

Seeking the Face of God



David Wilkerson November 7, 2005

In Psalm 27, David beseeches God in an urgent, intense prayer. He pleads in verse 7, “Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.” His prayer is focused on one desire, one ambition, something that has become all consuming for him: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after” (27:4).

David is testifying, “I have one prayer, Lord, one request. It is my single most important goal in life, my constant prayer, the one thing I desire. And I will seek after it with all that’s in me. This one thing consumes me as my continual goal.”

What was this one thing that David desired above all else, the object he’d set his heart on obtaining? He tells us: “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” (27:4).

Make no mistake: David was no ascetic, shunning the outside world. He wasn’t a hermit, seeking to hide away in a lonely desert place. No, David was a passionate man of action. He was a great warrior, with huge throngs singing of his victories in battle. He was also passionate in his prayer and devotion, with a heart that yearned after God. And the Lord had blessed David with so many of the desires of his heart.

Indeed, David tasted everything a man could want in life. He had known riches and wealth, power and authority. He had received the respect, praises and adulation of men. God had given him Jerusalem as the capital for the kingdom. And David was surrounded by devoted men who were willing to die for him.

Most of all, David was a worshipper. He was a praising man who gave thanks to God for all his blessings. He testified, “The Lord laid blessings on me daily.” Yet, at the same time, David was a man of war. He faced enemies and troubles throughout his life. All of hell was engaged in destroying this godly man. In fact, David now faced an entire host camped about him, wicked enemies who had sworn to “eat up my flesh” (27:2).

But David wasn’t afraid. In the very first verse of this Psalm, he declares, “Whom shall I fear?” (27:1). He was confident in God’s grace and mercy, and he knew the Lord would give him strength: “The Lord is the strength of my life” (27:1).

It’s clear David was going to continue as he always had, living his life passionately. Yet, despite all the blessings he had experienced, something was still missing. As he looked back over his life, David saw a need in his soul that was yet unmet. His whole life came down to this one issue, and he cried out to God over it.

David said, in effect, “There is a way of living I seek now — a settled place in the Lord that my soul longs for. I want uninterrupted spiritual intimacy with my God.” This is what David meant when he prayed, “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” (27:4).

David wasn’t talking here about leaving his throne in order to move into the physical temple of God. No, his heart yearned for something he saw in the spirit. For David, there had to be more than a Sabbath-day worship meeting.

He sensed there was something of the Lord he hadn't obtained, and he would not rest until he found it.

He said, in short, "There is a beauty, a glory, an excitement about the Lord I haven't yet seen in my life. I want to know what it's like to have uninterrupted communion with my God. I've known victories, I've been delivered, I've seen his hand work miracles — yet I still long for something unshakable. I want my life to be a living prayer. Only that will see me through the rest of my days."

I believe David was sick and tired of dead religious ritual.

This godly man was fed up with empty ceremony, watching priests and worshippers go through lifeless forms of religion. David saw in their rituals only a form of religion, one that had no power. His heart cried, "This is all wrong. It's why people drop out of worship and turn to idols. There is no beauty to this, nothing of passion. I love God's house, but what happened to the life? The law is still taught, but it has become only dead knowledge. Nowadays I leave the temple with my soul cast down."

David wanted to know the life, the reality, behind the religious rituals. Who was the sacrificial lamb? What was the reality behind the incense, the candlesticks? David's heart yearned to know, and he made a decision: "I've had it — I can't go on like this. I simply am not satisfied. I will not spend the rest of my life with these unmet spiritual longings. From now on, I have one goal, one pursuit in life. I'm going to dwell in the Lord's presence and inquire of him until I have obtained what my heart longs for."

I believe there are millions of godly Christians today who love the Lord but sense there's something missing in their lives. Scores of readers write that their church has become empty of life: "Our pastor's sermons are so dead. He preaches something he gets from a book, not from seeking the Lord. I end up questioning myself after every service: 'I've just been in church. Why does my soul feel downcast?'"

David didn't go to his pastors, Abiathar and Zadok, over the matter. Yet he didn't abandon the church. In fact, he never stopped "going up" to the house of the Lord. Instead, he determined, "If God's house is a house of prayer — and if his church is wherever his presence is manifested — then I'll make my prayer-room a tabernacle. I have set my heart to seek his beauty until I get to know him. I'll 'chain my eyes' on him until I see something that so attracts me I know it will satisfy me to the end."

So David went to his own house and prayed, "O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me" (Psalm 27:7). In other words: "Lord, I want to have uninterrupted fellowship with you. Please, what must I do to reach my desire?"

God answered with these simple words: "Seek ye my face" (27:8). How did David respond to this? He replied, "Lord, when you said, 'Seek my face,' my heart leaped in response." "My heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (27:8).

What does it mean to seek the face of God?

The face of God is his likeness, his reflection. In answering as he did, the Lord revealed to David how to satisfy his longings: by reflecting God in his own life. He was instructing David, "Learn of me. Search my Word and pray for understanding through the Spirit, so you can be like me. I want your life to reflect my beauty to the world."

This was not merely a call to prayer; David had already been praying seven times a day. In fact, David's prayers are what created this passion in him to know the Lord. No, this call from God was to hunger for a lifestyle that totally reflects who Jesus is.

You see, at Calvary, God took on a human face. Jesus came to earth as a man, God in flesh. And he did this so he could feel our pain, be tempted and tried as we are, and show us the Father. Scripture calls Jesus the express image (meaning, the exact likeness) of God. He is the same essence and substance of God the Father (see Hebrews 1:3), the same "engraved cut." In short, he is "the same as" the Father in all ways.

To this very day, Jesus Christ is the face, or very likeness, of God on earth. And because of him, we have uninterrupted fellowship with the Father. Through the Cross, we have the privilege of "seeing his face," of touching him. We can even live as he did, testifying, "I don't do anything except as I see and hear it from the Lord."

Today, when God says, "Seek my face," his words have more implications than at any other time in history. Why? Because the question being asked by multitudes today is, "Which Jesus?"

Christ warned that many impostors would come representing themselves as him. And these false christs would appear just prior to his coming, at the end of the world. Jesus' disciples had asked him, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" and the Lord replied, "Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:3, 5). Jesus then gives us explicit instructions: "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not" (24:23).

I don't believe Jesus is speaking of disturbed people in white robes and shaggy beards, claiming, "I'm the Son of God." No, he's describing deceived ministers who preach a different gospel and a different christ. Paul warned of men who "preach another Jesus, whom we have not preached ... another gospel" (2 Corinthians 11:4).

Likewise, Jesus warned, "False christs and false prophets shall rise ... to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect" (Mark 13:22). These words of Jesus have always intrigued me. I've wondered, "How could the elect possibly be deceived by anyone who goes about boasting of being Christ? Such a person would be dismissed as a joke."

But Jesus and Paul aren't just talking about people who claim to have divine power. They're referring also to concepts that claim Christ's likeness, including new "Jesus movements." This happens when people say, "Here is the face of Jesus. This is what he looks like. We've discovered the true Christ, so let us show you what he's like."

Such movements will be led not by madmen but by educated people who know how to reach the masses. These articulate teachers depart from the authority of Scripture and no longer believe in the power of prayer. Instead, they pose as angels of light to introduce new, "enlightened" concepts they say reflect Jesus. They will appeal to young people especially, who are fed up with the dead religiosity they've experienced in church.

Paul warns us in clear terms about such ministers, who will be "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ ... false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3, 13). There is a new movement today called the "emerging church."

This new movement claims to be "rethinking Christianity." It began about ten years ago, starting with small groups of believers who had become disillusioned with the "sinner friendly" mega-church movement. One news reporter calls it a movement of "mega burnout," made up of young people tired of the shallow gospel of self-fulfillment.

A Barna Group survey found that some 10 to 12 million "born again" Christians have stopped going to church in the U.S., many from the baby boom generation. They say they were seekers and wanted a church that provided an asylum from a culture of [iPods](#) [1], [TiVos](#) [2], [Xboxes](#) [3], competition and bigness. But they say the church deceived them. It wasn't an asylum from the world at all, but like Disney World, with skateboarders, sports leagues, cafes, game rooms — all the stuff they were trying to escape.

One writer states, "We were told that all these things in the church were meant to 'attract seekers.' But we asked, 'Attract them to what?' We searched the Scriptures and found nothing in these churches that resembles the church in the Book of Acts."

The truth is, most seekers are those who genuinely "seek the face of Christ." They search everywhere for a church where the presence of Jesus — the Christ of God's Word — is felt. They seek pastors whose only ambition is to be like Christ and who live like Jesus, not crafty men who offer a mixed gospel. They want a church that's grounded in reality — not feel-good lectures about reaching their potential, but soul-convicting messages from God's heart that expose sin and break its power over their lives.

Many who have become disillusioned are now gravitating to the emerging church movement. A Dallas newspaper characterized the movement this way: "Many emerging churches weave together elements from different religious traditions, especially Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Some are renewing medieval mystical practices such as 'walking the labyrinth.' It is a pick-it-yourself, mix-and-match approach stressing community and social justice. Hell is rejected 'because it makes God look like a torturer.'" Such churches use images, candles, incense and other things in worship.

Many of these churches connect with each other through [Internet blogs](#) [4], and the movement is making inroads into established denominations. Their common claims are, "We're trying to get reconnected to Jesus — the radical Jesus." "We want to put a more humane face on Christ." "Let's dialog and try to figure out Jesus together." No! They're putting their own face on Christ, and it's not the Christ of Scripture. All theology, all concepts of Jesus, are

negotiable to them. They encourage “engaging our imagination about what Jesus was saying.” One of their key spokesmen states, “Clarity is good, but sometimes intrigue may be even more precious.”

Think about what is being said. Clarity is the foundation of biblical Christianity. Nothing can be clearer than Paul’s revelation of the true Christ of Scripture. He warns, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed....

“If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.... I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:6–12).

Think now of what the emerging church is saying when it values intrigue over clarity. “Intrigue” means “a secret, underhanded scheme” or “a clouded effort to arouse interest.” Paul calls this a perversion of the gospel of Christ. Only the revelation of Jesus that’s revealed in Scripture is acceptable to God. And Paul warns in no uncertain terms: “I don’t care if an angel from heaven preaches this new gospel. It’s a fake gospel, straight from hell itself. Let those who preach it be cursed.”

I also have a solemn warning for every young pastor and truth-seeking person who surfs the internet or browses bookstores. You’re going to see books, articles and blogs about new brands of Christianity that are very articulate, very well written, very well presented. But beware: the hook being used is Jesus and it is another Jesus. Unless you know the Christ of God’s Word, you will be deceived.

In over fifty years of ministry, I have seen every conceivable wind and wave of false doctrine come through. They always gather up a following, and within a few years they vanish, leaving the faith of many shipwrecked. And this was all before the advent of the internet. Now a doctrine of demons can spread over the earth in a matter of hours.

The emerging church movement is not going to go away. It will keep evolving in different forms, until all that Jesus prophesied will come to pass. What saddens me is that thousands of ministers are going to be transformed by these “educated voices.” Many will be deceived and start preaching a Jesus of their own imagination, because they quit seeking God and became engrossed in new theologies of radicalism. In place of God’s Word, they will preach a radical Jesus who’s against war, who will bring down the establishment, who will wipe out poverty.

Anyone who reads the gospels knows what Jesus has already said on all these human matters. Yes, our Savior loved the poor and commanded his church to provide for widows and orphans. We’re to mirror Christ’s love to the world through our own lives of sacrifice and devotion. But the emerging church has replaced this mirror with a painter’s canvas. It says we can paint Jesus with any face that comes to our imagination. This is a direct attack on the divinity of Christ, meant to bring him down to nothing more than a human level. I see it as the enemy’s last assault on the church before Jesus returns.

What is God’s answer to all of this?

What shall we do as lovers of the blood-stained Christ of Calvary? God gives us the same answer he gave David, when that godly man was surrounded by a host of idolaters: “Seek my face.” This must become our single, all-consuming desire in life. Our one mission is to be in continual, uninterrupted communion with the Christ of glory — to seek and inquire in his Word of the beauty of Jesus, until we know him and he becomes our full satisfaction.

And we do it all for one purpose: that we may be like him! That we become his express image, so that those who seek the true Christ will see him in us. All evangelism, all soul-winning, all missions outreaches are in vain, unless we behold Jesus’ face and are continually changed into his image. No soul can be touched except by such Christians. And Jesus has called us to reflect his face to a lost world that’s confused about who he is.

As I was studying recently, I cried, “Oh, look at what they’re doing to our precious Lord Jesus.” But the Spirit whispered to me, “Don’t despair. You know how all of this is going to end. The heavens are going to open, and the King of kings and Lord of lords will appear on a white horse. He came to rule with a rod of iron. And he will lay hold of every false prophet, and smite with his sword all that is of antichrist.”

Every knee shall bow on that day, when we behold his face!

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