

Psalms 27:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

One thing have I desired 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 behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Analysis

David's 'one thing' reveals singular devotion amid life's complexities, echoing Christ's commendation of Mary in Luke 10:42. The threefold purpose—dwelling, beholding, and inquiring—expresses deep longing for God's presence, beauty, and wisdom. The Hebrew 'nô'am' (beauty) suggests pleasantness and graciousness, not merely aesthetic quality. David desires contemplation of God's character and intimate communion, not just external worship. This psalm anticipates the beatific vision (Matthew 5:8; 1 John 3:2) and reflects the chief end of man to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Historical Context

Written during a time of danger (verses 2-3), this psalm reflects David's experience of finding sanctuary at the tabernacle. As king, he would later prioritize bringing the ark to Jerusalem, demonstrating his lifelong commitment to God's presence. The temple would become central to Israel's worship life.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. If you were to identify your 'one thing,' what would it be? How does it compare to David's singular focus?
2. What practical steps would demonstrate that dwelling in God's presence is your highest desire?

Interlinear Text

אֶבֱקֶה שְׁאוֹתֶיךָ ! הִנֵּה מֵאֵת שָׂא לִתִּי אֶחַת
One thing have I desired of the LORD that will I seek
H259 H7592 H853 H3068 H853 H1245

חַיִּי יָמַי כָּל ! הִנֵּה בְּבֵית שְׁבֵתִי
after that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life
H3427 H1004 H3068 H3605 H3117 H2416

בְּהִיכָלוֹ: וּלְבַקֵּר ! הִנֵּה בְּנֵעַם לִחַז וְת
to behold the beauty of the LORD and to enquire in his temple
H2372 H5278 H3068 H1239 H1964

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 26:8 (References Lord): LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.

Psalms 23:6 (References Lord): Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Psalms 65:4 (Temple): Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

Psalms 84:4 (Parallel theme): Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

Psalms 84:10 (Parallel theme): For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Luke 10:42 (Parallel theme): But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Psalms 27:8 (References Lord): When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

Matthew 6:33 (Parallel theme): But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Jeremiah 29:13 (Parallel theme): And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Philippians 3:13 (Parallel theme): Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,