

The Worship of God
The Worship of God Conference
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The National Center for Family Integrated Churches welcome Scott Brown with the following message entitled “The Worship of God.”

I would like to ask for you to open your Bibles to Psalm 27. I’d like to read this Psalm from the first verse to the last. There are four divisions in this Psalm. The first is his confidence in God in verses 1-3,

“1 A Psalm of David. 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? 2 When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell. 3 Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, In this I will be confident.”

Then he speaks of his desire for one thing in verses 4-6,

“4 One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I 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 inquire in His temple. 5 For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. 6 And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.”

And then he cried out with his voice in a prayer, verses 7-12,

“7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8 When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ My heart said to You, ‘Your face, Lord, I will seek.’ 9 Do not hide Your face from me; Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. 10 When my father and my mother forsake me, Then the Lord will take care of me. 11 Teach me Your

way, O Lord, And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. 12 Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; For false witnesses have risen against me, And such as breathe out violence.”

And then finally, in the last two verses 13 and 14, David turns to us and he teaches us how we ought to respond. First of all, he gives a personal testimony and he says,

“13 I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living. 14 Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!”

This passage is about one thing and tonight is part one of a two part exposition of Psalm 27. But before I begin to take us into verse 1 and begin to move through this line-by-line, I want to take you to the absolute epicenter of this Psalm and it's in verse 4 and I want to linger there and then I want to back up and then begin to walk through it and then give you the whole content. The verse speaks of one thing, “One thing I have desired of the Lord.” One thing. Here's a reality: you can walk away from this conference with all the technical operating tools of worship, you can review the perfect commands and principles of the Bible on worship, you can become fiercely committed to them but if you miss this one thing, you will have missed everything. It would be like having a car without a steering wheel or a plane without wings or a marriage without a wife. And if this one thing does not stand at the center of all of your reforming of your church and your family life, it will be destructive to your family and it will prophesy to the destruction of your soul and all of your regulation will be unprofitable and it could plunge you either into a false religion or deeper into a false religion of hypocrisy if your heart in the midst of all your reformations isn't desiring one single thing. This one thing is the central matter and the most telling matter of a Christian's life: his love for God, his worship of God, his hunger for God, his dependence on God, the inclination of his heart toward God, his praise toward God, his desperation for God, his joy in God, his confidence in God. All of these things are revealed in this one thing, one thing that he desires.

This is the message of the whole Bible that “You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart.” And this shines the light on what is the defining mark of a Christian. It is one basic desire: do you, in the genuineness of your heart, desire to seek the Lord? To behold the beauty of the Lord? To say that his laws are beautiful? To say that his works are marvelous? This is the essence of Christianity and it captures everything that the Bible teaches.

This one thing also implies antithesis. There are always two things in opposition and there are so many things that we can desire but if you could only have one thing, what would that be? I heard a pastor from the UK speak of this and he asked his church: if I could give you one thing, what would you ask for? If I could give you any single thing you want in the world, what would you want? Would you want to be something? Would you want to get something? Would you want to accomplish something? Would you want health? Would you want freedom? Would you want success? Would you want to be

comfortable or loved or respected or appreciated or happy? What would it be? And I think this passage drives us to this one question: if you could only go to one place, where would you go? If you could only be near one person, who would it be? If you could only have one thing, what would it be? If you could only accomplish one thing in your life, what would you want to achieve? That's the question that is being driven by this principle that there is one thing. Answering these questions will tell you about that one thing that you value the most. A true Christian, though, will struggle with these things and they'll find themselves desiring something else and then they realize it and they cry out to God and they say, "Have mercy on me a sinner." If all of the reforms that you desire in your life are not tied to this one thing, then all will be lost.

I was speaking with a pastor from another country recently and he was telling me that the families and the churches all over his nation are destroyed. And he recognized that family life needed to change and he wanted to be involved in the reformation of family life and also of his church life. He asked me, "What should I do when I go back because of the brokenness that is everywhere?" And I told him, "Don't first of all do anything to reform your church. Go back home and cry out to God and ask the Lord what beautiful thing that is in his kingdom that you desire and then change that in your own life and let your people see someone who is being changed by what they love." I said, "You know, it's easy, you could just make all these changes in your church and in your family, you can turn the dials and rearrange the chairs. While it would be a good thing to do that, if it does not come from a desire to behold the beauty of the Lord and to love him, it will be unprofitable." I told him I felt that he should, out of the wellspring of his own love for God, go change one thing in his family life and tell the people why. And to help him to communicate the beauty of the word of God that he would extol and praise God for his wonderful word, he would so love it and cherish it that every change would come out of love, it would come out of a beholding of the beauty of the Lord.

You can change many things in your life in response to the word of God but why? Why do you dress the way you do? Why have you brought your wife home from the corporation? Why have you kept your children out of these pagan indoctrination centers? Why have you begun to conduct family worship? Why do you go to a Family Integrated Church? Why do you do anything that you do? Because if you've done them to bless yourself for yourself, then you've missed the whole point of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, that it's out of your innermost being that flow rivers of living water. You drink of his river of delights and then out of you flows the rivers. Pagan religion always works from the outside in. Christianity works from the inside out.

You can do all the right things for God, believe all the right things about God, argue all the great doctrines of God and not know God at all. You can win theological debates, you can have all the right views of church and state and speak on all the practical matters of Bible doctrine accurately and it's possible for any of us to hear when we stand before Almighty God something we do not want to hear. When we say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? Cast out demons in your name? Done many wonders in your name? And then I will say to you, I never knew you. Depart from me you who

practice lawlessness.” Well, without this one thing, nothing else can be in order. It is the epicenter of everything of value.

Let’s move into this passage of Scripture now. By way of introduction before we get to the exposition, I’d like for us to just consider the setting of Psalm 27. The exact setting is not known with certainty but David was in trouble a number of times. He was typically fleeing from Saul or in the midst of a struggle with his son, Absalom. There were many difficult days for David as he was being hunted; he was most likely separated from the house of God, cut off from his family and he had many needs. Notice also the earthly perspective of this Psalm: David is beholding the beauty of the Lord in this life on earth. He is speaking of the things that have happened to him or are happening to him or will happen to him and he says in verse 13, “I would have lost heart if I did not see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living.” He’s talking about the life that he’s living now.

Also understand the interplay between the symbolic and physical language, the types and the anti-types. There is the house of the Lord; there is his temple; there is his tabernacle; there is the secret place of his tabernacle; there is his pavilion. And he is speaking of two things: he is speaking of physical things that also cast a vision for spiritual things. On the one hand, all of these words he’s using as metaphors but he is also speaking of real temples and real pavilions and tabernacles. The temple hadn’t even been built yet and yet he’s speaking of inquiring in his temple. Instead of being in a physical holy place, he’s surrounded by his enemies and he speaks of the tabernacle and the temple, the place of spiritual rest that God gave the people. This language in Scripture is designed to speak of heaven. In a few moments, Dr. Joe Morecraft is going to give a message called “You Don’t Have To Die To Go To Heaven” and that’s really the point of the tabernacle and the temple. God has given these images to us and here David is instructing us, he’s mentoring us about worship. David is God’s mouthpiece to teach us about worship.

There are three forces that shaped and defined David’s worship of God: first of all, he had confidence in God. This was the first force in his life that shaped his worship and really everything about his disposition and how he could be happy in the midst of being pursued by his enemies. Verses 1-3 speak of his confidence. His confidence in God made a difference in his life; he had rest. He mentions fear twice, once in verse 1 and once in verse 3 but he had strength in the midst of his fear. And what was it that gave him such confidence? First of all, his Lord. His Lord. “The Lord is my light.” Jehovah. The word that God uses to speak of his omnipotence.

What else gave him such confidence? His light. “The Lord is my light.” He believed that the Lord would light his way; he would walk in the valley of the shadow of death and all the dark shadows and he would see the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire by night. The Lord was his light. The Lord would show him his way. He had confidence that God would lead him one step at a time and that was such a help in his soul regarding his confidence when he had so many reasons not to have any confidence.

What else gave him confidence? His salvation. “He is my light and my salvation.” This is referring to the persevering power of the gospel in a person’s life. First of all, that God would save his soul. This is the New Testament concept of deliverance in conversion, to be born-again, to once be dead in trespasses and sins but to be saved. Also, it refers to God’s preservation of him, this is the perseverance of the saints. He believed that God would deliver him, that God would preserve his people by the saving power of his right hand. He believed that no matter what happened, no matter what fell apart in his life, that God would preserve him. In Psalm 46 he said, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble, therefore, we shall not fear though the earth should change and the mountains slip into the heart of the sea.” David believed that God would save him; he didn’t believe that he would keep him from troubled times but he did believe that he would be preserved in the midst of his troubled times.

What else gave him such confidence? Freedom from fear. He says, “Whom shall I fear?” He wasn’t afraid of anything. The wicked did not concern him; his enemies did not concern him; the armies that were encamped against him did not cause fear. Though war was rising up against him, he did not fear. He was not concerned with outcomes but he was concerned with God and what God would do and who God was. That was his greatest concern. Is anyone fearful of anything tonight? If we calculated all the fear tonight, if we could bring all the fear in this room and pile it up on this stage, what would we do with it? I know what David did with it, he said, “Whom shall I fear?”

It’s interesting how David worshipped. One of the things that I ended up doing in trying to prepare my heart for these gatherings is to read through the Psalms and see how David worshipped. You know, I learned something about David that really was a chastisement to me. I learned that when David went to worship God, he was always focused on God. He was always extolling the works of God. He was always praising the mighty hand of God. He was always holding up the works of God in his creation. He was praising God and I realized that so often when I, in the morning, would fall on my face, I would be filled with nothing but anguish and I would cry out to God for my own stupidity, my own sins, my own weaknesses, my own lack of understanding of everything and lamenting, lamenting. And I had been doing that for so long, almost like a Roman Catholic in penance or something and yet I realized that David didn’t do that. When he fell on his face, he said, “One thing that I desire of the Lord, that will I seek that I may behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.”

I went through the Psalms and I saw David over and over again focused on one thing: God. His concern is with God. He’s not so concerned with his enemies, he’s not so concerned with what happens to him because he knows that God is sovereign. He knows that God will make it all right in the end. There may be pain, there might be martyrdom but he knows that God will make it right in the end. So, his vision is of God and of God alone. So, he says, “One thing, one thing I have desired of the Lord, to seek and behold the beauty of the Lord.” He had freedom from fear as a result.

What else gave him such confidence? God’s strength. “The Lord is the strength of my life.” The Lord is the strength of my life. Do you get the sentence? How is it that God

would create humanity in such a way so that he would actually become the strength in a person? A person without strength, a person without personal courage, a person without personal ability has strength imputed, washed with the strength of the Lord, that's what he's saying here. His confidence was that God was his strength, that God would provide strength for him. His confidence is that God would provide the strength that he needed. When you know that you will be given what you need, what impact on your personality does that make? He also says that the Lord is the strength of my life. My life. God was his God. God was his personal God.

In Isaiah, the prophet says, "Behold God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid for the Lord my God is my strength and my song and he has become my salvation." David was not having a foxhole conversion; he always trusted God. God was the strength of his life, of his whole life, not just in this moment but of his entire life. What a blessing it is to know that you can live your whole life long from now to the end in his strength, that it's yours to have because he is so kind. He's such a merciful Father to give you his strength.

Some people get very religious when they have trouble and they pray more, they use the Bible words. It's a lot easier to seek the Lord in a time of trouble. We know that, don't we? Are our spiritual awakenings only occurring when we have trials? You know, it's very much that way in my life. The sweetest times in my life have been the hardest times in my life. One of my friends who is here today was telling me the story of his family life and how he went through a period where his daughter almost died. He said, "We were so close to the Lord." He said, "We were like those who dreamed" because they were driven to their knees. There is nothing sweeter than being driven to your knees.

Do we need more trials in our lives? When I look back on the trials that I've had in my life and I have not had great grave trials, but I pray that God would give us the kinds of trials that would drive us to behold the beauty of the Lord. It's the sweetest place we could ever be. You know, it's so easy to despise a trial and to miss its purpose. That God is using his rod to drive you to himself, to bring you back into the sheepfold and to help you and to pour out his strength.

What else gave him confidence? His experience with enemies, verse 2. "When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell." David was speaking of his experience. The vicious nature of the enemies that is spoken of here, they wanted to eat up his flesh. They were like cannibals wanting to tear him to pieces and he had lived enough life to see how vulnerable he was to his enemies. He knows that only God is mighty enough to control his enemies and he says here that they stumbled. They stumbled and fell. And what we learn from this is that God will raise up your enemies, enemies of his own choosing and then he will disorient them and then he will use your enemies for your good and that's what David believed.

So, this force of confidence in God shaped David's worship. That is the first force that shaped his worship: his confidence in God. I pray that God would give us that greater confidence than we've ever had before God when we fall down before him to cry out to him.

The second force that shaped David's worship was his desire for one thing: he wanted communion with God. One thing. There was truly one single thing. This one single message of the Bible and it was genuinely desired. He desired it. You know, desires are such powerful forces, desires are what make you tick and they make you get up in the morning and do everything that you do. And this is the reality of our hearts and David is saying that he desired it. It was real in his heart. He had so many things pressing upon him from so many different directions but there was one single thing he knew he needed to concentrate on. It was so easy to be distracted. Often it happens that our desires are so low because our trials are so mild. Mildness of trials are mildly helpful. Mighty trials, however, are mightily helpful.

There's a pattern that repeats in many of our lives where we go through a hard time, we're brought to our knees and we find ourselves in dependence and desperation and then howling winds die down and the waves drop and the sea is glassy. Then we get comfortable again and we don't cry out to God because there is no threat and we learn how good the threats are for our souls. Moses warned the children of Israel of this, he said, "When you go into the Promised Land, you're going to become successful and then you will forget me."

In your registration bag that we gave you when you came in, we put a cd in there as a gift to you. It's the first session of a series that John Snyder and Paul Washer and some of our friends put together called "Behold Your God." My family was watching this series and he quoted Samuel Rutherford in one of the sessions. Samuel Rutherford was such a compassionate shepherd; he was such a tender-hearted pastor. And here's what he said, he said this to his congregation to help them see, really, the beauty of the Lord, "O you poor, dry, dead souls. Why will you not come and bring your empty vessels and your empty souls to this huge fair deep and sweet well of life?" And then he said, "Now, would to God that all cold-blooded, faint-hearted soldiers of Christ would look again to Jesus and to his love and when they look, I would have them look again and again and fill themselves with the beauty of beholding Christ." Psalm 107 says that "he satisfies the longing soul, he fills the hungry soul with goodness." And then he says, "O that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

He genuinely desired. You know, if your desires are lacking and we all go through times when desire does flag, listen to Samuel Rutherford and go back and fill that well. Fill up the well of your affections for desire for the holy things.

Also, not only was it desired, it was sought after. "That will I seek," is what he says. Here we find in David true desires led to tangible action and his desiring led to his seeking. Your desire always leads you somewhere whether it's a right desire or a wrong desire. What this means is that we have to go where our desires lead to our seeking him. Many desires die a slow death because they're not fed. We don't feed holy desires and that principle that what you feed grows is present here in this statement. Desires are a living thing; they need food to survive. And if you do not feed the desire, it will die in the same

way that your baby will die if it's not nourished. This is why Peter said in 1 Peter 2, "As newborn babes desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

Fourthly, he sought after the nearness of God, "to dwell in the house of the Lord." He sought after the nearness of God. The term "house of the Lord" appears here. It's a significant term and we need to understand it. Your first of various ways that God has ordained to be near his children, the house of the Lord is the place of the nearness of God and there are various terms in the Bible that speak of this. We've already spoken of the temple, the tabernacle, the mountain of the Lord, the courts of the Lord, the holy place, the city, the kingdom, the church. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of it as the secret place.

All of the appearances of these words are types of heaven and they do speak of physical things: real temples, real homes, real holy places, real Sabbath days. You know, God in heaven had a home. He and the family of God in the Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, they had a home where there was love and delight and submission and authority. Then God, when he created man, he put men in homes. He put them in a perfect home in the Garden of Eden and then he created a household through a husband and wife. Then he said to his people, "Be fruitful and multiply." And he said, "Multiply homes" and there were the homes of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and all of those. And God took his children out of the house of bondage and put them into the house of the Lord. There in the wilderness in Leviticus, it is recorded that he made a tabernacle for them where he would come near. It was the house of the nearness of God.

Then in Numbers, he commanded the families to gather around the temple of God: some on the north, the south, the east and the west. And all of the families would focus on the tabernacle, on the house of God, to be near the Lord. God wanted his people to have their focus toward the tabernacle of God, the place where God was. Then he made a temple, another place of the nearness of God. Then he made a family, the family of God. The Lord Jesus Christ creates another home of living stones, the household of faith. God is always creating a home where he dwells. A home is a holy and a sacred place and the tabernacle and the temple speak of it. The last words of the Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples were, "In my Father's house are many dwelling places." He was speaking of his heavenly home.

So, when David speaks of this house, the nearness of God, to dwell in the house of the Lord, he wasn't just throwing away words. He was saying that he was desiring to dwell in the household of the Lord and then he sought it with a motive, to have it every day. "All the days of my life." Notice the duration: all the days. Not just the Sabbath day. Not just on a good day. Not just in the congregation. Not just in a time of trouble. Not just five minutes three times a week. But all the days of my life. God has designed us to behold his beauty all the days of our lives. How much we miss in so many days when we miss it.

And then he sought it for an objective: to behold the beauty of the Lord. The word that David uses here is a word that means "pleasant, delightful, beauty, favor." He wants to behold the beauty of the Lord. And what does it mean to behold? It means to see his

works and meditate on them; it means to see his ways; to know his character, his laws, his attributes, his names, his mighty deeds throughout history. To behold the beauty, what does it mean? It means to taste and see that the Lord is good. In Psalm 34:1, he says, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears.”

It’s not only tasting, it’s also delighting like David did in Psalm 84 when he said, “How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”

But it’s not only delighting, it’s also lingering as he said in Psalm 84:10, “For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

But it doesn’t just mean lingering, it also means feasting. In Isaiah 25 he says, “And in this mountain The Lord of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces...and they will be glad and rejoice.”

But it’s not only feasting, it’s also having your thirst quenched. In Psalm 63, he says, “Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary.”

But it’s not only quenching thirst, it’s also gazing and being transformed. In 2 Corinthians 3, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”

David so desired to see the Lord. One of the most amazing things about the whole doctrine of the temple and the tabernacle and the household and the pavilion of God, the secret place of his tabernacle, the most amazing thing about this is when Jesus Christ gave such a gift as the New Covenant. What he did is he made your body the temple of the Holy Spirit; he made your body, he made your very frame like his house. And in this house, he meets with you in the same way that the tabernacle was mobile, so now you are the tabernacle of the Lord and wherever you are, whatever you’re doing, you can behold the beauty of the Lord. You’re not tied to a geographical place; you can worship him in spirit and truth. You can have him. You can have all of him wherever you are, whatever you’re doing because he has tabernacled with you and his dwelling place is now your dwelling place and there you are, able to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

I want to speak again the words of Samuel Rutherford who said this: “I beseech thee. Come warm thy heart at this blessed fire. O come and smell the precious ointments of

Jesus Christ. O come and sit under his shadow of great delight.” And this is my prayer for all of the time that we spend together. But more than that, that God would do a work in our hearts to increase our hunger, to inflame our desire for holy things and that as the days and the years pass, that it would be for us for holiness, it would be for the beauty of the Lord. And that next year there would be even less darkness, less of that cursed Halloween of October 31st. Further away from those nightmare days. Less broken. More hungry. More hopeful. More fearless. May God do this among us. May he come upon us and give us the ability to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

Now I pray, I pray that I have just threaded a needle of a theme in this holy convocation. It’s a thread of the beauty of the Lord and it would be woven in every speech and it would be woven into every heart and as we walk around this place, that God would do a miracle in us and we would think less of ourselves and how smart we are and how much we want the favor of people and we would care for this one thing. As we speak to one another, as we walk under God’s great sky, as we sit in the congregation, that in our hearts we would say, “One thing have I desired of the Lord.”

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