

THE ONE THING DESIRABLE

A STUDY ON R1914
PUGET SOUND BIBLE STUDENTS — SEPTEMBER 13, 2026

PRIMARY REFERENCE

Psalms 27:1-14

R1914 THE ONE THING DESIRABLE — January 1, 1896

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Psalm 27 was written in the first person—who wrote it and for what reason? May anyone claim the sentiment expressed in this Psalm?
2. What part does reason play in our religious life? What part does “fervent emotion” play? (R1914.8)
3. Why does “meditating on his word and obeying his precepts” bid our hearts to rejoice? (R1914.10)
4. Explain how the declaration given in Psalm 27:1 is for us a “consolation” in times of trouble. Give examples of how this consolation is “variously expressed throughout the Scriptures.”
5. Consider Psalm 27:4.
 - (a) What does it mean to “dwell in the house of the LORD”? What is His house?
 - (b) What does it mean to “behold the beauty of the LORD”? Why is this the “secret of a happy life”? (R1915.4)
 - (c) What does it mean to “inquire in His temple” and how does this lead us to “Christian courage”?

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“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? ... 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 27:1,4

THE inspired Psalmist in loftiest strains of devotion and fervor puts into the hearts and minds of God's consecrated people sentiments of faith and trust and love and adoration to God, who is worthy of all praise. While many of these sentiments were based upon his own checkered experience, they were uttered under divine inspiration for the instruction and edification specially of the true spiritual Israel of God. (R1914.7)

Thus the Lord himself would indicate to us the sentiments of fervent devotion to him that should fill our hearts; and in this view of the matter we see how closely he would draw us to himself in love and faith and childlike confidence. While reason and common sense have their rightful place and are indispensable to a religious life, the soul that never mounts upon the wings of holy and fervent emotion, that is never stirred to its depths by a sense of the divine goodness and beneficence, has never yet experienced the blessedness of the relation of sonship. A true son of a beloved and approving father naturally experiences the fervor of tender emotion. Especially is this so of a true son of God who recognizes in his heavenly Father the perfection of every grace, the crowning glory of all excellence, and who lives in close communion and fellowship with him and has the constant witness in himself of his love and approval. (R1914.8)

Ah, those were no empty words of our blessed Lord Jesus when he said, — “The Father himself loveth you.” “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” (John 16:27; 14:23.) It is under such conditions that all those holy emotions of love, tenderness, faith, gratitude and praise fill to the brim our cup of joy; and with holy ecstasy we sing, “My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (R1914.9)

How full of the melody of fervent emotion, of grateful praise, and of loving confidence are the inspired psalms! They bid our hearts rejoice and our tongues be glad, and they show us how, by meditating on his word and obeying his precepts, to “Rejoice in the Lord always, and in everything give thanks.” (R1914.10)

It was in view of the Lord's providences and of his many deliverances from the power of his enemies, and of the uniform kindness and mercy of God as he meditated upon them, that David exclaimed, “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?” This consolation, variously expressed throughout the Scriptures, comes with all its blessed potency in our times of greatest need: the more desperate and determined the foes we encounter and the more fierce the conflict with the powers of darkness, the more glorious is the deliverance and the clearer are the manifestations of divine grace. And, as a consequence, faith takes deeper root, and, with renewed confidence and assurance, lays hold upon all the precious promises of God; and love and gratitude well up from hearts refreshed with an increased sense of the divine favor and blessing. (R1915.1)

So it was with David; and so it is with God's faithful people who lead a life of prayer and faith and close fellowship with God. Such fellowship with God in adversity and in prosperity naturally tends more and more to center the heart's affections and desires in God, until the one thing supremely desired and sought after is that expressed by the Psalmist—to continually dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. (R1915.2)

To dwell continually in the house of the Lord signifies to be continually counted worthy and to be recognized of God as a member of his Church, “whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” (Heb. 3:6.) These, who hold fast their faith, and by faith overcome the allurements and temptations of the world, dying daily unto its spirit, hopes and ambitions, and living more and more unto God—these shall indeed dwell in the house of the Lord, in his holy, spiritual temple, his Church, forever. Now they dwell in the holy place of consecration and adoption; and the Lord says, “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels;” and by and by he will present them to himself “a glorious Church,

without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and worthy, as kings and priests unto God, to pass beyond the veil into the Most Holy—into the glorious spiritual condition and into the immediate presence of God. (R1915.3)

“To behold the beauty of the Lord” is to behold the beauty of holiness, to have this image of his glory ever before the mind's eye as our inspiration, our light, our guide, our pattern and our chief joy. Here indeed is the Christian's secret of a happy life—happy in the midst of whatever may come to him of affliction or pain or loss or perplexity or whatever experiences come through the checkered scenes of this present life. To behold the beauty of the Lord really is only possible to those who dwell in his house; for only to such does he reveal himself “the fairest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely.” Such only know how to appreciate the beauty of his holiness; such only can delight themselves in the Lord and in the continual meditation of his law, and in conforming their lives to it. (R1915.4)

“To inquire in his temple” signifies that those who are truly of the Lord's house are inquirers, students of his holy law and testimony, and that their delight is in so doing. The language of their hearts is, “Oh, how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day.” “I have meat to eat that ye [who are of the world] know not of;” for “It is my delight to do thy will, O God.” (R1915.5)

This one desire is the sum and substance of the Christian's ambition as more and more he becomes dead to the world and alive toward God. Let us more and more seek after it and conform to it; for in so doing Christian courage, boldness, fortitude and zeal will be greatly multiplied. These all are not only born of faith, but they increase and grow strong by a living faith developed and strengthened by the lessons of experience. (R1915.6)

Courage, born of faith and strengthened by endurance, cries with humble boldness in the midst of the deepest darkness of the most perplexing difficulties, and in the midst of the wildest storms and most threatening dangers, “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?” (R1915.7)

The Apostle Paul surely caught this blessed inspiration when he said, “Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say rejoice....Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Mark how all through the Word of God we are taught, not only to be sober, vigilant, diligent, thoughtful, prayerful, and always abounding in the work of the Lord through whatsoever it may bring of toil or care or reproach or persecution, but in the midst of any or all of these experiences we are taught to be happy and to be filled with the inspiration of a holy joy. And not only are we counselled to be joyous, but the manner of life which naturally produces this joy is pointed out to us. When we come into the Lord's family we enter a new and holy atmosphere which those only can realize and appreciate who have the one desire above referred to paramount to every other, viz.,—to be counted worthy to abide continually in the house of the Lord. (R1915.8)

"Do not count, when day is o'er, daily loss from life's rich store;
But the gains, however small, count them daily one and all:
Every sweet and gracious word, every pleasant truth you've heard;
Every tender glance and tone, every kindly deed you've known:
Let all evil things go by; still with brave endeavor,
try simple joys to multiply.
Thus you'll learn, how large a sum will
with faithful reckoning come."

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