

Psalm 37:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Analysis

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. This verse presents a profound promise rooted in proper spiritual priority. The Hebrew word hitanag (חִתְנָגָה, "delight") is a reflexive verb meaning to take exquisite pleasure, to luxuriate in something with soft, tender affection. It conveys more than casual enjoyment—it describes making God Himself the supreme source of joy and satisfaction.

The conditional structure is significant: delighting in the LORD precedes receiving heart's desires. This is not a prosperity gospel formula where God becomes a cosmic vending machine. Rather, when we genuinely delight in God, our desires are transformed to align with His will. The Hebrew mishalot (מִשְׁאָלֹת, "desires") refers to petitions or requests that arise from deep longing. As our affections are centered on God, what we long for increasingly reflects what He desires for us.

The promise "he shall give" uses the imperfect tense, indicating ongoing, continuous action. This is God's faithful character responding to hearts rightly oriented toward Him. The theological principle echoes throughout Scripture: seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, and other things will be added (Matthew 6:33). This verse refutes both legalism (trying to earn God's favor) and presumption (demanding God fulfill our unchanged desires). Instead, it offers the path of transformation through intimate relationship with God, wherein our wills are conformed to His perfect will.

Historical Context

Psalm 37 is an acrostic wisdom psalm attributed to David in his old age (v. 25 suggests an elderly perspective). Written during a period when the wicked appeared to prosper while the righteous suffered, this psalm addresses a perennial problem that troubled ancient Israel and continues to challenge believers today.

The agricultural metaphors throughout the psalm reflect ancient Israel's agrarian society, where land inheritance, harvests, and sustenance were constant concerns. The promise of desires being fulfilled would have resonated deeply with people facing economic uncertainty, foreign oppression, or social injustice under corrupt leaders.

In David's context, he had experienced both wilderness wandering and palace dwelling, persecution by Saul and prosperity as king. His counsel to delight in the LORD came from decades of learning that true satisfaction is found in God alone, not in circumstances, possessions, or human approval. This wisdom literature served to instruct covenant community members in practical godliness, teaching them that relationship with Yahweh—not material prosperity or national power—constitutes genuine blessing. For exilic and post-exilic Jews, this message would prove crucial for maintaining faith when the promised land was lost and temple worship ceased.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does delighting in the LORD practically differ from using religion as a means to get what we want?
2. What specific desires in your heart might change if you genuinely delighted in God more than in any earthly thing?

3. How does this verse challenge the modern prosperity gospel or the idea that following God guarantees material blessing?
4. In what ways does delighting in God transform our desires rather than merely granting our existing wishes?
5. How does Christ embody the ultimate fulfillment of this verse, both in His perfect delight in the Father and as the desire of all nations?

Interlinear Text

לְבָבֶךָ	מִשְׁאָלָךְ	לְבָבֶךָ	עַל	וְהַתְּعַבֵּךְ
Delight H6026	H5921	thyself also in the LORD H3068	and he shall give H5414	H0

Additional Cross-References

John 15:7 (Parallel theme): If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Psalms 145:19 (Parallel theme): He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

Isaiah 58:14 (Light): Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

John 15:16 (Parallel theme): Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Job 22:26 (Light): For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God.

1 Peter 1:8 (Parallel theme): Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Psalms 104:34 (References Lord): My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.

Job 27:10 (Light): Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?

Psalms 43:4 (Parallel theme): Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

Song of Solomon 2:3: As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

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