

Delight Yourself In The Lord – Ps 37:4

Welcome to our ministry year kick-off; If you're visiting, my name is Rob Willey, I'm the Senior Pastor here at Harvest, and we're thrilled you're here; We've been praying . . . That this would be a time when God encourages/challenges you in your walk with him

It's also a time we look forward to as a church each year; In fact, somebody said to me earlier this week, that's it's kind of like a box of chocolates . . . You know what you're getting, but it's still exciting

➤ And one of those things we get is a new *theme* for the year; A big idea that's central to our life in Christ; One that we reinforce with banners, bulletins, stickers, coasters . . . And whatever else we can do to keep it in the forefront of our minds and hearts

And this year, the theme is *Delight Yourself In The Lord*, straight from Ps 37:4
Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
And that's the verse I'd like to unpack this weekend; Ps 37:4

➤ This is one of those verses you might call a money maker – b/c you find it on plaques and frames in just about any Christian bookstore around; People love it And no wonder – “I get what I want”; And who doesn't want that? Who doesn't want the desires of their heart each day?

The problem is, we don't pay much attention to the *condition*, the first part of the verse – **Delight yourself**

And if we do pay attention, I fear that we little understand it, or fail to apply it Especially so, when you consider that . . .

- **It's a duty, not just a result**

Delight yourself in the LORD is a duty, a command; Something God actually tells us to *do*
As in, find great joy in, take great pleasure in, bask in, rejoice in – him
That's what the Psalmist, King David, is telling us on God's behalf

And this isn't the only place; **Ps 32:11** says – *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*
Once again, a command; A duty that's ours to carry out
And **Phil 4:4** says – *Rejoice in the Lord always; Again I will say, rejoice.*
Just 2 of many verses in the Bible, that tell us to *delight* in God

➤ But we don't tend to think of it that way, do we?*****
We tend to think of delight as a result, a by-product
Like the delight *I* get, when I savor the rich, creamy taste of a Cotton Candy Marshmallow milkshake; I get a feeling delight
It's a by-product of putting the stuff in my mouth

And while that's certainly the case when we abide in the Lord, when we taste and see that *he* is good – that's not it; There's more to it than that
B/c based on this passage, delight is a *duty* as well; We're actually *told* to be happy
Which would be crazy if it weren't for the fact that the *object* of our happiness is *delight-full*
And on the other side of the coin, it's half-crazy that we even need to be told

That's like telling a kid to delight in Christmas; Or giving them \$5 to spend in a candy store, and telling them to be happy about it
They'd probably look at you like you're off your rocker; Why *wouldn't* you delight in Christmas? Why *wouldn't* you squeal at the thought of a candy spree?

And the same is true of God; Why *wouldn't* you be happy about drawing near to him?
It's a duty, yes; But a duty of *delight*, b/c he's worthy

2nd . . .

- **It's a safeguard, not just a luxury**

Delighting in the Lord, or being happy in Jesus, isn't just a luxury, but a need; B/c it's a safeguard against sin
The more you delight in God, the more you delight in his Word, the more you delight in what's *good* – the less you desire what's bad

Like another Psalmist said in Ps 119 – *In the way of your testimonies I delight* (14)
And *I will delight in your statutes* – your principles, your guidelines (16)
He delights in God's Word
So much so, that he says in **v11** – *I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*
IOW delighting in God by delighting in his Word, serves as a safeguard against sin
And does so, not only by sensitizing our conscience, but changing our desires*****
You want to break out of your habitual sin? Start delighting in God

➤ It's something the Puritans picked up on 300 years ago
Like Richard Baxter, who said that – delighting in God arms us *against the assaults of our spiritual enemies and [puts] our mouths out of taste for those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks* (The Saints' Everlasting Rest)

It's like only drinking water for a month – after a while you no longer desire anything else; And certainly not pop; B/c it puts your mouth “out of taste” for it
In which case your delight in water serves to safeguard you from the ill-effects of pop
Just like your delight in the Lord, safeguards you against sin

And then 3rd here . . .

- **It's a must, not just an option**

Delighting in the Lord is a *must*, not just an option
B/c over and over again the Bible says that there are *consequences* for disobedience
Including the disobedience of obeying without joy
Like it says in **Deut 28:47-48** – *Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart . . . you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you;* Delight is a must, not just an option

➤ But not the kind of “must” we *normally* think of*****
Listen to how E.J. Carnell put it; He was an author in the 60's who said . . .
Suppose a husband asks his wife if he must kiss her good night. Her answer is, “You must, but not that kind of a must.” What she means is this: “Unless a spontaneous affection for my person motivates you, your overtures are stripped of all moral value.” (Christian Commitment)

Unless we obey with delight, it's of no value

Unless we delight with delight, it's not really obedience (**Summary**)

It's a must, though not the normal kind of must, and certainly not an option

➤ Nor is it something you can just manufacture, can you?; Especially since it's a feeling, a disposition; You have to cultivate it; Which brings us to the next phrase . . .

In the Lord

Delight yourself *in the Lord* David says; Which you'll never do unless you acknowledge him as such; And you'll never acknowledge him as Lord if you don't know about him

The problem is, that doesn't come naturally

B/c our sin and sin nature has so skewed our passions and stunted our knowledge, that we delight in idols; We settle for lesser things when we could bask in greater ones

We settle for things we *already* know, instead of learning things we *should* know

So delighting in the Lord *starts* by learning about him

- **It starts by learning about God**

Learning about who he is, what he's done, and why

All of which is found in his Word, the Bible; The book he inspired by impressing himself and his message on various men

Which all kinds of religions *claim*, but only the Bible supports; Only the Bible backs it up with objective evidence like the fulfillment of prophecy

So that's where we turn to learn about God

➤ And find that he's all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present
And that he created the world for his glory, only to be forsaken by us in our sin
But being rich in mercy and steadfast in love, he made a way to redeem us and reconcile us to himself, by sending his Son to die on a cross
Who now rules and reigns at his right hand in heaven, and will one day come again to judge the living and the dead, and restore all things unto himself

That's God – who he is, what he's done, and why; And if we're going to delight in him, we need to know it; We need to *learn* about him

2nd, we need to know him; Our delight . . .

- **It grows by getting to know God**

And the way to do that, is by *surrendering* yourself to his Lordship, and establishing a relationship with him through faith and repentance

That's the only way to know God personally

It's to believe, to trust by *faith*, that when Jesus died on the cross, he did so for your sins, so you wouldn't have to

So you wouldn't have to bear the punishment of eternal damnation apart from him

It's to trust by faith, that when he rose from the dead . . .

He did so not only to triumph over the penalty for our sins, but ensure that we would too; And thereby live with him forever; That's the faith part

➤ The *repentance* part, is acknowledging your sin and sinfulness before God, and how it not only *separates* you from him, but grieves him

And then asking him for forgiveness; Asking him to wash you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness, on the grounds that Jesus already *paid* the price for your sin

Delight starts by getting to know God, and getting to know God starts by establishing a relationship with him through faith and repentance

Apart from that, you can't *hope* to know him; Let alone delight in him

But if you do . . .

- **It flourishes the more you love God**

You *can't* delight in what you don't *know*, and you *won't* delight in what you don't *love*

Just like a marriage; The more you love one another, the more you'll delight in one another; The *less* you love one another, the *less* you'll delight in one another

Delight flourishes in the greenhouse of love

That's why elderly couples who have been married for so long, often display an intangible and unspoken delight that the rest of us so admire and want

And the same should be true in your relationship with God

Like the Apostle Peter said in **1 Pet 1:8-9** – *Though you have not seen him* [referring to Jesus], *you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, [9] obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Love for the Lord and delight in the Lord, go hand in hand*****

Flourishing to the point of being inexpressible (**Summary**)

Delight yourself – *in the Lord*; Always and only in the Lord, and . . .

He will give you the desires of your heart

It's a command with a promise; How good is that?

It's not just obedience for obedience sake, goodness for goodness sake – but obedience for *our* sake; Obedience that adds to our delight all the more

But it begs the question as to how can God promise such a thing

What if I want something outlandish? What if I want riches untold? Is he going to give me that?

Or what if I want to get married? Or want a different job? Or desire to live on a sailboat? Is he going to make that happen?

The answer, is yes – *if* those things are a product of your delight; An outgrowth of your delight; IOW if you're delighting in him, and reveling in his Word . . .

And finding great joy in his way, and taking great pleasure in his person, and resting firmly in sovereignty, and abiding always in his presence . . .

Then yes – God will give you the desires of your heart; B/c *your* desires will be *his* desires; Your thinking will be his thinking

You won't even *consider* doing something he doesn't want

That's why there need be no crisis of belief in taking this Scripture literally; And no risk to God that we might desire something out of bounds

If you give him the desire of *his* heart, which is your delight in him, he'll give you the desire of yours; Which is really his; He'll do it

But . . .

- **Not necessarily in your time**

That's why he says a few verses later in v7 – *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him*

God will give you the desires of your heart as long as they're in line with his – but you'll probably have to wait; And wait patiently at that
Maybe even until the other side of eternity
You'll have to wait, and trust that *his* timing is best

And his way; He will give you the desires of your heart, but . . .

- **Not necessarily in your way**

Which is a good thing, b/c his way it always better than ours anyway; And higher
Which means we may not understand it; But we can rest assured it's better

Think ancient Israel in bondage to Egypt

They waited 430 years to be released – definitely not in their time; And definitely not in their way either; But God's way exceeded their wildest dreams
Until they messed it up of course

Or how about Paul in the NT, who desired to preach the gospel in Rome, but *never* would have chosen arrest, imprisonment, and shipwreck in order to get there
But that was God's way; And he used it in ways Paul could have never imagined

He may not give you the desires of your heart your way, or in your time . . .

- **But give them he will**

Especially those foundational desires that are common to every single one of us
Like happiness, and peace, and purpose, and guidance
Every single one of us desires those things; We may desire them differently, and we certainly desire them wrongly at times – but desire them we do

And God will give them; Starting with life forever and life to the full

The Bible says that he has placed *eternity in our hearts*; IOW he has given us a sense of forever, and a corresponding desire to participate in it; To be around for it
And experience the peace and joy that goes along with it

All of which is yours, if you establish a relationship with him through faith and repentance, and grow in your love for him all your life (**Summary**)
It's a command with a promise

And I'm going to give you an opportunity to take advantage of it starting right now
An opportunity to embrace the Lord who's worthy of your *delight*, and your life
Let's pray

➤ If I've been speaking to you, I'm going to lead you in a prayer, a prayer of salvation
And if you pray with me, I'm going to ask you to raise your hand when we're finished, so I can rejoice with you . . .
And you can take that first step of boldness in telling someone

I believe – that when Jesus died, he died for my sins, paying the price I deserve; The price of eternal separation in the throes of hell

I repent – I admit that I'm a sinner, in need of forgiveness; And ask you now to do so – to forgive me and cleanse me fr all unrighteousness, so I can be in your presence forever

I receive – I receive you into my life, to dwell with me and I with you, forever; Following you as Lord, and loving you with all my heart, more and more

If you just prayed with me, would you raise your hand, and look at me, and wait for me to acknowledge you?

[And if you're at our West Campus, would you do the same there, with our Campus Pastor? Waiting for *him* to acknowledge you?]

Prayer – Lord, we delight in you; For who you are and what you've done; Especially in saving us – whether just now, or decades back

We delight in your grace, your plan, your provision, your love, and our life – the life we have in you; And know that you delight in the soul of even one person saved

We praise you for that, and we give now, with that same delight