the feelings of my soul in speaking of seeking after this one thing. Everything else may go but this one thing, and that he will seek after. God is good to the soul that seeks, and the soul that seeks shall find.

*To praying souls He always grants
More than they can express. (John Newton)*

I say, where there is this desiring one thing of the Lord, there will be the seeking after it, and a pleading with the Lord for this one thing. O it is a great thing to ask. The psalmist wanted God’s presence, and that is a great thing to be where Christ is, and call Him our own in ties of blood. This, says the psalmist, will I seek after, what ever it may cost me. He would part with everything else but this. God’s people are spiritual merchant-men, so to speak, and they will seek after one pearl of great price, and are ready to part with all, that they may obtain Jesus Christ.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord. And there was this seeking at God's hand – this one thing: *that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* The house of the Lord here is the church of God. You know, since the days of the tabernacle, there was the temple, and in these our days there are churches planted here and there, and God's presence is with His people. Where there is a church there is God's presence, and He has promised to be there, and there is a seeking after the Lord, and a knowledge of Him, and the desires to be united to His people, and to dwell in the house of the Lord. The psalmist said: *That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* It is not everyone who starts to go up to the house of the Lord (I am speaking now of where the Lord's presence is realised in the midst of the people in the visible church) there is such a thing, so to speak, of going up by fits and starts. Persons may seem to be in earnest, and go to the house of the Lord, and you begin to think well of them, but somehow or other they leave off going. And why? Because they have never sought after this thing that the psalmist sought after – that he might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life. Not one day, but all days – that is, whenever opportunity presents itself. He would dwell in the house of the Lord because the Lord's presence was there, and that was what the psalmist longed after, to be in the temple where the Lord has promised to be with His people.

O my friends, there have been times when I have desired, with the psalmist, to *dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* Can you say the same? Have you ever spent one day in the house of the Lord, and at the close of the day been enabled to say, feelingly, graciously, experimentally, “I would rather spend one day in Thy courts than a thousand in the tents of wickedness?” (*see Psalm 84:10*) *Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth. (Psalm 26:8)* Do you love God's house, the church of God – this church, or any other church? Can you honestly say, “I would dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life?” Where is your life? What is your life? What is it to live? Where do you have your best moments?

If you were to ask me where I have had some of my best moments, I should say, “In the pulpit.” And I have no hesitation in saying it in your presence – I often say it in your absence – I am honest in this – there is no pulpit like this pulpit, and there is no church like this church to me. I love the one church, I love all the members of Christ's mystical body, I love all them that love Christ in sincerity and in truth, but there is no church like this church, no people like this people, and no pulpit like his pulpit. Why? Because here the Lord has blessed my soul, and here the Lord has set me, and set the members of the church. And I hope that this is the feeling of each member of this church, that there is no church like this church. I put it like this: there is no house like my own house, and so there was no place like the tabernacle to David. David said: *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. (Psalm 122:1)* *Be thankful unto Him, and bless His Name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations. (Psalm 100:4,5)*

And so, friends, I can say this has been the one desire of my soul, to be *in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* I love to be in the house of the Lord, and here I would be more frequently if it were possible. I can appeal to the Lord, and say: *There my best friends, my kindred dwell, and: No more a stranger or a guest, But like a child at home. (Isaac Watts)* I would spend all the days of my life in the house of the Lord. You may be ready to say that the psalmist did not mean he was ready to dwell in the house of the Lord every moment. No, I do not say that. Like the disciples, they were continually in the temple blessing and praising God, that is, whenever opportunity occurred. Look at Anna; she was of a great age, and lived with her husband seven years from her virginity; she *departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. (Luke 2:37)* But I do not think for one moment that she always lived in the temple, because it says: *And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord.* There she was when the doors were open, and when there was a service where women were supposed to be. It was her life to spend her days in the house of the Lord. And so there is this desire in the soul to go up to the house of the Lord, and one desire swallows up all other desires, and that is to behold the Lord in His temple.

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. Now these are moments when God's people are not able to go up to the house of the Lord, and there is this working in the soul. I know, when I have been laid aside, when you have been met together for worship, but still God has been with me, and I have fallen in submission to His will, and said, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, and that I do desire to be in the place where Thine honour dwelleth, to meet with Thy people."

*God in His earthly temple lays
Foundations for His heavenly praise;
He likes the tents of Jacob well,
But still in Zion loves to dwell.*

*His mercy visits every house,
That pay their night and morning vows;
But makes a more delightful stay
Where churches meet to praise and pray. (Isaac Watts)*

O Lord, I would dwell in the house of the Lord, in the church of God. I would have my name and place among Thy people; I would be one of them, and I would be numbered with them. O my friends, some of us can honestly say, in the sight of a heart-searching and rein-trying God, I desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. I hope there never will come a time when I shall not dwell in the house of the Lord. God may, in the kind order of His providence, remove me from the church, and if it should be so, that I was unable to meet with you, I should desire to meet with the people of the Lord, and not to be separated. I do not want that day to come, says the child of God, and not be able to unite with the people of God. I could not bear the thought of it. Perhaps it would break your heart. I hope that is your feeling. We would dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life. Some dwell for a few months or years, but they do not dwell there all the days of their life. I am speaking now of the visible church. If we are members of Christ's mystical body, we shall ever dwell in Him. But I am speaking now of the visible church; we would dwell among these all the days of our life.

May the Lord add His blessing.

(The afternoon sermon was not taken down)