

Abiding Faith – Psalm 27
Sermon by Associate Pastor Joe Davis
Union Baptist Church – 7/3/2016

Well, family, did you have a good week? Would you say you were abiding in Christ this week? The world continues to be a troubling place, but were you able to remain with Christ in the midst of it, dwelling with him and experiencing his guidance and fellowship as you walked through each day? In the last 2 weeks as we've talked about being God's ambassadors and then about shining like stars in a dark world, I've been reminded again how we can only do this by abiding in Christ...by going into his house and staying there, enjoying his constant companionship, experiencing his protection and shelter, allowing him to feed us with his Word, and learning how to live life as his apprentice...placing our faith and trust and confidence in God alone and walking by His Spirit... letting Christ make his home in our hearts through faith, allowing him to arrange the rooms, clean up the messy areas and decorate how he pleases.

Recently as I was having my morning study time, I came across another great passage that speaks of this idea of remaining and dwelling constantly in God's presence. Turn with me, if you would, to Psalm 27. We're going to do something a little bit different today for the holiday weekend. I had planned to do my next installment on faith in Scripture today, but after realizing that half the church would be camping this weekend I decided to save it for next week. I'm really excited about what God's been showing me in this faith study and I believe it's so foundational to our entire walk with God. So make sure you come next week! What this means for us today is that we're going to do a little shorter message and MAYBE I'll get you out of here a few minutes early.

So hopefully by now you've arrived in Psalm 27. I've called our message today, "Abiding Faith." And as we look at verses 1 through 3, we notice that David begins this Psalm by expressing his abiding and unshakable faith in the LORD. He says:

1 "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread? 2 When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. 3

Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident.

In these verses it's very clear that David knows without a doubt where he's safe and protected and given the light he needs to see clearly the path ahead. He's not looking for these things anywhere but in the LORD. He trusts in the LORD alone as his light, his salvation and his defense, and as he finds his refuge in the Lord, David discovers an amazing truth: **he has absolutely nothing to fear**. Even when evil people come and try to kill him or an entire army surrounds him, his heart will not fear and he will have the unshakable confidence that can only come from trusting in Almighty God.

In your life so far, have you ever been surrounded by an entire army whose sole intent is to kill you? Imagine an entire army gathered together for the single purpose of removing you from the face of the earth. I'd say that it probably couldn't get any worse than that in our lives, could it? We fear a lot of things in life, but there could be no greater reason to be afraid than being surrounded by an entire army intending to kill you. And what's amazing is that even in this unimaginable situation which David, by the way, experienced personally, David was able to be fearless and confident because he put his trust in God. And with God on his side, he realized he had nothing to fear.

You see, David's wasn't living in "La-La Land" thinking that by trusting in the Lord his life would go perfectly and no problems or evil would come into his life. Instead, David knew that just like us he was a fragile human being living in a cursed world who at some point would die just like everyone else. He was also well aware that he was in a battle and that evil was very real and that armies **WOULD AND WERE COMING** against him; yet in spite of this grim reality, he found a way to not fear and to remain confident in any circumstance...and that was because he knew God was on his side and would give him everything he needed in the battle.

And in verse 4 we see how David could have this confidence and freedom from fear and even peace in the midst of a raging battle. He was able to have confidence and peace because His eyes and desires were fixed on one thing and one thing only: to dwell constantly in the Lord's presence...to abide with him at all times, beholding him in his glory and meditating on who he is. ***"One thing I***

have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: 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 meditate in His temple.”

Even if God had allowed David to die in battle, this reality of being in God’s presence would have continued and even expanded beyond his wildest imaginations as he transitioned into the heavenly realm, where the mortal is swallowed up by life and the glory of God’s presence takes the breath away.

My friends, this is where we each need to be in our daily lives, seeking after one thing throughout everything we do: to walk through our days and battles constantly in the presence of the LORD, beholding him, meditating on his Word, and experiencing his guidance, direction, protection and power as we go... ..to abide in Christ at all times, finding our nourishment and strength and fruitfulness as we stay connected to him and walk with him, knowing his Word in such a way that it stays with us and guides us in every decision and action we take.

Do you believe that living this way is possible? And if you don’t, why not? Do you believe God’s Word is true? Listen in verses 5 through 6, what God’s Word tells us will happen when we learn to live this way:

“For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.”

As we learn to abide constantly in the LORD’s presence, he will conceal us and hide us in his tent...He will lift us up on a rock, raising our heads far above our enemies and out of their reach...and we will be able to continue in fruitfulness, offering up our lives as sacrifices with shouts of joy.

I picture in my mind that scene from Psalm 23, where God prepares a table for me in the presence of my enemies. As the wolves hungrily surround me thinking they’re about to feast on my flesh, God sets up an invisible, impenetrable wall which they cannot pass and then, wonder of wonders, he prepares a delicious and

amazing feast for us to eat together in peace as the wolves watch on in frustration with saliva dripping from their mouths.

This is where we each can be when we seek one thing in our lives: ***to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of [our lives], to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple.*** Shouts of joy and songs of praise and peace that passes understanding will flow out of us when this becomes the focus of our lives. And so I ask: “Are you seeking this in your life?” When you think about what your priorities are right now and what you’re chasing after, is this on the list? Is it at the top or is it number 9 out of 10 or does it not make the list at all?

Looking back at verse 5, notice how David refers to the house of the Lord here in terms of the tabernacle...a movable tent. This tells us that we can remain in God’s house and abide with him wherever we go in life. We don’t just dwell with him when we come to church on Sunday and then head out on our own the rest of the week. No, he goes with us and we can continue to abide in him in any place and at any time.

Let this be the one focus of each of our lives today and everyday: ***“One thing I have asked from the LORD, that shall I seek: 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 meditate in His temple.”*** Let’s let that be the one unifying pursuit of our lives and see what God does as we live in constant fellowship with him and learn to follow his lead in everything. This is a prayer that God delights to answer, when we turn our eyes and energies to seek it!

And notice that it does involve a desiring and a seeking. It won’t just happen, if we don’t seek it. Look at verses 7 through 12:

***7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice, And be gracious to me and answer me.
8 When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O Lord, I shall seek."
9 Do not hide Your face from me, Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation!
10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the Lord will take me up.***

***11 Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a level path because of my foes.
12 Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, for false witnesses
have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence.***

What's David doing here in these verses? He's praying, isn't he? He's seeking the Lord. He's asking for God's help and salvation. He's expressing his faith in God by talking to him. And when he hears God's instructions, he's obeying them. God had evidently personally instructed David at some point to seek His face. David had heard God himself telling him the simple way to know him and experience his presence and glory and salvation, and God's instruction was incredibly simple. It wasn't a list of 10 steps David needed to take, or 5 books he should read, or 3 things he needed to clean up in his life first. Rather it was 3 simple words: **SEEK MY FACE**.

And how did David respond? Did he say, "But God, I'm too busy for that right now?...Or, "I would love to seek your face after I build my own kingdom for awhile."...Or, "If you'll me get on the throne of Israel, then I promise I'll do it?" No, David didn't argue or make excuses or come up with reasons why he couldn't do it right now. Instead, he simply responded in faith and said this: "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek." And even though David had a lot of ups and downs in his life and made some big mistakes, he's the one known in Scripture as "a man after God's own heart." What better assessment could there be of a person's life in God's kingdom?...to be a person who constantly chases after God's heart.

Seek God's face. Seek to dwell in his house all the days of your life, beholding his beauty and meditating in his temple. Abide in him. And no matter what comes against you in your life, even if your own father and mother forsake you, even if false witnesses rise up against you, even if an entire army surrounds you, you will experience joy and peace and deliverance in the constant presence of the Lord. You will see and experience the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. You will put away hopelessness and despair and live life to the full. Your life won't be free of problems, but you'll remain fearless and confident and secure in the midst of them.

Look at verses 13 and 14 of Psalm 27:

3 I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.

Spiritual strength and fearless courage and the goodness of the Lord is waiting for you. Do you desire God and are you seeking his face?...because that's the only place you can find these things. I promise you won't be disappointed and God will answer you and show you his glory when you will simply let the focus of your life be seeking his face. As you abide in his presence he will strengthen your faith, fill you up with joy and peace, and provide the light and salvation and defense that you need in whatever battle you're facing. This is the path to abiding faith.

May this be the heartfelt prayer of each of us here today:

One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: 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 meditate in His temple.

If you remember only 3 words from what I've said today, let it be these and let them guide you wherever you go in life and whatever you do each day: **SEEK GOD'S FACE**. Look for him diligently...desire him...and prepare yourself for the goodness of the Lord. Psalm 33:5 tells us that the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. It's not just buried under a rock or hidden in a secret forest. It's everywhere. Look for it... Praise him for it...and let him fill you up with his steadfast love and faithfulness as you seek him.