

Our Father and our God, we thank you that you have given us your Word, that you've given us the light of your revelation through the inspiration of your Spirit. And now we ask that your Spirit would illumine our hearts and our minds so that we can receive your Word, that we can obey your Word, and that we can love your Word. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. Psalm 27. And to begin, I want to focus simply on verse four. We'll move throughout the chapter, but for now, just verse four, Psalm chapter 27, verse four. One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. There is a remarkable simplification here on the part of David. A remarkable focus. To sift through all that is important and all of the priorities and to land on that single uttermost priority, as he says, one thing. Now David is not asking to dwell in the house of the Lord in eternity. That will happen. This one thing that he wants every fiber of his being to lean in towards is that he would dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life. Now we can take a step back from this and maybe ask David if he really means that. He is after all a king and I would suspect that a king can be rather busy. I would suspect they have taxes to raise and armies to support and dispatch and laws to write and issues to adjudicate. It is Henry IV who reminds us, uneasy is the head upon which the crown lies. It's probably being busy days if you're a king. How does David have time to step out of the palace and make his way into the temple, into the house of the Lord? What David here is stressing is that God be at the center of his life. He still has to be king. He still has to be a husband. And through his own machinations and stupidity, husband to more than one wife. And disobedience, we would add. And he is the father to many challenging children. And so all of life's obligations bearing down upon him. All of his duties and responsibilities are upon him, his professional duties and his domestic duties, and yet, what does he say? Clear the deck. On the top of the to-do list for today, on the top of the agenda, first thing that pops up on the schedule is to dwell, to be in the presence of God. And these verbs that David uses are wonderful. The first one is dwell, not a casual relationship, not a drive-by, not a from time to time, but to dwell, to be with. This is in fact the whole point of the temple and prior to that the tabernacle, a place, a physical place where there's a manifestation of God's desire to be with his people. It's what the word tabernacle means. that God would be with his people, and his people would be with him. And this is at the center of it, to dwell. But as he thinks about what it means to dwell in the house of the Lord, he has two sort of sub-points that grow out of this, and two more verbs, and the first is to gaze. To gaze upon the beauty, of course he's going to say that. He's a poet. He's a musician. He's going to focus on the aesthetic. But there's also the cognitive domain is brought in and he is there to inquire. to take God's disclosure, God's revelation, and to search it out, to study it, as psalm after psalm written by David tells us, to meditate day and night upon the law of God. Educators speak of the cognitive and the affective domain. can teach a student knowledge, you can impart knowledge, that's what education is all about. But it's also that that knowledge is more than just registered facts, but that that knowledge begins to impact, and even as we think about it, transform. And so, David is quick here to tell us that it's more than just gaining knowledge after the discipline of inquiry. It is also to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. We probably don't think about the category of aesthetics often enough. Beauty. I always thought of this when I thought of the old Superman slogan. Stolen, plagiarized, right out of Plato. Plato said the noble life is the life

that pursues truth, justice, and beauty. And Superman says truth, justice, and the American way. Sometimes we Americans are challenged with this concept of aesthetics and beauty. But David, worn from the duties of life, even have these opening verses of chapter 27, surrounded by enemies. We see it in our moment, don't we? So much anger. so much violence, so much ugliness, and here we have the beauty of our Lord, the present horizon of perhaps the opposite of beauty that we see and we feel it encroaching, don't we? so, here's David. Get above the noise, above the static, to gaze at the beauty of our Lord. It's a duty. It's also a privilege, isn't it? It's not escape. It's the reality. And so, we let the shadows deflect our vision from where it should be. But David reminds us, and reminds us with this singular focus, this is what is to mark our lives. Not that from the moment he wakes up to the moment he closes his eyes, he's in the temple. But that from the moment he wakes up, and even through his sleep, God is the center of his life. That's what this verse teaches us. And just like the hub is at the center of the wheel from which the spokes go out in many directions, so from this God-centered life, we engage our obligations and our duties, our responsibilities, all the while knowing what is at the center, God himself. And remarkably, this one thing, again, like the hub of the wheel, also in this chapter sends out multiple spokes of what we stand to gain, of our benefit, of having this kind of life where God truly is at the center and that our thoughts are fixed upon him. And in this chapter, David, being a good Calvinist, I think gives us five points. And the first one, we have to back up a little bit. We have to catch it in verses one to three. And so when we think about what does it mean to dwell in the temple? What does it mean to have God at the center of our lives? Well, one thing it means is we can have confidence. It's right there in verse three. David is surrounded by his enemies. He's known anger, he's known violence. On a personal scale, he's had a spear chucked at him a time or two, faced off a giant with nothing but a slingshot of a teenager. And he's seen wars on a national scale. He says, verse three, though an entire army and camp against me, a ubiquitous enemy surrounding me, yet I will be confident." Not confidence in his own strength. He had seen God time and time again deliver him literally from the lion's mouth. He had seen God show himself faithful and true no matter what enemy presented itself to David. Merciful and gracious, he has seen God." And so we can put his confidence in him. A lot of people today have lost confidence. They're shaky. They're wobbly. You can sense it. They're not at rest. They're disturbed by all of this swirl. And sometimes the temptation is there for us to waver in our confidence too. But not if our confidence is in the right thing. If our confidence is in ourselves or what we can do. it probably should totter and wobble and waver. But if it is in the God who keeps His promises, this is a great expression, isn't it? The God of Jacob. Scoundrel himself, Jacob. And yet God was faithful to Jacob. renewing the covenant, keeping covenant. A God who demonstrates himself in the lives of his people, this is a God in which we can put our confidence, and our confidence will not be shaken. So the first thing we can have is confidence. The second thing comes in verse five, and it's this word shelter. Now do you know what the word shelter in Hebrew means? air conditioning. That's what the word shelter means. I'm just slightly joking. I think it could be a reading of the word. But we know what shelter is. This word first showed up in the English language in Edmund Spenser and the knights, the fairy queen as they're traveling dangerous You know the latter medieval world. There's goblins under the bridge. There's dragons inside the caves. It's a dangerous world. And so, as they travel, they find shelter. I enjoy running. I don't know why I run in Florida in

the summer, but I do. And it doesn't matter. It could be early, sort of what you all live with. We call it humidity, 100%, I think, in the bright sun. And you're about to melt, and you look down the road, and there it is, a tree canopy. If I can just get to that shelter, I'll revive. They tell us it's a basic human need. Remember Robinson Crusoe? I don't know where it's been in my life. I know it's existed, but I've just this summer discovered audiobooks. And I'm having a great time rolling through classics. And, of course, I pulled up Robinson Crusoe. And there it is, chapter after chapter after chapter after chapter of description of his shelter. He's very, very proud of because it's chapter after chapter after chapter. And there's antechambers and storage chambers and front porches and balconies. It's the first thing he did. It's cannibals he comes to find on this island. There's the severe weather. And what does he need? What must he do first? Shelter. It's a basic human need. Think of David, Israel, probably many of you I'm sure have been to Israel, holy land trips. It's brutal. The sun, the heat, the dryness, the desert conditions. shelter. But all these human shelters are infinitesimally small compared to the shelter of the wing of the Almighty God. What a beautiful description of the psalmist, isn't it? We think of the grand outstretched wings of the eagle or some predatory bird. And under the shelter of that wing is where we live. My second favorite hymn by R.C. Sproul. First favorite, of course, is the one he wrote for you all on your anniversary. I have to say that because I'm here. But my second favorite is A Secret Place. It's a hymn of a psalm that's all about shelter. And though 10,000, an army of 10,000 rise against me, be sheltered under the wings of Almighty God, the secret place of God Most High. God will hide me in His shelter in the day of trouble. He will hide me, conceal me, under the cover of his tent. And in the midst of raging floods, he will lift me high upon a rock." We get confidence, we get shelter. The third thing we get comes in verse six, and it's joy. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies, verse six. And I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy. I will sing and make melody to the Lord." There's a group of Christians in an African tribe where when a fellow tribe's member wants to become a Christian, they say, I want to sing too. because the Christians in that particular tribe are known for their singing. They sing all day long about everything. And that's what's going on in this verse. The joy so wells up within David that it cannot be contained. And so the quantity of it, the sheer quantity of it, spills out and fills his mouth with songs and praises and melodies of rejoicing. Again, David the musician. And we know we have matured somewhat to begin to understand the distinction between happiness and joy. We know that this verse is not talking about some fleeting emotion that is absolutely contingent upon the circumstances. and that in those great circumstances, ah, happiness. That's not what this is. The enemies are still there. The camp is still there. David looks to the north, and it's the camp, and to the south, and it's the camp, and to the east, and to the west, it's the camp. They haven't gone. But in the midst of those extenuating circumstances, he has joy. Because again, he's dwelling, he's living in the very presence of God. And of course, there's moments of sorrow. David, plenty in his life, partook of the bitter root And there's disappointment and there's disillusionment in the whole package. And yet in it, there's joy. So we have confidence and shelter and joy. The fourth thing we have comes in verses seven to 10. Verse seven begins, here, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me. You have said, seek my face. My heart says to you, your face, Lord, do I seek. Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger. Oh, you who have been my help, cast me not

off. Forsake me not, oh God of my salvation. For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in. This is belonging. We can talk about the need for shelter, the need for water, the need for nutrition. But what is the most fundamental basic human need is this passage, to belong to God. And notice how David frames it. He's desperate. He cries to God. And God says, seek my face. And David says, that's exactly what I want. Your face I seek, but this is what he is concerned about. This is why he's so desperate. What if it is not the face of God too, but what if it is the face of God against? And what if it is not the grace and mercy and love of God, but what if it is the anger of God? And what if God casts him off? And what if God forsakes him? He even says, doesn't he, I'm an orphan, for my father and my mother have forsaken me. And how can we not hear the words of the David to come? My Lord, my Lord, why have you not forsaken me? You know, the only way that we can have the face of God toward us and not the face of God against us is because of what happened on that cross. Because the face of God was against his beloved Son. And the anger of God and the wrath of God was poured out upon the Son. so that you and I can escape the wrath of God, and so that we orphans, we who are orphans, can say, the Lord has taken me in. I have to imagine that for an orphan, the happiest day of their physical life is when they get adopted, is when they get taken into a family, And that's what God does for us. We are accepted through Christ, in Christ, before God Himself. And then fifthly, verse 11, teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path. God gives us direction. and guidance. Imagine, imagine what it must be like to be unregenerate and to not have the sure and certain Word of God to guide us and direct us. Do you remember it? Some of you might have been saved when you were little and you don't remember it. Some of you remember it all too well, groping around in the dark, running into everything uneven path, falling around, sinners being sinners, unrighteous being unrighteous because they don't have the clear revelation and teaching and direction of God's Word. Sort of like all your wonderful brick sidewalks around here. Not level. That and in total darkness. But what does God give us? light for a path, a lamp for our feet, and a level path. Well, I'll give you a bonus. I said there were five things. We had confidence, we had shelter, joy, belonging, direction. Here's a bonus. It's there in verse 13. And we're circled right back to verse 4. We are dwelling in the house of the Lord, we are gazing at his beauty, Jonathan Edwards put it this way. When God saves us, he gives us many things. He gives us forgiveness of sins. He gives us new life. We say it in the Apostles' Creed. We are now a part of the holy Catholic Church. We have the forgiveness of sins. We have the resurrection of the body. We have the life everlasting. These are all the benefits of being in Christ. But Edwards says, what is the most important thing, what is the best thing that God gives us when he saves us? Himself. He brings us into union with the fellowship of the triune God, and we see and we are in His goodness. God gives us shelter, He gives us joy, He gives us direction, He gives us a sense that we belong, but He gives us Himself. And all this is possible through Christ. And so what is left for David but to say, wait for the Lord, trust in the Lord, rest in the Lord, and then be strong, and then let your heart take courage. And again, trust, wait, rest. in God. Let's pray together. Our Father and our God, may we all, with David, cry out for this one thing. May we all desire but one thing, to have you at the center of our lives so that we dwell in your presence all the days of our life and in the life to come. We know this is possible, only possible, through Jesus Christ, and so again, we are so grateful for this gift of your dear Son to us. We pray these things in Christ's name.