

Delight yourself in the Lord

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- [0 : 0 0] I want us to focus our attention on that psalm, Psalm 37 and verse 4. Very simply, the words in verse 4.
- Delight yourself in God or delight yourself in the Lord. And he will give you the desires of your heart.
- I'm going to read that again and this time I want us all to really think about how extraordinary this verse is.
- Here we go. Delight yourself in the Lord. That's what God is asking us, commanding us to do. And here's what he promises.
- And he will give you the desires of your heart. Today I'm going to break all the preaching rules.
- [1 : 0 5] I hope none of our students are listening and taking perhaps a bad example. And what I mean by that, of course, is that when you preach a sermon, you're supposed to give some background, some introduction.
- And who wrote the psalm and when it was written, when it possibly was written, what it was written for and all of that kind of thing. I'm going to just dismiss all of that. Neither am I going to divide the psalm into its parts, its constituent parts and explain each one.
- That's how you're supposed to do it. I'm not going to do any of that this morning. I'm going to focus on one verse and I'm going to take it completely out of context. And I think I have every right to do so.
- And that's because the Bible, even though it's a story, it has a beginning and it has an end. Every so often within that story, you come across a verse that just encapsulates everything.
- It just seems to say it all. And this is one of these places where we get to find out exactly what God expects of us, what he commands us.
- [2 : 1 6] And remember when God commands us something, it's A for our good, but it's also a perfect loving command from a perfect loving God.
- Which means that when he tells us to delight ourselves in the Lord, he is lovingly coming to his people. And he's saying, here is above everything else.
- Here is your number one priority. That shouldn't surprise us. Because it fits in with other places in the Bible where that number one priority is made clear.
- Remember when the man came to Jesus and he said to Jesus, what's the greatest commandment in all the world? And Jesus said, here is the greatest commandment. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.
- That's the number one commandment. Well, it says exactly the same as the verse that we're looking at this morning. Delight yourself in God and he will give your heart's desire to you.
- [3 : 2 8] So, I want us to try and unpack this by saying four things. Four things that this command reminds me of.

And then we'll go on to spend a few moments talking about the promise that there is connected with this command. Four things that this command reminds me of.

I want to share with you. First of all, it reminds me of what humanity was designed for. Read it again.

Delight yourself in God. Delight yourself in the Lord. It reminds me of what the Bible calls the image of God or the likeness of God.

And when you read all the way back to Genesis 1, where we were created, it's clear that there is a complete difference, a contrast, a uniqueness about humanity as opposed to even the greatest, even the most majestic of the animals.

[4 : 49] And the feature was simply this, that human beings were the only life form that God created in order to A, reflect his character, so it means the image of God, but also to relate to him, which means that they were given the capacity to listen to and understand the voice of God.

But they were also designed to respond to God lovingly and willingly and happily with a perfect happiness.

We'll go into that in a few moments time. But humankind was designed to enjoy God.

Let me say that again, because I think it's extraordinary. And I really think we need to grasp this. Humankind was designed to enjoy God, not just listen to him, not just robotically do what he says, not to be slaves, not to be unhappy, unwilling slaves of some kind of tyrannical God.

That's not what God is like. Humanity was designed to enjoy God. And that's what's encapsulated in the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

[6 : 25] I don't know how many of us are old enough to remember how we were brought up in Sunday school to learn the catechism, the shorter catechism. And there's 107 of them.

And some people learned all of them off by heart. But pretty much everyone learned the first one. Because the first one was the shortest and it was the easiest.

Arguably, it was the most central. It was the one on which every other question was founded.

And here's what it says. What is the chief end of man? In other words, why are we here? What is the purpose of human life?

And here's the answer. Man's chief end, or we are here. Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

[7 : 33] We were created in order to enjoy God forever. Think about that for a moment. That is our purpose.

Isn't it sad? Isn't it tragic that most of the world today, most of humanity, does anything but enjoy God?

And that is why there is so much misery in the world. Because we live in a fallen world. A world that has drifted away from what we were always meant to be.

You remember how John Piper puts it. He says, God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

So that's the very beginning then. That's what I want to start with. This verse reminds me. It teaches me afresh what humanity was designed.

[8 : 40] Why we're here. What the purpose of human life is. The Bible tells us clearly. There is a purpose. We are not random human beings. We're not random acts of time and chance.

There is a God who reveals himself in the pages of the Bible. Who tells us in no uncertain terms why we are here. And here you have it. Delight yourself in God.

God is to be enjoyed. Second thing it reminds me of is what the garden was once like.

The world as we know it was not always the way it is now. At the very beginning there was perfection. And perfection meant perfect unbroken happiness.

Unimaginable bliss and joy and thrill. In fact, if you were to go back in time.

[9 : 45] Right back to the Garden of Eden. And you were to go up to Adam and say. Are you happy? His response would be. I have no idea what you're talking about.

Because he never knew anything other than happiness. 24-7. Unbroken. Perfect.

Joy. And happiness. It was only when Adam and Eve rebelled against God. When they decided to go their own way.

That the whole flood. The whole deluge of misery and unhappiness. And all that it brought with it. Came into the world.

The world changed in a moment of time. Split second. Between it being a place of unbroken permanent happiness.

[10 : 43] To a place of darkness and shame. And all of the sickness and the death. That came as a result. There was peace.

There was harmony. There was harmony. With creation. There was harmony in the weather systems. And the ecosystems in this world.

There was harmony in human relationship. There was harmony in the world. There was harmony in the world. There was harmony in the world. There was a perfect one.

There was no conflict. Until of course they decided to go their own way. And most of all there was harmony. Between Adam and Eve. And God.

His greatest enjoyment. Was the fellowship and the friendship of God. And God. But then of course. They decided.

[11 : 42] That they knew better. They listened to the serpent. They doubted God's word. And they took the fruit that was forbidden. That was the moment.

That sin and death. Came into the world. And I don't want to leave it there. Because God did not allow.

The world to simply drift off. Into destruction and oblivion. Bible tells us. That God so loved the world. That he gave his only begotten son.

So that whosoever believes in him. Should not perish. But have everlasting life. The reason I'm saying that. Is because.

The gospel's message. Is to every human being. Come home. Read. God can. God can. Bring you.

[12 : 39] Back to himself. He can reconcile you. He can heal the drift. The separation. That there is between you and God. He can take away the shame.

And the darkness. And the guilt. Of your personal sin. And your rebellion. And he can bring you. Into friendship.

With himself. Once again. But there's only one way. In which that can happen. And that is by faith. In Jesus Christ. So the second thing.

That that verse reminds me of. Is what. How things were. At the very beginning. What the garden. Was once like. Delight yourself.

In God. And he will give you. The desires. Of your heart. The third thing. It reminds me of. Is what God. Will one day do.

[13 : 34] The story. Is not finished. God will not. Allow this world. To exist. Forever. And ever. And ever. In a fallen state.

With all its misery. And sickness. And. And its. Shame. And darkness. And death. That. World. Will come to an end. One day.

And when it does. He will usher in. His perfect kingdom. The new heaven. And the new earth.

Now of course. There are debates about. To what extent. This new heaven. And new earth. Will be perhaps. A rebuilding. Of the earth. On which we live. I'm not going to go into that.

It's fascinating. But. What is absolutely clear. And. And. Beyond debate. Is that. There is a future. For all those. Who trust.

[14 : 28] And who belong. To Jesus Christ. And the future. Is simply this. That the dwelling. Of God. Will be. Amongst. Us. And.

When that happens. God's people. Will be. Perfected. All their sin. And all. Of the remnant. That sticks to us.

In this life. Will all be taken away. We will be perfected. And our bodies. Will be glorified. And. We will live. In perfect. Harmony. Once again.

And we will. Enjoy. God. As we have. Never. Enjoyed him. In. The past. Fully glorified. Fully perfected.

The dwelling. Of God. Is with. That's why. I was determined. To read. That last chapter. In. Revelation. Revelation. Chapter. 22. Because.

[15 : 23] What God. Has in store. For us. Is. A world. In which. We will. Delight. Ourselves. Perfectly. In God.

And. In which. All. Our hearts. Desire. Will be given. To us. We'll come on to that. In a few moments time. Try to understand that. Not in terms of.

Our wish list. For ourselves. But in terms of. What God. Wants. For us. But. Before we do so. Let's come on to the fourth. Thing that this reminds me of.

Reminds me not only what. Humanity was designed for. That's the first thing. Reminds me not only of what the garden. Was once like. It reminds me not only of what God's plan is.

Ultimately. For humanity. Or for. Those who trust in Jesus. But it reminds me. Fourthly. Of what is possible. Now. See.

[16 : 20] This psalm. Doesn't. Just. Look ahead. Or look behind. It. Gives us a command. To be obeyed.

Now. Delight. Yourself. In God. Right now. God is saying to us. I often hear people saying.

You know. I wish God would speak to me. Or. Some people claim. That they hear some kind of voice. Or whatever. I don't want to go into that. But. You know. If you ever doubt. That you're hearing the voice of God.

Let me tell you. With. In no uncertain terms. This. This. Is what God is saying to us. Right now. Delight. Yourself. In God.

Do you know what. If we made this a priority. Then. I don't think. We would be. Listening for voices anymore. We wouldn't need to.

[17 : 19] Because this is such. A marvelous truth. And a marvelous. Command. That if we spent the rest of our lives. Pursuing this. We wouldn't need anything else.

Because God would. Fully satisfy us. That's what he wants for us. Right now. Because the most marvelous truth.

Is that it is possible to taste. Something. Of the pleasure. Of God. That's what he wants.

For us. See. To delight yourself in God. Means to. Find pleasure in God. To enjoy God.

To be. Thrilled with God. To have a longing. For God. To want him. More than anything else. In this world.

[18 : 17] It's. You notice. That it's not just. A command. To obey God. If. You're satisfied. With just living. An upright life. In which you think.

Well. I think I've got it together. And. I think. That. I'm a pretty upright guy. I come to church regularly. And. I give. A tenth of what I earn.

To the church. And. I don't swear. I don't drink too much. I. I don't cheat. And. And. I'm. I'm. I'm. A pretty good model. Of what it means. To be a Christian. If that's.

What you're satisfied with. I'm afraid you've got it wrong. That's not what this psalm tells us. It tells us to go way beyond that.

So if you're depending on your own obedience. Then. Think again. This psalm commands much more than that. Commands.

[19 : 11] Commands you. To enjoy. Invites you. To enjoy God. So you might be surprised that I'm saying actually. Obedience is not enough.

Well it isn't. What God looks for. Is something different from obedience. I'm not saying obedience is not important. But that comes afterwards.

The first thing that God looks for in our lives is faith. In Jesus Christ. And that's the key to enjoying God. Neither is it knowing about God.

I think it's possible to know loads of things about the Bible. About religion. About the various chapters and verses. And the various phases in which the Bible goes through.

And for us tragically not to know the God of the Bible. The God who is at the heart and in the centre of the Bible. See what this command is all about is our affections.

[20 : 13] Our longings. God wants a longing for him to be cultivated. He wants us to enjoy him.

Let me try and help you then. And by the way. I am not the perfect model of what it is to enjoy God. What I'm saying to you is let's do this together. Let's try and understand how we.

It's not about me telling you this is how you are to do. It's about us together. Recognising what the Bible says. And we're asking the question right now.

How does the Bible help us to enjoy God? Well, I want to say three things. First of all.

God has given us his word. The Bible. In which God is revealed in all his majesty and his glory. Now, I'm not saying that we understand everything in the Bible.

[21 : 13] There are so many questions. I have so many questions about the Bible. And I don't think that I'm ever going to get an answer this side of heaven itself. But that doesn't mean that I cannot enjoy what's in the Bible.

And I cannot discover with relish the goodness and the grace and the kindness of this superb, perfect God.

I think I've said before about how the Bible tells us why we are here. It gives me the satisfaction of knowing that I'm not just a blob in an empty universe, in a meaningless universe.

But that the supreme God has created every one of us as individuals in order to know him and to enjoy him.

It's the Bible that tells us that. And then secondly, there is the church. The church is a place where we discover and rediscover what God is, who God is, what God has done, what God has done for us in sending his own son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to give himself as the sacrifice for our sin.

[22 : 43] The church is the church is the place where we are challenged and invited and drawn by the power of the Holy Spirit into faith in Jesus Christ.

That's why it's so important to come together as we are doing, even live streaming as we're doing right now. Because I hear people saying, well, live streaming is not real church.

Yes, it is. It's not church as we would want it. It's not ideal. But nonetheless, there are so many elements of church that we can enjoy right now in our own homes.

We are hearing the word of God. We're hearing the voice of God. We're being challenged by what God is saying to us. We are being drawn and invited to a better and a closer knowledge of him.

And all of that's taking place in the church. So the church is a vitally important component in how we understand our relationship to God.

[23 : 52] And then there is prayer. Prayer in which we can come and express ourselves to God.

Prayer is that function, that faculty that's been with human beings since the very beginning in which we're able to listen and we're able to talk to God and we're able to relate to him.

Sometimes prayer is difficult. I know that. If you think I always find prayer easy, I promise you I don't. And sometimes you feel, well, God is not listening.

Why would God listen to me? Who am I? But he does because we come in union with Jesus Christ. The Bible says that if we belong to Jesus by faith that we're united to him.

And that means that God accepts us as his children and forgives where we have gone wrong. So there are these three areas, what the old theologians used to call the ordinary means of grace.

[25 : 09] The Bible, the church and prayer. And by the way, the church includes the sacraments. It's amazing really how in the sacraments we can discover God as we listen to them being explained and as we partake of the Lord's Supper, for example.

We have a representation of what Jesus did for us in which we are drawn into a rediscovery of what Jesus did for us.

So let's just spend two or three minutes talking about that second part of the verse. Delight yourself in God and he will give your heart's desire to you.

Let me begin by saying, if all you're seeing is the second half, you really haven't got this. If you see this as somehow God as a genie in the lamp who exists to give you whatever you want, you've got it wrong, I'm afraid.

I'm sorry to offend you, but you have. You've got it wrong. We have to see the two things together. We have to see the two things as one promise and one command.

[26 : 26] It's a description of the man or the woman of God, the person who trusts and belongs to and follows Jesus Christ.

What God wants for you is for you to have a developing and growing appetite for him and what he has done.

As that happens, the old desires, the old longings, the old aspirations fade away.

Just like when we were kids, the things we liked when we were kids we don't like anymore. And the things we didn't like when we were kids we like now.

What the Bible is revealing to us right now is it's a description of our relationship to God.

[27 : 31] In which God is afresh inviting us to enjoy him. To use the means that he has given to us to enjoy him. To love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

And we will discover that as we do so, our prayers mature and change and develop. And we find ourselves asking, not just for what we want, but asking God, Lord, teach me what you want me to pray for.

Place within my heart your priorities, your loves, your objectives. Give me a real longing to do what you want me to do.

Now he's done that actually. I'm going to close with this. In the Lord's Prayer, you find this amazing pattern of what God's priorities are.

The Lord's Prayer is something that we ought to return to time and time again as the pattern of what God's priorities are.

[28 : 43] In which we begin by adoring God, our Father in heaven. Hallowed be your name. And then we get to see what God is doing.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done. And we find ourselves praying for the different countries in the world where so much of the world has never heard the gospel.

So many people who are lost and who are dying today in darkness without knowing who Jesus was. So enjoying God is longing for the day when the earth will be full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

When we pray, are our prayers filled with just our own things? Or are we praying for a big world?

And for the good news of the gospel to go over that. To be spread to that great world. Give us today our daily bread. Now we come on to the specifics. And we're reminded that there is no thing that's too trivial or too small to bring to God.

[29 : 55] Give us our daily bread. And then we're led to a place of confession and forgiveness. A place where we're reminded that we need God's protection.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Let this be a moment when we are reminded of this great command. And if you have lost sight.

Lost your enjoyment. Lost your taste. If you've drifted away somehow. From this place where you can be thrilled with God.

Then ask him to give it back to you. And seek that appetite that he wants for you for himself.

[31 : 00] May the Lord enrich our hearts. May he energise us. May he reorient our priorities.

May he raise. May he raise. So that he takes the central place. And takes all our affections. Today. And forever. Our Father in heaven.

We thank you for our time together. And we pray that our lives will be characterised. By loving God with all our heart and soul. And mind. And strength.

Let's pray for my word. Thank you.