



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Psalm 27:1-6

"Beholding the Beauty of the Lord"

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] When I was getting ready to preach at the 8:30 service, one of the men in the tape room came and asked me if I was starting a series. And I said, No, well, really not a series, but two messages on the 27th Psalm. And he mentioned the fact that it would therefore be classified by them as a miscellaneous message. I made a comment at the 8:30 service that it seemed to reduce the significance of what I was saying. And so when I came in just a moment ago and looked on the desk, there is a note from the tape room that says, In order to keep you from feeling that we in the tape ministry consider any of your messages as being insignificant, I am forthwith changing all messages which would otherwise be labeled "Miscellaneous" to "The Significant Other." [Laughter] I trust that this new classification meets with your approval.

So we're turning to Psalm 27, and this is the first of two messages, the Lord willing, on this great Psalm. And the subject for today is "Beholding the Beauty of the Lord." And in the light of the fact that both of the messages are on the Psalm, I'm going to read the entire Psalm, both this Sunday and next Sunday, the Lord willing.

It's a psalm of David and he writes,

"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? (Such a familiar text. It's sad in one sense to make a slight change, but the term "the strength" is probably a term that means better "refuge". And so, we'll think of it in that way.) The LORD is the refuge of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 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, 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. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

May God bless this reading of his word. And let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn to Thee in the confidence that David's psalm suggests to us. We turn to one who has offered himself to us as our light, as the God of our salvation, as the refuge of our life. We thank Thee, Lord, for the greatness of our triune God in heaven. And we thank Thee for the largeness of the promises of the word of God and how by reason of the plenteous redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are beautifully furnished for living the days that Thou dost give us to live upon this earth. We are so grateful for the presence of the Lord Jesus and for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of us whom Thou hast brought to trust in him who loved sinners and gave himself for them. We ask Thy blessing upon the entire assembly, upon the visitors who are here with us today. We ask Thy blessing upon the whole church of Jesus Christ wherever gathered together. May today be a significant day in the life of those who are united to our Lord Jesus through faith in him who has sacrificed himself for us.

We pray for the sick. We especially ask Thy blessing upon them. Those whom we know and whom we love particularly, we bring them before Thee, Lord, and pray that Thou wilt minister to them, strengthen them, build them up, give healing accordance with Thy will. And minister to them and to those who love them and who minister to them as well. We are grateful, Lord, for the life that we have in this great country. And we pray Thy blessing upon it, upon our president, upon the governments under whom we live. Be with us in this hour, and may as we sing, may as we listen to the word of God, our minds and hearts be open to Thy truth. And may we be responsive to the extent that our lives are changed. We commit our moments to Thee now. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is "Beholding the Beauty of the Lord." This warm and impassioned psalm fairly shouts the central place of personal union and communion with the Lord Jesus in the believer's life. It reflects the ardent concern also of David's greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'm going to take the liberty of reading chapter 17, verse 20 through verse 26 of the Gospel of John, a section of our Lord's high priestly

prayer, in which he speaks of the great concern of his life. And in verse 20 of John chapter 17, our Lord prays. He's just prayed for the apostles, but now he says,

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

I think you can see that the eternal election of believers had as its goal that we, all of us who are his, should ultimately be united in the Father and in the Son, and secondarily, in other believer's lives ultimately. The important thing that our Lord had before him constantly was finishing the work that would make it possible for the elect of God to be one with him and with the Father, and with the Father as he and the Father were one, and as a result of that, might enjoy the knowledge of the glory of God in Jesus Christ. When I read Psalm 27, I think about that.

The house that David speaks about was for him the tabernacle. The temple had not yet been constructed. And that represents the place of sanctuary from enemies and from trials, and in a spiritual sense, from all kinds of enemies that believers have. But it also represented for him the ultimate in the vision of God because Jehovah had identified

himself with the sanctuary. And as you know, on the first of the great Day of Atonement, it was there that Israel's relationship with him was settled for one further year. And the putting of the blood upon the ark of the covenant was the consummation of the work of atonement. And since it was in the Holy of Holies, it was representative of the presence of the Lord God, only the high priest able to enter on that particular day.

As you look at this psalm, you naturally think, When did David write it and under what circumstances? Unfortunately, we don't really know. Things that are said in it, however, suggest perhaps the time of Absalom's rebellion. After David had been king, Absalom his son raised a rebellion against him, and it was necessary for the king to flee. And he spent many days fleeing from his enemies. And furthermore, since there were military struggles, the language of the military, which is found in this psalm, would be suitable for that time. One reads of foes and enemies in verse 2 and verse 3 and then again in verse 6. So we may think of that as being perhaps the time, sitting upon a rock, for 1st Samuel tells us that that's precisely what he did at one point during Absalom's rebellion, writing about his experiences and about his trust in the Lord in the midst of his trials.

The psalm itself, generally, is spoken of as having two parts, verses 1 through 6 and then from verse 7 through the end. I like to think, because I'm always looking for three points, I like to think that this last verse is something of a conclusion with the lesson of the psalm. At any rate, we have a strophe, verses 1 through 6. We have an antistrophe with an entirely different mood in verse 7 through verse 13. And then we have a kind of epode in verse 14.

Scholars like to tell us that there is some possibility that the two psalms, which have such different language in them, have been put together by someone. But one difficulty with calling this a composite psalm is the fact that if the two parts are so entirely unlike, why or what should have led any arranger to have united the two which are so separate in their thoughts. We regard the psalm as coming from David and the whole

psalm expressing the ups and the downs, perhaps, because that's really a picture of the lives of most of us.

Now the first 3 verses of the psalm are verses in which the sweet psalmist of Israel expresses his confidence in God. One of the things that we learn from our human experience is that confidence derives from experience. The friend that we have found faithful is the friend to whom we turn. Our experience has indicated that this friend is a faithful friend, and so we turn to him. The physician who has ministered to us successfully is the one to whom we turn. Our confidence is based upon our experience. The commander under whom we may have served and who has brought us to victory would be the commander in whom we should trust.

And so, David now expresses his confidence. And his confidence is based upon his experience and his knowledge of the things of the Lord. And three reasons are given for his confidence in the very first verse. He says, "The LORD is my light." This is a profoundly beautiful name for God, "my light." What really could be more wonderful than that? "My light" That suggests a sun that never sets. It suggests a sun that would know no eclipse.

"The Lord is my light." Light is revealing, and so he is the one who reveals the truth to us. Light gives illumination. He is the one who sheds his light upon our path and shows us our way. Light gives us knowledge. In fact, that's the way we speak in our language. I read such-and-such and I was enlightened. Or I got light upon this. The Lord is my light. He's the one who gives illumination. He gives knowledge.

And light suggests truth. We say of an individual, he has light on that subject. He has knowledge of it and truth. In fact, the psalmist himself will say shortly in the 9th verse of the 36th Psalm, "In Thy light we shall see light." In other words, we never know anything correctly and rightly until we know God's interpretation of it. That's a truth that is so important that it's a leading truth in the most significant biblical science. In Thy light we see light.

We never understand anything about this world until we understand God's interpretation of it. He created this world. He knows this world. His interpretation of this world is the interpretation. And so consequently, if we have his interpretation of anything in this particular world of which we're a part, we have truth, we have light. It's in his light that we ultimately see light. Theologians know the significance of this because it means that if we are to defend the Christian faith, we must defend it in that light.

Light not only gives us illumination and knowledge and truth, but it also gives us light and knowledge and truth about ourselves. And so consequently, the light of the Lord God shining upon our life reveals to us the flaws and the weaknesses and the failings and the sins of our lives. So, light dispels the passions of self-love and sin. This is one of the great benefits that is the believer's. He has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, not only to give him light with reference to God, but to give him light with reference to himself.

This past week I opened up a book of mine and found an old illustration which I had copied out of a magazine and put it away, but I don't think I've ever used it. And it seemed to fit what I was talking about.

J. W. Alexander, relating his first experience with an ingenious type of signal in World War II, describes something that he said few non-navy men might know. But he said, "My first observation of this system in operation came in the summer of 1944 when during the mid watch, from midnight to four in the morning, the signalman on the bridge of our ship suddenly burst into activity. "Stand by to write," he yelled to the chief signalman on watch. His assistant signalman grabbed the pad of paper and pencil and stood by to copy the message as the chief interpreted it as he peered into the darkness through a special pair of binoculars that looked toward a darkened hulk about four thousand yards off the starboard beam. A sister ship had a message for us."

"And staring into that inky darkness, in which I could see absolutely nothing, the chief began to call out words. As far as I was concerned, he was seeing things. But the

chief had eyes to see, saw something out there in the darkness that nobody else saw because he had a special pair of binoculars that were equipped to receive a type of polarized light impulse being flashed by the sister ship which had a special type of signal lamp which sends that type of impulse. And only people with the right types of binoculars could see it. When I borrowed a pair from the signalman, I was amazed to see a brilliant light flashing on that other ship, dots and dashes streaming forth in rapid succession. A message was coming, but it could only be seen if you had the proper instrument with which to receive it."

The things that have to do with the Christian life are similar. The Holy Spirit has been given us. He, if I may use the term, is the binoculars by which we may see the light that comes from God. And if we do not have them, we do not see them.

"The Lord," David says, "is my light and my salvation." He's the one who reveals the truth to me. It does not come from other sources. It comes ultimately only from him. That is a marvelous term for God, isn't it?

Some of the commentators have made the point that this is the only place in Scripture that God is called "My light" as if this profoundly beautiful name for God is found only here. Elsewhere in Scripture he is often referred to as "the light" or "light." But here, "my light", "my God", "my salvation", David says. That meant for him deliverance and victory. For us it means not simply that, but it means deliverance or victory from the guilt and power of sin in our life. So, he is my light and he's my salvation. And there is salvation in no one else, for he is the only savior.

And finally David says, "He is the refuge of my life." Notice the personalizing pronoun. "My" light, "my" salvation, the strength of "my" life. Everything personalized, everything individualized. These are God's benefits that have to do with the individual who knows the Lord God. They are not for the world as a whole. They are for those who are able to say, "My God, my light, my salvation, my life." Well of course, if he is my

light, if he is my salvation, if he's the refuge of my life, David's right, whom shall I fear?

"Of whom shall I be afraid?"

In the 118th Psalm, he says much the same thing in the 6th verse. I think I'd like to read that for you. You need not turn there, but if you want to, that's fine. I turn to 118:6. We read these words, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" And after all, if he is my light, if he is my salvation, if he is the refuge of my life, then nothing can touch me. No man can touch me. The gods (little g), the gods cannot touch me, for they are non-entities. And the devils cannot touch me because the devils cannot act except under the sovereign will of the Lord God in heaven. So, what can man do unto me?

The Apostle Paul puts it this way. After he has unfolded the great doctrine of salvation and reached almost a climax of it in chapter 8, he asks in Romans chapter 8 and verse 31, "What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Now if you know anything about the German reformation, you know the name Philip Melanchthon. Melanchthon was the scholar of the Lutheran revelation. Martin Luther loved Melanchthon and Melanchthon took Luther as his hero. Luther once said, "I'm rough, boisterous and stormy. I'm born to fight against innumerable monsters and devils. I must remove stumps and stones, cut away thistles and thorns, and clear the wild forests. But Master Philip comes along gently and softly, sowing and watering with joy according to the gifts which God has abundantly bestowed upon him."

In fact, humanly speaking, there wouldn't have been a Lutheran reformation in the way that it came were there not both a Martin Luther and a Philip Melanchthon, because Melanchthon was one of the greatest of the scholars of his day, and the fact that he was a supporter of the reformation gave it credibility in the time. And so consequently, Luther and Melanchthon and their relationship to one another represent the two individuals who have a kind of Apostle Paul and an Apostle John relationship.

Melanchthon's home is in Wittenberg where Luther nailed the ninety-five theses to the castle church. And if you go to Wittenberg today, you can see the home of Philip Melanchthon. And you can also see the study in the second story of the house. You may think I've seen it, but I haven't, I'm reading about it or have read about it. And his study was on the second story of the house. And when you go in that house, above the study of Philip Melanchthon in Wittenberg where he spent so much of his time are these words, "Si Deus pro nobis quis contra nos" or "If God be for us, who against us?" That's the same sentiment that the psalmist expresses here when he says the Lord is his light, his salvation and the refuge of his life, of whom shall he fear?

I love the next verse that Paul wrote, for he said: If he spared not himself for us, but gave himself for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? He who spared not his own life, but gave himself for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

If the Lord Jesus has given us himself, that's the greatest gift of all. No one could give anything more than that. Every other gift is lesser. And Paul says if he gave the most for us and the greatest for us, he surely will give us something lesser or the rest. That's why I believe that since the Lord was given for us , he also gives to those for whom he has given himself the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Holy Spirit in conviction and conversion. And so consequently, all those for whom he has given himself have the ministry of the Holy Spirit given to them. As Paul says, "He that spared not his only Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" David writes similarly. He's my light, my salvation, the refuge of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

I can understand now why Luther when he was going to Worms and everybody was telling him: Don't go there. You're going to lose your life if you go to Worms; he said, Look, if there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the

houses, I still would go. And he went. And he survived . And as a result, the Protestant reformation survived as it has survived.

Now David goes on to talk about the experience of his confidence. In verses 2 and 3 he says, "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell."

I confess to you, I still, after all of these years, read the Hebrew text. And this word "they" bears an emphasis in the Hebrew text. "When the wicked, even mine enemies came and my foes came upon me to eat up my flesh," who would you expect to stumble and fall? David. But no, he says, not David. "They stumbled and fell." You can underline it in the English text. That would give the sense of it. When the wicked, my enemies, my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. It was the hand of God for the protection of his servant.

"Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me (even from my own son Absalom), in this will I be confident."

He's my light, my salvation. He's the refuge of my life. So David tells us whom we have tried, we trust.

And I say to you as Christians , whom you have tried, trust. So I suggest to you, if you've never tried him, try the Lord, and you will discover that he's worth trusting. And his trust never fails.

Now, David changes the topic, it seems, almost emphatically. And he looks at his own heart, expresses exactly what his goal in life is. David was not a priest. He was of the tribe of Judah, remember, like our Lord. Our Lord could never have been a Levitical priest. He was not of the right tribe. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews points that out. But David envied those priests who served in the tabernacle, because they were the ministers of God ostensibly. They were the individuals who had to do with the divine things that were carried on. And the high priest, he, of course, was at the center of the worship of the children of Israel. And David could not help expressing a desire to

experience, spiritually at least, what they had the opportunity to be. No ambition to be a priest is expressed here, but to enjoy what their calling typified, unfettered divine communion, the priests constantly in the things of the Lord.

He says, "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." You cannot help but see someone who is stirred by spiritual hunger. And notice the terms of it: "To dwell in the house of the Lord." Though excluded because of the tribe of Judah, he realized that ultimately there is no home like the house of the Lord. If you turn back to the psalm immediately preceding this one and the 8th verse, David writes, "LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."

And secondly, he says, "To behold the beauty of the LORD," meditation on all that is engaging and gracious in the revelation of himself. Of all the ritual of ancient times, no ritual was more impressive, more significant than the liturgy that characterized Judaism. Nothing could be more impressive than the tabernacle and the temple and the worship that was carried on. The sacrifices, the priests, the high priests, the great feast days, the Day of Atonement. No Christian church could ever have the kind of liturgy that God gave the Nation Israel designed to point forward to the time when the fulfillment of it all should come.

"To behold the beauty of the Lord." And I don't know how much David understood, but I have the feeling he understood a great deal more than individuals today like to think that he did. But nevertheless, we have no indication that David is speaking beholding the beauty of the Lord as if he got a great deal of help from the good entertainment that he might have seen in the carrying out of the liturgy. He was not "on the Canterbury trail," many evangelicals today going back to Anglicanism on the Canterbury trail.

Some books recently written have designed to glamorize that as if it is something great to go back on the Canterbury trail. If you're going to go on a spiritual trail, you better go on the Jerusalem trail, it seems to me, and go back to the beginnings of the Christian church and not to something along the way in our departure from the worship of the early church which was simple and direct and gathered around the observance of the Lord's Supper after baptism.

So, "to behold the beauty of the Lord." One could talk for a long time about this, and I don't want to talk about it. We don't have the time to do it. But obviously, the center of all reflection on the truth of God is the wounded and mutilated man of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is there that ultimately our worship, our wonder and the beauty of the Lord is found.

He goes on to say, "And to enquire in his temple." I would include with that expression the life of prayer, the practice of godliness, preoccupation then with his person and with his will. His person: Beholding the beauty of the Lord. His will: Enquiring in the temple, asking for guidance and direction concerning the will of one's life. That's the essence of worship. That's the essence of discipleship, to behold the glory of the Lord and to ask for direction through personal communion with the Lord for the steps of our daily life.

When I was a new Christian, still in the insurance business, back when I used to work. There's a lot of truth in that. Back when I used to work, someone put in my hands the little book by Brother Lawrence, a mystic of the seventeenth century called Practicing the Presence of God, a thin little book. Brother Lawrence was a rather interesting person. He was a person who had been, I think, in the service. He had been a very awkward soldier. Then he was a footman. It was said of him that he broke everything that he touched. And finally he felt led to go into the Carmelite order as a lay brother. He was about fifty years of age, and he served for many years in the Carmelite order in the kitchen. He said he hated kitchen work, but nevertheless, that's where he

served. And his writings stress the need to do everything, including the work of the kitchen which he naturally disliked, for the love of God, and thus to achieve a condition in which he lived in the presence of God constantly. His goal was to have the presence of God as real in his life as his work in the kitchen. And it's a marvelous little book that has just that one point: Practicing the presence of God in whatever you do. "Enquire in his temple."

But then that fourth of the terms, "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." "One thing." Isn't that interesting? The singleness of the ardent passion of David, the prophet and the singer, "One thing."

Now my mind goes back to Hosea chapter 2 where Hosea is describing the apostasy of his day. And he describes it in this way; he said Israel is a luxuriant vine. That was the symbol for Israel. It's a luxuriant vine. There is tremendous fruit being produced. It's a luxuriant vine. But the fruit that was produced, according to Hosea, was the images and the obelisks that characterized the worship of Israel. In other words, it was not prayer and submission to the word of God and seeking to bring men to justice and righteousness. But it was just the opposite. It was interest in the religion itself. And he said they are luxuriant vine, and they're bringing forth great fruit, but it's fruit to themselves.

Fruit unto themselves. That is often the case with us as individual believers. We're busy in the "things of the Lord" but it's fruit unto ourselves.

Isaiah writes about that too. He said when God looked for righteousness, *ts•daqah*, what did he find? *tsa`aqah*, a shriek. In other words, that which was the purpose of salvation is not found in their lives, but just the opposite. Instead of righteousness, a shriek and a cry of injustice and unrighteousness. So Israel is bringing forth fruit, but it's not fruit unto God.

That's something for you and for me to think about. We talk a great deal about our Christian life, but is our Christian life the kind of life that produces fruit to God?: The word that we might speak to someone that we know who does not know the Lord which we omit to speak. The kind of life that we live which we know is not altogether in the will of God, but which we nevertheless go along with. Fruit unto ourselves.

Hosea tells us the trouble. He says their heart is divided, divided. I feel that often I live with a divided heart. Their heart is divided.

When I think of the way the New Testament speaks, I think we have something of the same thing in that you remember the Lord Jesus, when the rich young ruler came to him, he spoke about how great his life had been, but then he said, "One thing Thou lackest."

The Apostle Paul expresses David's desire most beautifully in Philippians chapter 3. When speaking of his own life he said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "This one thing I do." That's what David is speaking about when he says "One thing have I desired."

I remember many years ago G. Campbell Morgan once said, "People may criticize you for having one thing, one great passion, one great goal. And you might think of an individual who has one great passion, one great desire, one great goal as being something like a fanatic. But if the goal, if the idea, is big enough, then it's not fanatical."

And I suggest to you, as a Christian man, that it's not, that there's not anything that is bigger than what David is talking about when he says, "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, and behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple."

And furthermore, I'd like to suggest to you that as a matter of fact, this is the Hobson's choice that faces us. Now I learned something this past week. I know you're

surprised that I would admit that I've learned something this week. But every week it's the same. I do learn so many things when I think of the responsibility of teaching the word of God. But I must confess, I didn't know anything about Thomas Hobson.

He was a Cambridge carrier, celebrated in Fuller's Worthies, and in two epitaphs by Milton. He was a man who refused to let out any horse except in its proper turn. Now you'd think a man would not live in English literature for that one thing. He wouldn't let any horse, I presume, out of the stable except in its proper turn. Horses even had to come out in a certain order. And so as a result of that fact which became known, we have now in the English language the expression "a Hobson's choice." A Hobson's choice is no choice at all. That's what the horses had, no choice at all. They had to come out in a certain order.

So I'd like to suggest to you as Christian people that for living a fruitful Christian life you have a Hobson's choice, that is there's only one way. There's only one way to live a fruitful Christian life, only one way, and that is as David said: To desire the one thing, to desire to behold the beauty of the Lord, the desire to dwell in the house of the Lord, or as Paul talks about it in Philippians chapter 3, to have that one goal of following him. It's a Hobson's choice for a beautiful life.

Now David defends himself in the 5th verse. He says this is why such ardor is useful. God undertakes for those who have made the Hobson's choice and have him as their first concern. This is something, of course, God gives to his people.

Now he concludes with the statement that he sings triumphant sacrifices of joy to the Lord.

Let me conclude by saying this. True religion is a faith. It's seeing the invisible. It's a trust in the being of God and in his word. It's an experience. It's un-sharable by the world. Amos said, "You only have I known of all the families upon the earth." There is a God who operates according to his own righteous principles in the affairs of men. So, true religion is an experience that is unshared by the world. That's what Jesus said in that

prayer we read. The world doesn't understand what he is about. And it's also a life. And to those who've heard Christ's whisper in his heart, he makes himself known in a particular disclosure. That's what he has done for believing individuals.

If you turn back a page to Psalm 25 and verse 14, David also wrote, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

John Owen's great text, "With Thee is the forgiveness of sins, that Thou mightest be feared," comes to my mind. Mr. Owen traced his conversion to that. "If Thou should mark iniquities, who should stand?" the psalmist wrote just previously, but then he said, "With Thee is the forgiveness of sins, that Thou mightest be feared." And Mr. Owen said it was that text that brought him to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Not only that, Mr. Owen wrote two hundred and sixty pages plus of exposition of that one verse "With Thee is the forgiveness of sins that Thou mightest be feared."

I think of that in the light of this, you know. "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." But I thought that fear is something that we should not have. "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?"

Ah, but there is a difference, isn't there? When we talk about fear in the sense that David is speaking about, we're talking about dread, about terror, about painful agitation in the presence of or in the anticipation of danger. But John Owen understood that text, and David wrote that other text with the meaning reverence. With Thee is forgiveness, that Thou mayest be reverenced, reverenced. And in that sense, we don't fear. We reverence him. And because he's granted us the forgiveness of sins, and he has become for us "my light", "my salvation", "the refuge of my life", then we reverence him for his eternal forgiveness and for the beauty of it. And we give ourselves wholeheartedly and, if possible, completely to beholding his beauty and to serving him implicitly.

May God in his marvelous grace touch our hearts to that end. The second part of the psalm is quite different. We'll look at that, the Lord willing, next week.

If you're here and you've never believed in Christ, as usual, we invite you to turn to him whom to know is life eternal. He offered the sacrifice for sinners. And you may have eternal life. You may have him as your light, your salvation, your refuge as you in your heart turn to him and give him thanks for what he's done for you.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the word of God and for the experiences of the men of God who've gone before us. Such a great man Thou didst make King David, a man of war, a man of poetry, but above all, a man of God. We thank Thee for the experiences. We know his failures, but we know the victories and we know the high anticipations of life that one may obtain from following in his steps of devotion to Thee. We're grateful to Thee for the man whom Thou hast said is a man after my own heart. Help us, Lord, to follow in the steps of him, of Paul and others who've gone before us toward the ultimate heavenly home. Be with us now as we part. In Jesus' name. Amen.