

Series: Seek

Title: Commitment Sunday

Text: Psalm 27:8

Date: March 26, 2023

In life and in pastoring, I've noticed a strange phenomenon that seems to occur as people age. For some reason or another, it seems like some gradually develop an expectation that other people — friends, family members, and the like — have the responsibility for maintaining relationships. Such people often become perturbed when others don't reach out to them. Perhaps you have had experience with such things. Older individuals can sometimes complain, "No one ever calls me!" Or, they might say, "No one cares about me anymore!"

The problem with such things rests in the nature of older age. As life slows down, people have more time on their hands. Boredom tempts them to think unhealthy thoughts (Proverbs 18:1). They may assume everyone else has the same type of schedule they do. Or, they may develop unrealistic expectations of those around them.

Another problem with the aforementioned scenario is a lack of personal initiative in maintaining a relationship. When aged parents have complained to me about children who don't call enough, I've sometimes asked, "Well, how often would you like to hear from your children?" Most will say, "At least once a week would be nice." I usually then counsel such people to take the initiative and call their children at least once a week.

For any relationship to succeed, each party must play a part. The same is true when it comes to our relationship to God. To know Him and glorify Him, we must own our responsibility to seek after Him. The entire canon of Scripture gives witness to this reality. As we have already seen, the Bible is replete with admonitions for God's people to seek God and Christ's kingdom.

When we approach the Psalms of David, we learn more about this subject. In particular, Psalm 27 contains great truth about our pursuit of God. The Psalm was contained within a trilogy of songs (Psalm 26, 27, 28) in which David pour out his heart concerning suffering he endured. In the midst of his three painful songs, the king sang of his commitment to pursue the Lord in worship.

In Psalm 27:8, we read, "My heart says this about you, 'Seek his face.' Lord, I will seek your face." The psalmist described his pursuit of God by making mention of God's "face." It is important to note that his language was figurative. The Lord does not have a literal face, since He is a spirit (John 4:24). As a spirit being, His exact presence can be hard to explain; thus, Scripture uses a number of figurative descriptors. In one of his letters to Timothy, Paul said the Lord "...lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6:16). The author of Hebrews said, "...our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28).

In the book of Revelation, John was teleported to heaven. In the presence of God, he did not see a physical entity. Using human language, he tried his best to describe what he saw: "Immediately I was in the Spirit, and there was a throne in heaven and someone was seated on it. The one seated there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian stone. A rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald surrounded the throne" (Revelation 4:2-3). John's vision and the rest of Scripture teach us that God does not have a literal, physical face.

Anthropomorphism

The psalmist's language should be taken figuratively. He used a rhetorical device known as an "anthropomorphism." Such a word refers to the act of ascribing human characteristics to a non-human entity. One theologian has defined the figure of speech as "The attribution of a human quality to God, such as 'eyes,' 'hands,' or 'arms.'" It uses analogous and metaphorical

language.”¹ Examples of anthropomorphic language in relation to God can found in passages like Genesis 3:8; Exodus 33:23; Ezekiel 37:1; and Isaiah 59:1.

Applied to the Lord, the device reminds us that God is not like us. Yes, we are made in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), but there is an “otherness” about the Lord. He is defined by a holy disposition (Isaiah 6:3). His impeccable holiness and perfect righteousness makes Him different from us. His character, nature, and works go beyond human capacities and abilities.

Though the Lord is distinct from humankind, men and women can relate to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. This was the Psalmists point in speaking of the Lord’s “face.” He did not intend to be literal. The Heavenly Father does not have a literal, physical visage. The Psalmist used such language in a metaphorical fashion to depict his relationship to God.

The word “face” that appears in the Hebrew of Psalm 27:8 is one that often referred to a literal face (Genesis 31:20). However, the word was often applied in a figurative sense to God. Used in such a way, it figuratively spoke of the Divine presence. We see the word used this way by David in Psalm 11:7 — “For the Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds. The upright will see his *face*.”

The Presence of a Person

This brings us to a key point in our study of the pursuit of God through the Bible’s use of the word “seek.” From David’s testimony, it is important to note the object of our pursuit. As we seek the Lord, we are seeking His presence. We are not primarily interested in a precept, paradigm, principle, a program, or a profit from religion. Our aim is a person!

The language associated with “face” from Psalm 27:8 was used in the ancient world of a “face-to-face” meeting. In our world of modern technology, we know the value of “in-person” meetings. The internet and mobile devices give us the luxury of meeting online through video calls and conferences. Though such conveniences are helpful at times, they often only provoke a greater desire for “face-to-face” meetings. My family learned this through firsthand experience while we lived hundreds of miles away from loved ones for several years.

As we seek God, it is important to remember that it is Him we seek. Biblical Christianity isn’t concerned with empty religion, rules, rituals, or requirements. It is chiefly concerned with a relationship. One has said, “Christianity is not an ethic whereby if we keep the Ten Commandments, we are good Christians. Christianity is not a philosophy whereby if we think a certain way, we are good Christians. Christianity is not a religion whereby if we do certain religious rituals, we are good Christians. No. Christianity is the miracle of a changed heart and a personal relationship with the living God.”²

These things are important for the people of God living in the twenty-first century world. As society becomes more complex, and as corruption increases upon the Earth, the presence of God is the only hope of fallen and unredeemed humanity. The church will not impact society by championing the paradigms and programs of man. The power of the flesh cannot enact any change within human souls. The presence and power of God is what’s needed. William Carey, pioneer missionary to India, was aware of such things. He once declared, “Without the Holy Spirit nothing effectual can be done anywhere, or under any circumstances.” May the spirit of King David and William Carey live on in modern Christians who fervently seek the presence of the Lord!

¹ McKim, 13.

² Stortz, Rodney. *Daniel: The Triumph of God’s Kingdom*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 45.