

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 27

Opening Prayer

Read Psalm 27

Overview

Psalm 27 provides a nice meditation for anyone going through difficulties. It begins with the psalmist giving perspective to his difficulties by remembering why he should have confidence and hope. His confidence begins by putting those difficulties alongside the power and love of the Lord in verses 1-3. Then in verses 4-6 he gives further hope as imagines himself in the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle/temple with the end result of hope that he sings (27:6). Yet returning to his difficulties in verses 7-12, he is now encouraged and offers them up as prayers before the Lord. Finally verses 13 and 14 exhort those hearing the psalm to the same confidence and hope by waiting for the Lord.

Psalm 27 shows us that while we are in this life, faith and fear will live side by side. We can and should have faith that God will deliver us, nevertheless as we live this life fear is a very real part of our experience. Psalm 27 gives meditation and voice to we who live in the midst of difficulties, who have faith but also fear.

Structure/Outline

- I. Reflecting on God gives hope – 27:1-6
 - a. Putting difficulties in perspective – 27:1-3
 - b. Meditating on being in God’s presence for confidence – 27:4-6
- II. Driven back to reality but offering reality as prayer – 27:7-12
- III. Exhortation for others who may be facing difficulties – 27:13-14

Reflecting on God gives hope – Putting difficulties in perspective – 27:1-3

:1 - This verse asks the rhetorical questions that allow us to gain perspective on our difficulties. When compared to the Lord, *whom shall I fear* and *whom shall I dread?* The non-spoken but obvious answer to those questions is no one. The Lord is more powerful than anything here that may cause me fear.

Read Luke 12:5

Who alone does Jesus wish for us to fear?

- Both the idea of the Lord as a light and the Lord as a defense/refuge are almost formulaic in the Old Testament.¹

What is the value of having formulaic phrases of faith?

What are some that you know?

- A college classmate of mine has given us good perspective on the difficulties of the pandemic:

While I'm all for masks and social distancing, we should reflect on the fact that this is the first pandemic in the post-Christian and largely secular west. Previously, when plague came around, it was understood to happen under the auspices of God. People might fast and pray in the hope for mercy from an angry God. They might recognize that this was a bad thing but that it was a loving discipline from a merciful Father. In any case, the disease wasn't the biggest thing in the world. God was recognized as ruling over all. Death wasn't the worst thing that could happen to you -- hell was. There was the hope and, for some, the bold assurance that if one died in faith there was a better world dawning on you. People did not grieve as those who had no hope. I believe our pandemic is a very serious matter, but it is not eternally serious. It is not everlasting darkness. In Christ, there is always a new day which dawns. Let us pray for our neighbors who are facing this without him that the Spirit of God may reveal to them the gracious promises of God through the Gospel of Christ. All who trust in the power of his sacrificial death on our behalf have the full forgiveness of all their sins. By the power of his resurrection, his people, too, shall rise to life eternal.

Professor Charles Schultz

- :2-3 - David continues to gather perspective on his present troubles by a remembrance of what happened before in verse 2 which leads to the confidence expressed in verse 3. By reflecting on what God has done before when we have experienced troubles in our life, we gain confidence for what God will do now.

¹ Isaiah 2:5; 5:20, 30; 8:22-9:1; Amos 5:18; Micah 7:8 and many other places

Reflecting on God gives hope – Meditating on Being in God’s Presence For Confidence – 27:4-6

:4-5 - Now David allows himself to look even further and find hope and confidence. Not just that the Lord would bring him past these current difficulties, but that there will be a time when he will “dwell” in the presence of the Lord. For an Old Testament saint to dwell in the presence of the Lord meant to be in the tabernacle or temple.² The temple was not built yet in David’s day so he could have in mind the tent (27:5) where the Ark of the Covenant was kept.

- David imagines two things that will be of immense comfort to him should he be able to be in the Lord’s presence:
 1. He would gaze on “the beauty of the Lord”.
 2. He would meditate/inquire there.
- In the New Testament, the immediate presence of the Lord and the hope of the eternal presence of the Lord are given to us by God to encourage us. **Read Matthew 28:20; John 14:1-3**

How does Christ’s promise of His ongoing presence comfort us?

How does the promise of our eternal presence with Him comfort us?³

- “He will lift me up on a rock” – Though being lifted to a visible position seems to be in contradiction to the previous line about being hidden, the implication is that God in His protecting of us will place us on a solid foundation.

:6 - As David imagines his deliverance and being in the presence of the Lord, he also allows himself to be taken to the final result of that deliverance and presence: worship and singing. The duplication in this verse emphasizes the joy of that picture: “I will *sing*, yes, I will *sing praises* to the Lord.”

What is the purpose of singing in our worship?

Is the singing necessary to worship?

- David may wish to remain in the place of God’s presence, the tabernacle/tent, but he must return to reality.

Read Matthew 17:4

What did Peter want to do?

Why can’t life just be the mountain top experience of the Lord’s presence?

² In these verses the place of the Lord is expressed in four different ways: (1) “house of the Lord”; (2) “His temple”; (3) “His tabernacle”; (4) “His tent”

³ See also the picture of our life in heaven given in Revelation 4 and 5 as a source of comfort

Driven Back to Reality But Offering Reality as Prayer – 27:7-12

- :7-8 - David is brought out of his dreaming of what it will be like to be in God's presence and his earthly difficulties remain, so he offers them up in prayer. Asking God to hear his voice and be gracious.
- We have talked before about the face of the Lord and its perspective towards or away from one as favor or disfavor. David makes it clear that he seeks the Lord's face, that is that he seeks God to be gracious to him. Verse 8 even seems to indicate that he reminds himself to seek the Lord's face: "*Seek My face*", *my heart said to You, "Your face, O Lord, I shall seek."* Additionally, recall that the Benediction blesses with the words: "may the Lord make His face to shine upon you".
- :9-10 - David actually feels a sense of abandonment by people who he thought he could rely on here in this life and so begs the Lord not to abandon him also. Whether verse 10 reflects a reality that David felt or experienced in this life or is set up as a conditional of what might happen, we don't know. The main point of the verse is that even when earthly helpers fail, God never will!

Read Deuteronomy 31:6 (Hebrews 13:5)

What does the Lord promise here?

- This same idea is expressed in the opening verse of Abide with Me:
*Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When **other helpers fail** and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me. (LSB #878)*
- :11-12 – Here David's prayer is more specific. He wants to be delivered from temptations to stray(verse 11) and from those who speak falsely against him(verse 12). David's foes apparently put up temptations before him that may cause him to forget the way of the Lord in verse 11.
- How does the world cause us to forget the way of the Lord at times?
How does the Lord teach us His way and remind us of it?
What can we do about people who speak falsely about us and make false accusations about things we have done or said?*

Exhortation For Others who May Be Facing Difficulties – 27:13-14

- :13 - This verse in the Hebrew is actually an unfinished sentence, though most English translations complete it. In the Hebrew it would literally read: *had I not believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.....*

Like the rhetorical questions that begin the psalm, this verse is an opportunity for the reader or hearer to supply the answer. Something like this: *had I not believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living..... then I would have despaired.* (Or something along those lines.) We are left to complete the sentence to show what happens when we don't trust and look to the goodness of the Lord.

:14 - This final exhortation is a call to know that the Lord answers in His time and in His way – wait! Here is a verse truly worthy of memorization to be used in times of despair. It answers our deepest questions of fear:

*When will the pandemic end? **Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord.***

*When will there be peace? **Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord.***

When will the wildfires be under control? When will my loneliness end? When will I get out of these financial difficulties? Etc.

Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord.

Summary

Psalm 27 gives us a medium through which to see our difficulties and put them into perspective, but it also encourages us to bring them to the Lord. It takes faith and fear, hope and despair, courage and trepidation and allows them to live side by side in the Christian in this life. Yet, its final call is trust and reliance on the Lord!

Closing Prayer