

Sacrifice of Joy

The root of our desire to come and join the people of God in worship is our great thanksgiving to our God. Through prayer and praise we show our love for a God who has made us his own. He has delivered us. The Psalmist speaks of the men who desire to eat up his flesh; this phrase is a euphemism for slander, for those who plot against. There are men and women out there who hate us, who are filled with envy for us and God provides us with rest in Him. God provides us with light and salvation. And we come to worship out of thanksgiving for that salvation; that salvation that he continues to work out for us, as we war with our own sin and our own weaknesses.

The Psalmist knows that he must come to God in order to receive confidence as he deals with the daily attacks of his enemies. We have this as well. We have people who hate us and backbite, but God offers us a refuge against this. We must find refuge in our God. We must trust on Him to give us the justice we deserve. We have people, who slander us, but we find refuge in Him. Most importantly we need his refuge against the war in ourselves; the temptation we have to trust in our own strength, to fight our own battles in the work that God has called us to. "Vengeance is mine," says the Lord. He has promised to be our strength and our defender. The Psalmist knows the correct place to look in order to find strength in His life. He must find strength in the Lord and through His worship.

This Psalm shows the great confidence that we can have when we are living out of the fear of the Lord. He is boastful. Whom shall I fear when the Lord is on my side? Whom shall I be afraid of? God is on his side. We may really boast if we boast in the Lord. Think of Christians who were fearless in the face of persecution. This came from the fact that their boast was in the Lord, not in their own strength.

He has this confidence because he knows he has the favor of God. He knows he has the favor of the Lord, because he has sought the Lord.

I bring you the word of the Lord under the theme, "Bring a sacrifice of joy to the Lord."

Because of

- 1. The favor of the Lord**
- 2. The rescue of the Lord**
- 3. The glory of the Lord**

The favor of the Lord

David's confidence begins with his longing to be with the Lord. He is with the Lord, but at the same time he desires all the more the joy and the communion of being with the Lord tomorrow and the day after that. And the day after that. And the day after that. All the days of His life. As he says in verse 8 of the same Psalm, "When you said, "seek my face." My heart said to you, "Your face Lord, I will seek." David's confidence comes from the fact that he seeks the Lord and the Lord's will, first in his life. We can think of Jesus' words, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

David has been in trouble. He has sought the Lord. And the Lord has vindicated him. And here David pours out his heart in gratitude to the Lord. The Lord has shown him favor, because he sought the Lord; He looked to the Lord for help; He believed the Lord's promises.

David gives thanks with one wish, "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." David is using a metaphor here for the church, in his case, the house of Israel. The house of Israel is the Lord's house. God dwells among his people in the Tabernacle. And the people of Israel are gathered around the tabernacle. David wants to dwell where his favor is. But there is more here. By using this metaphor David is expressing a wish for a closer communion with the Lord. A communion he already has; a communion that can be infinitely deepened. A communion of peace and rest; A communion that must wait for its fullness in Jesus Christ and even then it looks forward to a greater fulfillment; to dwell in the house that God has prepared for all his saints in heaven. This is the greatest desire of the Christian.

When we go into that house, what do we see? We see the beauty of the Lord! David was likely thinking of the tabernacle. David could reflect on the beauty of the tabernacle that the Lord had commanded to be built with awe. Here the Lord dwelt with his people.

What is it to gaze on the beauty of the Lord? We can think of an awe-inspiring scene in the mountains. We can think of what it might be like to meet a Hollywood star. They are often physically perfect people, and who, at least in our minds, possess power to excite and inspire their audiences. To gaze on the beauty of the Lord is far greater than that; we can only approach him with a sense of awe. This is not only because of his great power, but because of his Holiness and his righteousness. And we know that we can only enjoy that beauty, because of our unity with Christ.

That is what we see today. We see that in the preaching of the word. The word points to the salvation we have in Christ. The word points to Christ crucified. In our ritual of the Lord's Supper we see that beauty as well. Christians partake of and commune with our glorious Lord who died for us. We would not be able to bear that beauty, if he had not given himself as a sacrifice for our sake. Knowing the great things he has done for us. Knowing the love and care he shows to us day by day, only makes us desire to see him and to be with him.

David not only desires the joy of seeing the beauty of the Lord, but he desires to learn from his Lord. He longs to inquire into his temple. The temple did not exist at this time, for it had yet to be built. But David could certainly inquire of the Lord through the High Priest and the other faithful priests and Levites who served before the Lord at that time. He could also speak to the prophets. From them he would find the will of God from his Holy Seat, his Holy seat above the firmament, above the skies, the spiritual reality of the temple, which the temple on earth pointed to. He could seek from them the explanation of the Bible he had, which was at that time the five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and perhaps Joshua.

David inquires of the Lord in order to learn wisdom. He wants to know how to follow the path that God desires. In verse 11, David calls on God to teach him God's way, the way of righteousness. The temple not only brings delight to David, but in that delight David is taught; he is instructed in the way that God wants him to live.

Ultimately David's longing for inquiry into the temple, is given after David's death. The temple is built by David's son, Solomon; but even that great temple is not the fullness.

God gives the fullness of the answer of this request long after David and Solomon have been buried. David did not see fully. He could see something of the heavenly glories that God was beginning to reveal to a world that was under the power of sin and death, but he could not see the fullness. The fullness was in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is David's greater Son. In Jesus Christ, God becomes incarnate. The Gospel of John says he tabernacled among us. That means that he is the tabernacle, the place of worship, which we may come to, where we may see the face of God, where we may inquire into the wisdom of God. In him we see the beauty and the glory of the Father; the great love of the Father for mankind.

Do you want this joy and confidence? A confidence to live, trusting that your Father in heaven will be your light and your salvation? Seek His Face, that is, seek his salvation, seek after his kingdom. Live, by faith, in Jesus Christ. Do the works of his kingdom. When we seek his face, David's desire becomes our desire as Christians, our greatest desire; "That we should dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire into his sanctuary."

Where do we see the greatest manifestation of God dwelling among us? In the weekly meeting of the church of God. The Apostle Paul says to the Christian: "You are the temple. You are the temple of the living God." Christ meets with us in the preaching of the word. And we respond with our sacrifices of thanksgiving, which in the New Testament are no longer animal sacrifices, but the prayers and the songs of the saints, that is, us. Our weekly worship is our life-blood. We come to see the beauty of the Lord. We come to hear the wisdom of the Lord. We have the joy of communing in Christ. By the strength that Christ gives us on Sunday, we are able to live week to week, delighting in the favor of God.

The knowledge that we are right with God is a glorious thing. We sin against God. Too often we love the things of this world more than God. But when we seek his face, when we seek his mercy, He will answer, wherever we are. He promises that He will be with you, Christian, in whatever situation, wherever you are. This brings us to our second point.

The rescue of the Lord.

David's desire for the Lord; His communion with the Lord; the Lord's teaching and promises; give him confidence as he goes out into a world where he has many enemies.

David had a lot of enemies; many more than your average person. Even before he became king he had to deal with the king at that time, Saul, as well as those who were in league with Saul. He had to hide in caves and in the mountains, but ultimately he knew that he had to hide in Christ. After he became king, he had to deal with all the internal divisions in the land of Israel. The north and the south, the tribes of Judah and Ephraim did not get along. He had to deal with the rebellion of his own son Absalom. And yet he knew that his God protected him. He didn't know when he would die; he didn't know if he would get caught, but he knew that God would keep his promises to Him.

Because he had the light of God he could trust to keep a sure foot. More than that the Lord would provide him a hiding place in himself. Even if he couldn't see, even if he was surrounded, the Lord could hide him in his pavilion and the secret place of his tabernacle. He called on the Lord to hide him with the certainty that someday he would be exalted by his God.

Now David never lived out this promise perfectly. He was not seeking the Lord when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, or when he sought he numbered the men of Israel in his pride later in his life. At these times he was trusting in himself. And the Lord did not hide him. The Lord did not keep him. But the Lord did come to him and drew the one whom he loved back to Himself, through His word; through trouble in David's life, the Lord called David back to himself

Only Christ lived according to the promise of God, perfectly. Only he trusted in God perfectly, without straying. The Gospel of John in particular teaches us that he always desired the glory and the will of the Father first. He trusted in his Father to hold him and keep him until the time of the cross. It was because of his perfection, his righteousness, that following his sin, David could return back to God. It was because of His righteousness; that David could hide in his Lord.

David's words here are the words of every faithful Christian. Hide me in you, Oh Lord. As the Lord's Prayer puts it, "Deliver us from the evil one." This is the great benefit of being in Christ. We are hidden in him. We are protected from the attack of Sin and its master the evil one. We have comfort; our physical enemies may kill us, but our souls are held by Christ. We used to walk in darkness. We used to be without the light and salvation of Christ. Christ continues to call those who live in fear and darkness, those who are subject to the attacks of sin into his hiding place.

Are you weary of the long days of work, hoping that someday you might reach financial stability? Are you weary of your loneliness? Are you weary of the anger and the envy and the addictions that plague you? Are you weary of fighting with family and friends? Christ says, "Seek me and my righteousness." I will hide you in myself. Look for his light and his salvation. Then you need not fear anything. For Christ will give you the strength to seek after him.

Do not neglect that seeking of the Lord. Every week we meet enemies; the devil has many tools that he uses to draw us away from Christ, whether it is people we don't like, whether it is alcohol or pornography or bad friends, whether it is our addictions. Too often we love these things more than Christ. We may also be drawn away by what is good: work, family, and other earthly goals. These are good until they become to us greater and more desirable than Christ. We must seek after God.

The author of Hebrews warns us "Do not neglect meeting together as some do." We need see his glory. We need to continually inquire and learn from our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to come in thanksgiving for his continual work of salvation in our lives. We need communion with the body of Christ, his church in order to strengthen us for the weekly struggle with the Devil and his power.

Out of that communion with Christ and his body, comes the strength to remember him day by day. Every day we may have access to his throne. He is God. He is always listening. He is always ready to give an answer through his word and spirit. He will protect you, but that protection is for a purpose; glory. His glory. You have the promise that you will share in that glory. By abiding in Him you are assured day by day that there will be an end to the attacks of the evil one; that by his power you will share in His victory.

This brings us to our 3rd point.

The glory of the Lord.

In the last sentence of the 5th verse the physical position of the Psalmist changes. He has been hidden from his enemies. He has been protected by the Lord. Now he is set high upon a rock. His enemies can now see him, but they cannot get him. The first line of verse 6 repeats this. "And now my head has been lifted up above my enemies all around me."

The Lord's protection is so great that David cannot be touched by his enemies. He is exalted. This in part refers to his kingship. God finally exalted David above his enemies. They could see him, but they could not touch him because he was the Lord's anointed. Even more this looks forward to the end of David's life and the end of every Christian's life, where the Christian will be brought into the courtroom of God. There, he will be exalted while the enemies of God, those who do not confess Christ, will be laid low.

David sees that salvation in his life now and therefore he brings sacrifices of joy to the tabernacle. He begins and ends with worship. He responds with joy to the great things God has done for him. He is ecstatic. "I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord."

David's exaltation; The exaltation of any Old Testament saint, David or Moses or Joshua; The exaltation of these imperfect men, look forward to Christ's exaltation. It is only because of Christ that these imperfect men can be exalted. Christ is exalted by God and His Father puts all things under his feet. He is lifted up all his enemies all around Him.

This Psalm is a promise that we too may be exalted in Christ. When we believe in Christ. When we trust in his word, we are freed from sin and death. That is the message of Paul in Romans. Death and sin cannot touch us anymore in Christ. We are free of these things, because we live by Christ. In Christ we are lifted up above our enemies. What can we do except bring offerings of thanksgiving to Him.

Our very lives are to be a thanksgiving to Him, because we live by His life, because by faith we have died in His death. That is the promise of the gospel. Outside of Christ there is trouble and darkness. Outside of Him there is always something missing. There is dissatisfaction. This is because men and women are enslaved to sin, they are not able to do righteousness. They live in fear of death. In Him, there is life and glory. It isn't easy to follow Him. The Christian's life is war. In the words of Mark, "we are to take up our cross and follow Him." This means a way of suffering.

It's often easier to follow others. When Christians begin to stray from Christ, when they choose other gods, other things that they put first, before Christ, in their lives, they risk losing Christ. Remember this promise from Romans 8, "Neither death nor life, nor powers or principalities, nor any other created thing, can ever separate me from the love of Christ." He has given you a great salvation.

Therefore come with joy to His temple, the church of God and show your thankfulness to Him in prayer and song and by hearing His word. This is the great joy of the Christian to commune with Christ; to enjoy His presence in our lives. Our exaltation now, our knowledge, that by faith in Christ, we are justified and since we are justified, we are freed from the power of sin and death, looks forward to our final exaltation. When the final enemy will be defeated, death. Therefore come! Believe! Seek after God and He will give you eternal life. Live in remembrance of that salvation. Bring your sacrifices of Joy to the Lord among His body, His church here today. "I will sing, yes I will sing praises to the Lord."

All glory be to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, both now and forevermore, Amen.