

# Pursue God Above All Other Things

## Psalm 27

Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

By Ryan Perry

### Scripture:

#### Psalm 27:4

***[4] 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.***

### Let's Pray

#### Introduction

I am not a gift person by nature. I don't get super excited about them, and it doesn't bother me if someone doesn't get me a gift on a special day like Christmas or my birthday.

However, there was one particular gift that my wife gave me, which, to this day, is probably the best gift that I have ever been given.

In June of 2020, I had been telling my wife for months that it would be awesome to have a **"Traeger Pellet Smoker,"** but I also knew how expensive they were. So it was something that I would say in passing, but I knew it would probably never happen.

But my wife had a plan. You see, one of our friends worked for Ace Hardware, and with his help, she was able to get what is normally a really expensive grill at cost out of the warehouse.

Of course, I didn't know this, so you can imagine my surprise when, on Father's Day, I came out to our back porch and saw this grill along with a bunch of pellets so I could get started right away.

I was both in shock and over-the-moon excited. So I got this thing up and running, and I was off to the races, smoking any piece of meat that I could get my hands on.

In fact, over the next 3-4 months, I got so into using this smoker that I even started an Instagram page where I put up my creations, got other ideas from seasoned grillers, and became a part of this community of grill experts and meat lovers

**But as I was doing this, I missed the subtle shift that was happening in my heart.**

No longer was it simply a fun hobby that provided good food for my family. Instead, it became an obsession where my entire focus was on smoking meat, creating new food creations, and gaining followers on a social platform who would give me high praise for what my food looked like and not for how it actually tasted.

Now, I can't remember the exact conversation that we had, but there was a point in talking with my wife, where it became clear that this was becoming a problem.

My world became about grilling, smoking different foods, and getting the approval of a bunch a people that I had never met. Because, for a brief moment in time, I made "being a griller" my greatest pursuit.

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I am sharing this story with you because it highlights the truth behind a very common phrase that most of us have heard before: **"You become what you focus on."**

This means that the things we repeatedly think about, prioritize, and give our attention to will affect our thoughts, beliefs, actions, and even our character. They will have a profound effect on who we become.

Now, this phrase has generally been attributed to the ancient Stoic philosophers, and particularly to a man by the name of Epictetus.

But its origins can so easily be traced back to the pages of scripture. Look with me at the following verses:

#### **Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)**

***Above all else, guard your heart,  
for everything you do flows from it.***

#### **Matthew 6:19–21**

***[19] "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, [20] but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. [21] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."***

Again, what we focus on and take into our hearts shapes what we do and who we become.

We are going to see this same idea play out in Psalm 27 this morning.

Where David is going to pull back the curtain of his life so that we can get a glimpse of his greatest focus and pursuit (V. 4), **which is to know and experience God.**

Then, within the rest of the psalm, we will see how this singular pursuit affected the rest of his life: **His confidence in God (V. 1-6), his desire to walk in his ways (V. 7-12), and his belief in the future to come (13-14).**

My hope this morning is that this look behind the curtain at David's deepest desires will be instructive for us. That it will help us to see that our greatest pursuit in the Christian life is meant to be God himself.

Because knowing and experiencing God is what we were created for, and seeking him as of first importance will have a profound effect on how we live.

So here's how I'm going to walk us through this psalm:

1. We will begin by looking at David's central pursuit of God in verse 4. In fact, this is where we will spend a good part of our time this morning.
2. We will see how his pursuit of God overflows into the practical realities of David's life.

Let's begin by looking at David's greatest desire and pursuit.

### **Make God your greatest pursuit**

#### **Psalm 27:4**

***[4] 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.***

#### **Illustration**

Imagine that you're sitting around with a group of friends and someone asks the question, **"If you could have anything in the world right now, what would it be?"**

What do you think most people would say? **"A million dollars."**

Many would answer this way because money is viewed as a really useful and important thing in our world. And for most of us, having a million dollars would feel life-changing.

We could pay off debts, we could pay off our house, we could stop worrying about whether or not we have enough, we could start a business, we could save more for retirement, or maybe for some of you, you could finally retire.

**So, it makes sense that someone would respond this way.**

#### **Text**

But that wouldn't be King David's response to this question. Because his greatest desire and longing go way beyond money, way beyond security, and way beyond any earthly thing he could ever get.

Instead, what he wants, more than anything else, is to dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of his life.

This is David's way of saying, **"What I want above all else, and what I am working towards, is being in God's presence forever."**

He understood that fellowship with God was the greatest and best thing he could spend his time seeking after. **Because it is the place that he would get to gaze upon and experience his beauty.**

Now, when we think of the word beauty, we tend to think about it in physical terms. We might say, "That sunset or those flowers are beautiful" because we believe those things to be visually appealing.

But when that word is applied to God, it actually refers to an expression of his favor, grace, and goodness to his people. Look at the following verses:

#### **Exodus 34:6-7**

***6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."***

As he made his presence known to Moses, God revealed himself to be good, gracious, merciful, and just.

#### **Psalm 90:17 (A Prayer of Moses)**

***[17] Let the favor (beauty) of the Lord our God be upon us,  
and establish the work of our hands upon us;  
yes, establish the work of our hands!***

So, in Psalm 27:4, David isn't asking to gaze upon or behold the physical beauty of God. Rather, he wants a robust fellowship with God that allows him to experience the fullness of His goodness.

Because he knows that the presence of God is the place where he will experience the full and abundant life that God has promised to his people, and it is the place where he will find his greatest pleasure and joy.

As he wrote in Psalm 16:11

***[11] You make known to me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.***

## Application

Church, this should be the longing of our hearts this morning. To make fellowship with God our greatest pursuit, and in so doing, experience the fullness of the goodness, grace, and favor that he has for us.

For God is nearer to us today than David or any of the Old Testament saints could have imagined.

Where David had to go to the house of God to be in his presence, we know that God, in and through Christ, has come to dwell within us by his Spirit. **We are now his house.**

And where David longed to experience God's presence forever, Jesus came to open the way for us into the most holy place so that it could be a reality for us today.

As it says in Hebrews 10:19-20

***[19] Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, [20] by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,***

Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection, has fully opened the way for us to know God, to be with God, and to experience God. Which means that every single day, we can experience his favor, presence, and all of the blessings of the new and abundant life, because they now belong to us in and through Christ.

This is what Paul wrote about in Ephesians 1:3 when he said:

***[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,***

Now, if this is true, and it is, then I want to encourage each one of us to ask ourselves the following question:

What am I running after and what am I pursuing today? Are you trying to seek fulfillment and accolades from other people, like I was, through my Instagram page? Are you trying to seek security and comfort from relationships in your life?

**Or, are you seeking God, in Christ, as your greatest pursuit? To know him, to rest in him, to trust him, and to listen to him through his Word?**

Because only in him will we find the abundance of life, joy, and favor that we were created to experience.

And the beautiful truth of this Psalm and the rest of scripture is that everything else that we need flows from the deep and abiding fellowship that we have with him.

In fact, there are three things that this psalm points to as the results of David's deep fellowship with God.

The first one is his strong confidence in God.

**Put your confidence in God.**

**Psalm 27:1-3, 5-6**

***[1] 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?***

***[2] When evildoers assail me  
to eat up my flesh,  
my adversaries and foes,  
it is they who stumble and fall.***

***[3] Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war arise against me,  
yet I will be confident.***

***[5] 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.***

***[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.***

## **Text**

This is another one of those psalms where we don't exact situation that David is dealing with, but from what we do know, it's a pretty serious and scary situation.

It seems that an army, more than likely from an evil nation, has come against David, and they want to violently destroy him.

Now, I've never served in the armed forces or been on the front lines of battle. But I remember one time when I was about 7 or 8, two older kids tried to beat me up and steal my bike at our local convenience store.

Fortunately, I was able to get out of there, but I remember how scared I felt at that moment. So I can only imagine the kind of fear that David could have experienced as he saw this giant mass of people coming against him.

But instead of crying out to God in fear, he proclaims his full confidence in God. He says the Lord is my **“light,”** my **“salvation,”** and my **“stronghold.”**

Because David has experienced the deep fellowship and favor of God, he knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God will be for him and will fight for him.

God will guide him through the battle as his light, he will be his refuge and safety when the battle gets hard, and he will be his salvation and rescue. Which means that God will be the one who fights for him.

Therefore, he says that he is confident in God, he refuses to be afraid, and in anticipation of the coming victory, he will rejoice in the Lord.

### **Application**

Are you struggling with fear this morning? As I shared my story of anxiety and panic attacks last week, are you dealing with the same thing? Do you find yourself routinely dealing with a spirit of insecurity and worry?

If so, it might be an indication that you are pursuing the wrong things. That you have made something else besides God, in Christ, your greatest pursuit.

So I want to encourage you to come back to him. Believe that he will satisfy your soul and that he will be your guide and your refuge through the darkest and hardest moments in your life.

And no matter what tribulations come your way, you can live with peace because Jesus tells us that he has gained victory over this world.

As he said in John 16:33:

***[33] I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."***

Therefore, pursue God and put your confidence in him.

Secondly, David's deep fellowship with God puts within him a desire to walk in his ways.

### **Desire to walk in the ways of God.**

#### **Psalm 27:7-12**

***[7] Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;  
be gracious to me and answer me!***

***[8] You have said, "Seek my face."  
My heart says to you,  
"Your face, LORD, do I seek."***

***[9] Hide not your face from me.  
Turn not your servant away in anger,  
O you who have been my help.***

***Cast me not off; forsake me not,  
O God of my salvation!***

***[10] For my father and my mother have forsaken me,  
but the LORD will take me in.***

***[11] Teach me your way, O LORD,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.***

***[12] Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;  
for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they breathe out violence.***

## **Illustration**

As I said at the beginning, what we focus on profoundly affects who we become. And one of the ways that we can learn about someone's focus or priorities is by listening to what they talk about.

If you had spent any amount of time talking to me in the summer of 2020, you probably would have heard me talk about using my pellet smoker, because that's where my heart, my priorities, and my attention were focused at that moment.

But there's another way we can gain a glimpse into someone's priorities. It's by listening to their prayers. Because in prayer, we are generally revealing our deepest longings and desires to God, with the hope that he's going to give them to us.

## **Text**

That's exactly what we get to see in David's prayer in verses 7-12. He begins with a cry for God to hear him and answer him in verse 7, and then in verse 9, there are four petitions that are all related to his desire for God's nearness:

- "Hide not your face from me..."
- "Turn not your servant away in anger..."
- "Cast me not off..."
- "Forsake me not..."

These are all petitions for God's closeness and fellowship that show us, once again, that his greatest desire, even in the midst of great distress and hardship, is to experience the presence and favor of God. **He wants God to be close to him.**

But then he follows up those petitions with these words in verse 11:

***"Teach me your way, O LORD,  
and lead me on a level path..."***

This is important because it connects our desire to follow God and walk in his ways to our pursuit of his presence.

Which means that if you're struggling to follow God's commands, you might be focused on the wrong thing.



You might be too focused on doing the right things **For God**, when you really need to be focused on knowing, beholding, and delighting in God.

However, we also need to realize that there is a connection between our experience of God and our desire to walk in his ways. In fact, we can see this connection in Jeremiah 31:33 as he talks about the blessing of the new covenant.

***[33] For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.***

God, when he made us his people through Christ, wrote his good and perfect law on our hearts. Which means that we don't need to wonder how we are supposed to live. Instead, we lean on the revealed will of God in his word, and by his Spirit, we increasingly bring our lives in conformity with his instruction.

And the fruit of that pursuit will be a greater knowledge of God, a greater love for God, and a greater experience of his presence in our lives.

### **Application**

I think we intuitively understand this as Christians. Walking in sin will keep us from experiencing the closeness with God that is ours through Christ, while walking according to his ways will result in a deeper fellowship with him.

But the root of that desire to walk in his ways begins with our fellowship with God. **Do we want him more than anything else?**

So if you're struggling with sin this morning, I want to encourage you to come to Jesus. Come and repent of your sin and believe that he has fully and wholly forgiven you through his shed blood. Then make it your pursuit, not simply to obey his commands, but to know him and to experience the joy that he has for you when you walk in his ways.

And if you are here this morning, and you don't know God and haven't experienced the new life that can be yours through Christ, then I want to encourage you to come to him. Realize that by trusting in Jesus, you can be freed from the penalty and power of sin in your life.

Because he took your sin upon himself, he died the death you deserved, and then he rose again in victory.

Which means that if you believe in him, he will give you a new and everlasting life, he will bring you into a forever relationship with God, and you can experience the joy of knowing and pursuing him, all the days of your life.

This brings us to the last fruit of David's fellowship with God. He believed that the best is yet to come.

**Believe that the best is yet to come.**

**Psalm 27:13-14**

***[13] I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD  
in the land of the living!***

***[14] Wait for the LORD;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the LORD!***

### **Text**

Verse 13 is so good because it is a proclamation of David's deep faith in God's future grace. David is looking ahead and is declaring, **"I know that I am going to see God and all of his goodness clearly when this war is over."**

This is David putting his full hope in the future deliverance that God would provide for him. That he will not only see and experience God in the trials of war and hardship, but there will be a day when all of those things are over.

All of the wars will cease, all of his enemies will be subdued, and he will experience the full goodness and favor of God as he brings victory to David and the rest of Israel.

### **Application**

And this is the same hope that we have this morning. But our hope isn't ultimately about a victory or a deliverance that will happen in this life; rather, our hope is in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That the God who raised Jesus from the dead will one day raise our bodies to new life and will bring us into his eternal presence forever. As it says in 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18:

***[17] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore encourage one another with these words.***

So be encouraged today, even when our world, much like David's, can be frightening and altogether discouraging.

Pursue God as your greatest treasure and put your full confidence in him. Know that he is with you and walk in his ways. And finally, live with the hope that his perfect and forever presence one day will be yours.

Because the best, his best, is yet to come.

As David said, ***wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!***

**Let's Pray**