

SUNSHINE IN THE HEART

NO. 454

A SERMON
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“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”
Psalm 37:4

THERE are two teachings in our text which must be very surprising to those who are strangers to vital godliness, to sincere believers these marvels are recognized facts, but to the outside world they will appear very strange. We have here first of all, the life of a believer described as a *delight* in God, and thus we are certified of the great truth that true religion overflows with happiness and joy.

Ungodly persons and mere professors never look upon religion as a joyful thing, to them it is service, duty, or necessity, but never pleasure and delight. Why should they go up to the house of God? Is it not because of custom—a custom which they would fain avoid if they dare? Wherefore do they attend to the ordinances of the Church? Is it not either out of Pharisaic hope of merit, or from a superstitious dread? How many view the forms of religion as charms to avert ill, or as lesser evils by which they escape from dreaded judgment? What is their service but drudgery, and their worship but weariness?

Ask ye the worldlings what they think of religion—and even when they practice its outward rites, they snuff at it as a dull and dreary thing. “What a weariness it is!” They love it as much as the ass loves labor, or the horse the whip, or the prisoner the treadmill. They cry for short sermons, indeed none at all would suit them better. How cheerfully would they clip the hours of Sunday, indeed if Sabbaths only came but once in the month, they would prefer it.

The heavy necessity of pious customs weighs upon them as tribute upon a conquered province. They pay to religion an observance of the character of a tax, or a toll which custom demands, but free will offerings they know not, and loving enjoyment of hallowed fellowship they cannot understand. They serve God as Cain did, who brought his offering it is true, but brought it late, brought it because it was the family custom, and he would not be outdone by his brother, brought it of the common fruit of the ground, and with a sullen, loveless heart.

These Cainites bring such as they are forced to bring, and mingle no faith in Jesus’ blood with their offerings, they come with leaden heels to the house of God, and they go away as if they had feathers to their feet, they serve God, but it is either that they may gain thereby, or else because they dare not do otherwise.

The thought of delight in religion is so strange to most men, that no two words in their language stand farther apart than “holiness” and “delight.” Ah, but believers who know Christ, understand that delight and faith are so blessedly married, that the gates of hell cannot prevail to divorce them. They who love God with all their hearts, find that His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace. Such joy, such brimful delights, such overflowing bliss, do the saints discover in their Lord, that so far from serving Him from custom, they would follow Him should all the world cast out His name as evil.

We fear not God because of any compulsion, our faith is no fetter, our profession is no prison, we are not dragged to holiness, nor driven to duty. No, sirs, our religion is our recreation, our hope is our happiness, our duty is our delight.

I know it always will be a calumny against Christ’s religion that it makes men miserable, but a greater misapprehension, or a baser falsehood never cursed the world. Because we cannot trifle so

foolishly, nor sin as boldly, nor brag as lustily as the servants of sin, therefore you think us miserable! Ah, sirs, it is well written, “A stranger intermeddleth not with our joy.” The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and their joy no man takes from them.

Let us remind you however, that still waters run the deepest. The brook which rattles o’er the stones dries up in the summer, but the deep-flowing river speeds on, come drought or heat, and yet glides silently along the meads. We do not talk so loudly of our joys as you of your merriments, because we have no need to do so, ours are known as well in silence as in exciting company. We need not your society to make us glad, much less the varied accompaniments which prop your bliss, we need neither bowl, nor feast, nor viol, nor dance to make us glad, nor even the stalled ox, and the bursting wine vat to make us rich.

Our happiness lies not on passing creatures, but in the eternal, immutable Creator. I know, despite all we shall say, this slander will survive from generation to generation, that God’s people are a wretched people. But at least, let us clear our conscience of you, and let us make you without excuse if you believe it again. We *do* have joy, we *do* have delights, such that we would not part with one dram of ours for tons of yours, not drops of our joy for rivers of your delights.

Ours are no tinsel or painted joys, but solid realities, ours are joys that we can take with us to our bed in the silent dust—joys that shall sleep with us in the tomb, and that shall awake with us in eternity—joys that we can look back upon and so live them over again in retrospect—joys that we can anticipate and so know both here and hereafter.

Ours are not bubbles which only glitter to burst, ours are not apples of Sodom, turning to ashes in our hand, our delights are substantial, real, true, solid, lasting, everlasting! What more shall I say? Dismiss from your minds this mistake. Delight and true religion are as allied as root and flower, as indivisible as truth and certainty, they are, in fact, two precious jewels set side by side in the same socket of gold.

But there is another wonder in our text to worldly men, though it is a wonder well understood by Christians. The text says, “He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” “Why,” the worldly man says, “I thought religion was all self-denial, I never imagined that in loving God we could have our desires, I thought that godliness consisted in killing, destroying, and keeping back our desires.” Does not the religion of most men consist in an open abstinence from sins which they secretly love?

Negative godliness is very common in this age. It is supposed by most men that our religion consists in things which we must not do, rather than in pleasures which we may enjoy. We must not go to a theater, we must not sing songs, trade on Sundays, use ill words, and so on, we must not do this, and we must not do that. And they suppose us to be a crabbed, miserable race of persons who, no doubt, make up by some private allowance for denying ourselves in public.

Now, it is true that religion is self-denial, it is equally true that it is not self-denial. Christian men have two selves, there is the old self, and therein they do deny the flesh with its affections and lusts, but there is a new self, there is a newborn spirit, the new man in Christ Jesus, and brethren, our religion does not consist in any self-denial of that. No, let it have the full swing of its wishes and desires, for all that it can wish for, all that it can pant after, all that it can long to enjoy, it may most safely obtain.

When I hear persons say, “Well, you know my religion consists in some things that I must do, and in some things that I must not do,” I reply, “Mine consists in things that I love to do, and in avoiding things that I hate and would scorn to do.” I feel no chain in my religion, for I am free, and never man more free.

He who fears God, and is wholly God’s servant, has no chains about him. He may live as he lists, for he lists to live as he ought. He may have his full desires, for his desires are holy, heavenly, divine. He may take the full range of the utmost capacity of his wishes and desires, and have all he wants and all he wishes, for God has given him the promise and God will give him the fulfillment of it.

But do not go away with the idea that we are always afraid to put one foot before the other because there is some *must not* in our way, and that we do not go that way to the right or that way to the left

because we dare not. Oh, sirs, we would not if we might, we would not if the law were altered, we would not have your pleasures if we might. If we could go to heaven and live as sinners live, we would not choose their way and conversation. It would be a hell to us to be compelled to sin, even if sin could go unpunished.

If we could have your drunkenness, if we could have your lusts—oh, ye ungodly ones—if we could have your mirth and your joy, we would not have them. We do not deny ourselves when we give these up. We despise your mirth, we abominate it, and tread it beneath our feet.

“I can’t understand,” once said a bird to a fish, “how it is that you always live in the cold element, I could not live there. It must be a great self-denial to you not to fly up to the trees. Look how I can mount aloft.” “Ah,” said the fish, “it is no self-denial to me to live here, it is my element, I never aspire to fly, for it would not suit me. If I were taken out of my element I should die unless I was restored to it very soon, and the sooner the better.”

So the believer feels that God is his native element. He does not escape from his God, or from his Master’s will and service, and if for a time he were taken out of it, the sooner he could get back to it the better. If he is thrown into bad company he is miserable and wretched until he gets out of it again. Does the dove deny itself when it does not eat carrion? No, verily the dove could not delight in blood, it would not feed thereon if it could.

When a man sees a company of swine under the oak delighting themselves in their acorns, and grunting out their satisfaction—does he deny himself when he passes them by without sharing their feast? No, verily, he has better bread at home whereof he can eat, and swine’s meat is no dainty to him. So it is with the believer, his religion is a matter of delight, a matter of satisfaction, and that which he avoids and turns from is very little self-denial to him. His tastes are changed, his wishes are altered. He delights himself in his God, and joyously receives the desires of his heart.

This by way of preface. Now to come to our text itself. There are two things in the text very plainly. The first is *a precept written upon sparkling jewels*, “Delight thyself in the LORD.” The second is *a promise priceless beyond rubies*, “He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

I. The first is a PRECEPT WRITTEN UPON SPARKLING JEWELS.

I have added those last words, because the law of the ten commands was written upon stone—perhaps hard granite, in which men could take but little delight. But this law of one command, “Delight thyself in the LORD,” is no stony law to be written upon tablets of granite, but it contains a precept for sparkling brightness, worthy to be written on amethysts and pearls. “Delight thyself in the LORD.”

Why, brethren, when delight becomes a duty, then certainly, duty is a delight. When it becomes my duty to be happy, when I have an express command to be glad, then indeed I would be a sinner if I refuse my own joys, and turn aside from my own bliss. Oh, what a God we have, who has made it our duty to be happy! What a gracious God, who accounts no obedience to be so worthy of His acceptance as a gladsome obedience rendered by a joyous heart. “Delight thyself in the LORD.”

1. Now first, *What is this delight?* I have been thinking the word “delight” over, and I cannot explain it. You know it is a word by itself. A delightful word—I cannot use anything but its own self to describe it. If you look at it—it is flashing with *light*, it sparkles like a star, nay, like a bright constellation, radiant with sweet influences like the Pleiades. It is joy, yet is it more, it is joy running over, it is rest, but such a rest as allows of the utmost activity of every passion of the soul.

Delight! it is mirth without its froth. Delight! it is peace, yet it is more than that, it is peace celebrated with festivity, with all the streamers hanging in the streets, and all the music playing in the soul. Delight! whereunto shall I compare it? It is a stray word that belongs to the language of paradise, and when the holy words of Eden flew away to heaven at the fall, this one being entangled in the silken meshes of the net of the first promise, was retained on earth to sing in believers’ ears.

Where shall I find metaphors to set it out? Man fails me, let me turn then to the unsinning creatures of God. Go to the seaside when the sea is going down, and in some parts of the coast you will see a little fringe just at the edge of the wave. It looks like a mist, but on closer examination you will find there are

millions of very small shrimps, leaping up in all manner of postures and forms out of the receding wave, in exuberance of glee and merriment.

Or look on a summer eve at the gnats as they dance untiringly, scarcely knowing how to enjoy themselves enough! Or see the lambs in the field, how they skip and leap! Listen to the morning song of the birds of the air, and listen again to their delicious notes at eventide, see the fish as they leap from the stream, and hear the insects as they hum in the air, these may give faint glimmerings of the light of delight.

Wing your flight to heaven if you would know what delight means. See the spirits there, as their fingers sweep the golden strings! Listen to their voices, as with peals of joy unknown to human ears, they sing unto Him that hath loved them, and washed them from their sins in His blood! Mark them as they keep eternal Sabbath in the great temple of the living God, and gaze upon His throne, and gaze, and gaze, and gaze again, absorbed in glory, beatified in Jesus, full of heaven, overflowing with exceeding joy. This is delight!

I fail in the description, I know. You must take the word and spell it over letter by letter, and then you must pray God to put your hearts into a sweet frame of mind, made up of the following ingredients, a perfect rest from all earthly care, a perfect resignation of yourself into God's hands, an intense confidence in His love to you, a divine love to Him, so that you feel you would be anything or do anything for Him, then, there must be added to all this, a joy in Him, and when you have these, they must be all set a-boiling, and then you have delight in the Lord your God.

Matthew Henry says, "Desire is love in action, like a bird on the wing, delight is love in rest, like a bird on its nest." Such is the meaning of the word, and such the duty prescribed. "Delight thyself also in the LORD."

2. Secondly, *Whence comes this delight?* The text tells us, "Delight thyself in the LORD." Delight yourself in *JEHOVAH*, in His very *existence*. That there is a God is enough to make the most wretched man happy if he believeth. The nations crash, dynasties fall, kingdoms reel, what does it matter—for there is a God. The father has gone to the tomb, the mother sleeps in the dust, the wife has fallen from our side, the children are removed—but there is a God. This alone is enough to be a wellspring of joy for ever and ever to all true believers.

Delight also in His *dominion*. "The LORD reigneth, let the earth rejoice." JEHOVAH is King! Come what may of it, *He* sits upon the throne, and ruleth all things well. The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all. Standing in the chariot of providence, He holds the reins, and guides the dashing coursers according to His own will. God is exalted above the mountains and above the hills, He hath sway in all things, both the magnificent and the minute. Be glad, O daughter of Zion, for the Lord is King for ever and ever, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Every *attribute* of God should become a fresh ray in this sunlight of delight. That He is wise should make us glad who know our folly. That He is mighty should cause us to rejoice who tremble at our own weakness. That He is everlasting should always be a theme for our music, when we know that *we* are grass, and wither as the green herb. That He is unchanging should always give us a song, since we change every hour and are never long the same. That He is full of grace, that He is overflowing with it, and that this grace in the covenant He has given to us, that it is ours, ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to glory—all this should tend to make us delight ourselves in *Him*.

Oh! believers, ye stand today by a deep river, you perhaps have waded into it up to your ankles and you know something of its clear, sweet, heavenly streams, but onward the depth is greater and the current more delightful still. Come, take a plunge therein! Now, plunge into the Godhead's deepest sea! Lose yourself in His immensity, let His attributes cover up all your weakness, and all your folly, and everything else that can make you groaning, and desponding. Rejoice in *Him*, though you cannot rejoice in yourselves! Triumph in the God of Israel, though in yourselves you have cause enough for despair.

The Christian also feels that he may delight himself in all that God has done in the past. Those psalms which end with “His mercy endureth for ever”—where we find such divisions as these—“Og, king of Bashan, for His mercy endureth for ever.” “Sihon, king of the Amorites, for His mercy endureth for ever”—all these show us that God’s people in olden times were wont to think much of God’s actions, so that they did not throw them in a lump into one verse, but divided them, to have a song about each of them.

So let God’s people rehearse the deeds of the Lord! Let them tell of His mighty acts. Let them sing, “Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces thine enemy,” “The LORD is a man of war, the LORD is his name,” “Sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously.”

Let them continue to rehearse His deeds, till they come to the deeds of grace in their own hearts, and here let them sing more sweetly than ever. Nor let them cease to sing, for as new mercies flow unto them each day, let day unto day utter His praise, and night unto night testify of His grace. “Delight thyself in the LORD.”

If these that I have already mentioned were not enough, we might delight ourselves in all that God is to do, in all the splendid triumphs He has yet to achieve, in all the glories of the latter days, in all the splendors of His throne, when all the hosts of God shall meet at last, in His triumph over death and hell, and in His ultimate victory over sin, when He shall make the whole earth to become filled with His praise.

Oh! brethren, time would fail us, eternity might fail us indeed, to catalog all the different points of holy delight which believers, when they are in a spiritual frame of mind, may find in the Lord their God. Ye should delight yourselves in God the Father, in His eternal love to you when there was nothing in you to love, in His election of your soul, in His justification of you in Christ, in the giving up of His only begotten Son to redeem you from hell.

You should delight yourselves in Jesus, you should—

*“Tell what His arm hath done,
What spoils from death He won;
Sing His dear name alone,
Worthy the Lamb!”*

You should delight yourselves in God the Holy Ghost, in His quickening operations, in His illuminations, in His consolations, in the strength which He gives you, in the wisdom which He imparts to you, in the faithfulness with which He attends you, and in the certainty that He will ultimately perfect you, that you may be meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

And here we might branch out into a thousand themes. Delight yourselves in God as your Father, as your Friend, as your Helper. Delight yourselves in Jesus Christ as your Brother, as your Bridegroom, as your Shepherd, as your All in all. Delight yourselves in Christ in all His offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King. Triumph in Him, in all His garments, for they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Delight yourselves in Christ, in His glory, and in His humiliation, in His cross, and in His crown, in His manger, and in His eternal triumph, wherein He led captivity captive.

Delight yourselves in the Holy Spirit, in all His various dealings with men’s minds. Delight in Pentecost, and in Pentecosts that are yet to come. And—but we close. What more should we say? Surely we might talk on forever. Delight thyself in JEHOVAH, that great, that boundless, that joyful theme, and delight thyself in Him for evermore.

3. Now another question suggests itself. *When is this delight to be practiced?* “Delight thyself in the LORD.” Precepts without limit as to time are for perpetual observance. My text does not say, “Delight thyself in the LORD occasionally, and now and then,” but at all times. There are two occasions when it is hard to delight in God, and therefore I will mention these. It is difficult to delight in God when

everything goes well with us. “Oh,” I hear you say, “I cannot understand that, that is the time when I do delight in God the most.”

Brother, I am afraid it is the time when you delight *in God* the least. “Well, but when my comforts are round about me, when providence smiles upon me, then I can delight in God.” Stop! are you sure of that? Is it not likely that often you are delighting in His mercies rather than in *Him*? delighting in the creature rather than in the Creator? I fear, brethren, it is our sunshiny days that are the greatest times of temptation. Well may we pray, “In all time of our wealth deliver us.” We are somewhat like a foolish wife who, when her husband gives her jewels and rings, grows apt to love the jewels rather than her husband.

Many believers we have known who have had graces and mercies, and have had great privileges, and they have come to pride themselves more in the mercies and the privileges than in their God. It is hard when the wine vat is full, to love God more than the vineyard, it is hard when there is a fine harvest to think more of God than of the sheaves, it is hard when you are growing rich still to say “this is not my treasure.” The treasures of earth will besmear our garments unless we see well to our hearts, our soul cleaves to the dust, and dust is no aid to devotion.

Oh, take heed, rich believer, that you delight thyself in God, not in your parks and your lawns, your gardens and your houses, your lands and your estates, for if you delight in these, your gold and your silver are cankered, the moth is in your garment, and the blight will soon be on your heritage. Say, “These are not my portion.” “God is my portion saith my soul.”

Another time when it is hard to delight in God—not so hard as in this first one—is when everything goes ill with us. Then we are apt to say with old Jacob, “All these things are against me.” What a noble opportunity Job lost, when servant after servant came to tell him that everything was gone, when he sat on the dunghill and did scrape himself with a potsherd. If he could have stood upright and have said, “Now will I rejoice in the LORD, and triumph in the God of my salvation,” what a triumph of faith he would have achieved.

If he could have thus played the man for God, Job would have been the most splendid character we have in Holy Scripture. He did go far when he said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” There spoke a man whom God had made mighty. But if he could have delighted still more in God when the sores were on him and the blains were bursting, that would have been all but superhuman. I think I may say it would have been as much as even grace itself could work in a man.

Yet how often have I noticed that believers do rejoice in God much more readily in their afflictions than they do in their prosperity. I have seen the hyssop growing upon Lebanon, and I have seen the cedar growing on the wall. I have seen great saints where there was little mercy, and I have seen driveling saints where there were great providential blessings. God’s birds sing best in cages, and the praise of God comes better out of the mouth of the furnace of affliction than even from the top of the mountain of communion.

We are so constituted, it seems to me, that unless God screws the strings of our heart up by pain and affliction, we never give forth much sweet music to Him. Yet it is hard, very hard, for a man, when every earthly prop gives way, to say, the fig tree does not blossom, the calves perish from the stall, the harvest has been mildewed, the cankerworm eats up all the produce, but still my delight is in God, and my triumph is in the God of my salvation. Yet, by grace, at all times we are to delight in God.

But I hear a voice say, “But when is the Christian to be miserable?” Never, brother, never! “But not at times?” No, not if he does his duty. “But ought not a saint sometimes to be cast down?” Saints are cast down, but they ought not to be. “Well but many of God’s saints are full of doubts and fears.” I know they are, and the more’s the pity. “But some of the Lord’s children go mourning all their days.” It is their own fault, their Lord has not bidden them do so.

The Scriptures teach us, “Rejoice in the LORD alway, and again,” saith the apostle, “I say, rejoice.” “But are there not times when we may indulge the melancholy vein, and cultivate sorrow?” Well, if you do, you will soon find it grows.

God often serves His children as I have known parents do theirs, if His children pray for afflictions they shall have them until they shall begin to pray ten times more earnestly to have them taken away. If God's people cry for nothing they shall soon have something to cry for, if they will make themselves miserable they will soon have miseries added to their miseries. But so far as the promise is concerned, and the precept is concerned, it is the daily, constant, hourly duty and business of the true believer to delight himself in the Lord his God.

4. But before I leave this point, I answer one other question. *Why is this delighting in God so rare?* Why do you see so many desponding Christians? so many doubting Christians? Why do you see so many whose religion seems to them to be a yoke, a very heavy yoke, too? It is, I fear, because there is so little on the one hand of genuine religion, and so little on the other of deep-toned religion where the little that there is is genuine. Why, the man who has a religion that is not of his heart, I do not wonder that he is wretched.

You have sometimes seen a man with a dog of a breed that does not like the water, and he throws it in, how quickly it gets out again. But there are some of a different breed, that will swim by the hour, and delight in it. So, now, there are some professors who are known to be hypocrites by the fact that their religion is against their will. You have put them into it, and they soon get out again. But the true Christian takes to his religion by grace with ardor and delight. He loves it, he delights therein. This is one of the best tests to discern between a hypocrite and a true Christian.

Job says of the hypocrite, "Will he delight himself in God?" No, the hypocrite will pull a long face, the hypocrite will look wretched, the hypocrite will make himself as miserable as ever man can be when the time has come for it, he never *did*, and he never *can*, and he never *will* delight himself in God as a rule. He may have some joy in the outward means, for even Herod heard John gladly. But that is only a spasm.

Only the true believer can have a constant and an abiding satisfaction and delight in the service and love of God. This is an evidence so sure and infallible, that if any among you delight in God, I conclude, without hesitation, that you are a saved soul. But if any of you, on the other hand, never have any delight in God of any kind, I question whether you ever knew God at all, for if you have known Him you must in your degree have found delight in Him.

"But what is the good of this delight?" saith one. "Why should Christians be such a happy people?" Why, it is good in all ways. It is good for our God, it gives Him honor among the sons of men when we are glad. It is good for us, it makes us strong. "The joy of the LORD is your strength." It is good for the ungodly, for when they see Christians glad, they long to be believers themselves. It is good for our fellow Christians, it comforts them and tends to cheer them.

Whereas, if we look gloomy we shall spread the disease, and others will be wretched and gloomy too. For all these reasons, and for many more that can be given, it is a good and pleasant thing that a believer should delight himself in God.

II. I now turn briefly to the second point of the subject, "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." HERE IS A PROMISE PRICELESS BEYOND RUBIES.

What connection is there between the first part of the text and the second—"Delight thyself in the LORD," and "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." There is this connection, they who delight in God are qualified to have the promise fulfilled. They are qualified, in the first place, as to the desires. It would not be a safe thing for God to give to every one of you here the desire of your heart, it would be your ruin.

One of the best things that the Lord does for some men is to check them, and thwart them. There is many a man that has gone to heaven through not having had his desires who would have gone to hell if he had had them.

Ungodly men have desires that would lead them to the pit, and when God refuses to give them their desires, it is as though He had put chains, and posts, and barriers in the road to keep them from going

post-haste to their own destruction. The ungodly man is not qualified to have the promise, because he would desire something that would neither glorify God nor profit himself.

But when a man's delight is in God, then his desires are of such a sort that God may be glorified in the granting of them, and the man himself profited by the receiving of them. Again, delighting in God qualifies the believer not only for desiring aright, but for spending aright, for some men, if they had their heart's desire, and it were a good desire, would nevertheless make a wrong use of it, and so it would happen to them as it did to Israel of old, while the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse of God would come upon them, but he that delights in God, whatever he gets, knows how to use it well. People say *use* is a second nature. Brethren, abuse is the first nature.

To abuse mercies is much more the nature of man than to properly use them, but when the believer delights in God, whatever he has from God he spends aright, he makes it not a sacrifice to himself, much less a god before whom he will bow down and worship, but he makes it a means of serving God better, and delighting himself in the Master the more.

The rivers of worldly men run away from the sea, but the rivers that Christian men have, run into the sea. If a worldly man sails along the stream of his mercies, he gets further and further from God, and becomes more and more an idolater. But when the Christian gets mercies, he sails nearer and nearer to his God, and so his mercies become highways to the throne of God Himself.

"Still," says one, "what are those desires which we are sure to receive?" Now, brethren, we must single out those who delight themselves in God, and I believe the range of their desires will be found in a very short compass. If I had my desire of my God this morning, it is not much for me to say I have no earthly thing that I would desire, "for I have all things and abound."

But if the apostle Paul were here, who had nothing, who was often naked and poor and miserable, I am persuaded if he had his wish, he would say, "I have nothing to wish for, nothing upon earth, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."

But if I must have a wish, brethren, I know what I would wish for. I would wish to be perfect, to be free from every sin, from every imperfection, from all self, from all temptation, from all love of the world, from all care for everything or anything that is contrary to God's Word.

Is not that your wish, you who delight in God? Would you not now, if an angel were to stand before you at the pew door, would you not say, "If I may, let me be perfectly set free from the very name, and nature, guilt, and power of sin." You shall have your desire, the Lord shall give unto you the desires of your heart.

But I hear another say, "If I might have my desire it would be that I might live nearer to Christ, that I might have constant communion with Him till I knew Him, and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable unto His death." Brother, I join you in that desire. I am sure if you had ten kingdoms offered in the one hand, and this fellowship with Christ in the other, do not I speak the desire of your heart when I say you would choose to have communion with Christ rather than these kingdoms? Well, the Lord shall give you the desire of your heart. Only delight thyself in the Lord.

"Well," says another, "if I might have my desire, I would have all these things, but I would desire to be always useful." Ah, to be useful! How many men live like Belzoni's toad in the pyramids of Egypt, which had been there two thousand years, and what had it done but sometimes sleep, and sometimes wake the whole time through. And so some men live and do nothing.

"But if I had my desire," I think I hear many of you say, "I should like to be useful, to win crowns for Christ, to save souls for Him, to bring in His lost sheep." Brothers, delight thyself in the Lord, you shall have your desire. Perhaps not exactly as you would like to word it. You may not be useful in the sphere you aspire to, but you shall be useful as God would have you useful in His own way and in His own measure.

I must say one thing though. I have a desire, which if now I might offer it knowing that it should be granted me, it would be this, I desire to see you all converted. Mothers and Fathers, can you not say,

“My heart’s desire is that my children might be saved, for I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the truth.”

And I as a minister say, my earnest desire, the highest desire I know, that which my soul feels most when it pants the most and aspires the most after some big and great thing, is that I may present every man of you perfect before God at the last, that I may not only be clear of your blood which is a great thing, but that I may have you with me when I shall say, “Here am I, Lord, and the children Thou hast given me for Christ.”

Oh, you who are members of this church, will you pray that your minister may delight himself in God, that he may have this desire of his heart. And will you yourselves also delight in God, so that when you come to God in prayer, and pray for this congregation, you may be sure He will give you the desire of your heart, because you have delighted yourselves in Him.

They said of Martin Luther as he walked the streets, “There comes a man that can have anything of God he likes.” You ask the reason of it. Because Luther delighted himself in his God. Give us some such men in this congregation and in this church who love the Lord and rejoice in Him, what an effect their prayers will have. These are the men that have the keys of heaven, and of death, and of hell. These are the men that can open heaven or shut it up, make it rain or rain not.

The church of Rome pretends that she has the keys, but the church of Christ has the keys without pretending to have them, and these keys swing at the girdles of the men who delight in God. You can by your prayers bring down such showers of the Spirit upon the Christian church, that the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, and if you cease to delight in God, you can shut up heaven itself, so that no rain descends, and the whole church becomes barren and unfruitful once again.

Now to wind up. Mark this, this is the only thing that a man can delight in and get his desires. There is a man that delights in money, but he does not get his desire. He gets his money, but he never gets the satisfaction he expected. We read in the papers but the other day of one who had a singular success in his profession, but who lately attempted suicide under the notion that he would lose his all through the American war.

We remember in this great city one of the largest merchants who died worth more than three millions of money, for at that amount I think his property was sworn, who during the latter part of his life was accustomed to be paid the same wages as his gardener, and believed that he would certainly die in a workhouse. He had got his broad and wide estates, and money that could not be told, but he did not get the desires of his heart. He had delighted in his gold, and he had not the desires of his heart.

So have we known men who have delighted themselves in fame, and when they have got it, they would have been only too glad to get rid of it. They have been great statesmen or mighty warriors, and they have been greatly renowned, but when they have gained all the fame and stood on the very top of the pinnacle, there was not that in it that they expected, and they have said, “Would that I had lived in obscurity, for then I might have known some satisfaction.”

And look at many of you. When you were apprentices, the desire of your heart was to be journeymen. Well, when you became journeymen, what then? You wanted to be masters, and set up in trade for yourselves. Well, you have set up in trade and got on pretty well. Have you the desire of your heart? Oh, no, that has gone on a little further. Now, you are waiting till you have brought up this large family of yours, and then when you have your children started in life, you are looking out for a villa in the suburbs where you can retire and spend the rest of your days.

And some of you have the villa in the country, and have wound up your business affairs. Have you the desire of your heart yet? Well, not quite yet. There is still something else that you want. Ah, yes—getting the desire of a man’s heart is like chasing a phantom. It is here—there—and everywhere, now on the hill, now down in the valley, you leap down on it, and it is away again on the next hill, and then on the next, and you find your chase is fruitless.

Satisfaction in this world is like the diamond which the fool sees lying at the foot of the rainbow. So he runs after it, and as he runs the rainbow is ever in the distance, and he can never find what he

expected. But if you would have the desire of your heart delight in your God, give Him your love, give Him your heart. Plunge deep into this stream, and you shall have all that you can wish for, the desire of your heart to the full extent shall be granted.

Are there not in this house today those who cannot delight in God?—cannot—cannot—cannot? “How,” say you, “can I delight in God? He is angry with me.” You are right, you cannot. How can *he* delight in God whose sins are unforgiven, upon whom the wrath of God abideth always? Can a man delight in a roaring lion, or in a bear robbed of her whelps? Can a man delight in a consuming fire? Can a man delight in a naked sword that seeks to reach his very heart? God is such to you so long as you are out of grace. How then can you delight in God?

There is one step that is necessary, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you shall delight in the Lord. That is, trust yourself to be saved by Christ. Go and put yourself into Christ’s hands to have all your sins put away, and when you have trusted Christ you shall know that your sin is forgiven, that you are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and you may go your way and delight yourself in God, for the promise is this, your desire shall be granted you.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.