

## DESIRES OF THE HEART

***“Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”***

Psalm 37:4

At twilight on a picture-perfect afternoon I returned from a walk down by the big timber and a reclaimed pond where deer, raccoons, opossums, bob cats, skunks and other critters from the woods and fields often come for water. The landscape around me was far different from what I remembered as a youth. I walked through a lane under the canopy of mature cedar trees that had sprung up long ago along wire fences that funneled livestock from the barns to pasture land that now was covered with young timber.

I looked to my left at young pine trees in neat alignment where as a child and youth I had spent long weary days working in the cotton fields. Where the pine trees now stood, I had trudged down row after row with a hoe digging out weeds and grass from among the young plants under the broiling Alabama summer sun. In the fall I had dragged a pick sack over the white fields snatching the opened bolls as the chill of winter drew near. But there was a latent dream of a place of refuge and rest not knowing that one day that dream would come true.

To my right, where I had hauled hay in the sweltering heat, young oaks were beginning to bear acorns providing food for squirrels, deer and small animals that scurried among the fallen leaves. A refuge was provided for rabbits in which to hide from the coyotes in the wild privet that blanketed much of the ground. Birds were finding choice places for their nests in spreading branches.

I realized my emotional connection to these acres reached far back into my childhood and adolescent years for in them I had found a sense of security. Educational pursuits and evolving ministry had called me away, but I had returned to them for a few hours wherever I could. They had provided a rest for me when the cares and burdens of life weighed me down. When my father had determined to sell the land Effie and I had scrapped together all our resources for its purchase not sure at the time how the property would be used, only that I had no intentions of farming it.

Slowly the nature of the landscape had evolved as seedlings were set out and the few bare acres remaining around the house were allowed to grown into a hayfield only mowed once or twice a year. When time for retirement came we had been able to build an abode that would shelter us in our latter years.

As I neared the house a light had been shining through the sunroom windows of Effie's dream house. I could see her as she sat in our double recliner which had been my gift on the golden anniversary of our wedding. Unexpectedly another picture flashed across the screen of memory in which I saw a young girl with a captivating smile who with her family had come down from Cincinnati to visit relatives in the community. That smile had planted the seed of a dream in a young boy that seemed improbable of ever becoming reality but it was silently cherished through his adolescence into young adulthood.

Through a series of God directed events that dream did become a reality. I looked again toward the light in the window and the profile of Effie and as always my heart was warmed as I remember our shared history. For many years we had served together in various forms of Christian service. She was the joy of my life; the fulfillment of my greatest desire. Spontaneously the thought had come to mind that whatever the future held for us I would be eternally grateful for our years together.

My life had taken many twists and turns after leaving the farm at age seventeen to go out into an unclear future. My faith had developed slowly from those early days as I sought to find my place in ministry. In difficult times I had been tempted to turn aside from the path that was before me. I had struggled with disappointments in my journey, but faith had eventually prevailed and I had delighted in the providence of God and His grace.

My thoughts turned to the words of faith and encouragement written by David as he faced the last years of his life. At a young age he had been called away from an idyllic shepherd's life when God had rejected King Saul and commanded Samuel to seek his desired replacement to lead his people. In short order David found himself thrust into the spotlight of a nation in great turmoil. Armed only with faith and confidence in God he went forth to defeat Goliath and to withstand the attempts upon his life by the deposed king. Over the years he had faced many trials and tribulations originating from his kingdom position and the division and turmoil in his family. Yet through it all he trusted in the leadership and goodness of God.

In Psalms 37 recorded in his old age David recounted the tenets of faith that had been his foundation for life and had provided strength when faced with many adversarial forces and difficult days. After a period of moral failure he had found God's grace sufficient for his sins by responding to his prayer of confession with complete forgiveness (Chapter 51).

According to his testimony faith is the answer to anxiety over situations of the present and fears over the future. His words teach us that faith is not a step but a journey. It is not authenticated by a single event or a series of selected events. Faith is evidenced by

the attitude that is the fruit of trust in the promises of God unto these who love and follow his teachings. I list below four tenets of David's faith.

- 1. Trust in the Lord.**
- 2. Delight thyself also in the Lord.**
- 3. Commit thy way unto the Lord.**
- 4. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him.**

David's trust in the goodness of God; his delight in the ways of God and his commitment to walk in those ways had given him the patience to allow God to perform his work of grace in his heart and in his life. Such faith is always rewarded.

In due time I received the greatest desires of my heart. I have been blessed.