

## **Psalm 27 – Help for today, hope for tomorrow**

How are you feeling today? Happy? Sad? Worried? Calm? Full of joy? Full of despair? How about yesterday? Did you wake up feeling the same way yesterday? What about last week? Last year?

I would say that most of us feel differently from day to day. Our moods change, the world moves so quickly nowadays, things happen so quickly that our feelings can alter very easily, before we even realise it.

Here in the book of Psalms we have a collection of songs and verse, written by normal believers in God. They describe everyday experiences, they tell of feelings commonly experienced by all of us, they are so true to life. We can so easily identify with the psalmists as they write these things down. We go through the different moods and feelings with them. We sometimes find the psalmist full of joy, praising God, worshipping Him, singing and making music in thankfulness. But at other times we see him in the depths of despair, crying out to God for help in times of need. Nothing is hidden here. We find the psalmist close to his God, we also find him feeling miles apart from his God. The Christian experience is described in the book of Psalms in its entirety – warts and all, the good and the bad times.

Because of this, the Psalms are a great encouragement to the Christian, don't you agree? They show us that it is to be **expected** that we won't be feeling on top of the world all the time – and it's **normal** for the Christian to feel like that in this life. God's word is so true to life, so honest. The **important** thing is, that no matter what our feelings and experiences as Christians, God still loves us, he wants us to stay close to him, depend upon him, desire him.

I start each day by reading a Psalm, and I've found great help through them, they remind me of my relationship with my God, the God of all creation, the God who sent His only Son to die on a Cross so that I might be **able** to know Him.

**David** knew this same God. This Psalm 27 is one of over 70 Psalms that he wrote and that are recorded here for building our faith in God. David, you remember, was the shepherd boy chosen by God to be king. He was the one who slew Goliath. He was Jesus' ancestor. A great man. In Acts we read that God himself refers to David as '*a man after my own heart.*' All of us could aspire to be a man like David.

But ‘hang on a minute!’ I hear you cry. Wasn’t this the same David who committed adultery with Bathsheba? Didn’t he then arrange her husband’s murder? How can **he** be a man we could all aspire to be like? There but for the grace of God go I. David was a man, prone to sin like all of us – we too are tempted, we too commit sin. But David’s reaction to his sin was to turn to God in confession and repentance. There is no hiding of David’s weaknesses and failures in God’s word – he was a man just like us, we can identify with him, surely.

In his psalms he often writes of the privilege of belonging to God; he is keen to tell of how he has proved God’s goodness, and as he passes this on to us, we learn how to live lives which please and honour God.

We can follow David through his experiences; as he trusts God he finds God to be good and faithful. In times of distress, we see him turn to God in prayer, and we see God answering his prayers.

Let’s look together then at this Psalm 27. We’re going to see the psalmist’s dependence upon God, his desire to be close to his God, and his confidence in God’s presence with him. David’s dependence upon God, his desire to walk closely with God, and his confidence that God will be with him forever.

Firstly then, the psalmist’s **dependence upon God**.

We read in verse 1 *“The Lord is my light and my salvation”* – *“The Lord is my light and my salvation”*.

As I said to the children earlier, when I was a teenager in Yorkshire, I went with a group from my church up to the Yorkshire Moors to do this walk from the west side of the moors to the east, 42 miles. We set off at 10 at night and walked through the night, and I finished the walk at quarter past 4 the next afternoon. Up on the moors, on top of those hills, of course there were no lights apart from our torches. It was pretty scary, I can tell you. Pitch black all round. Total darkness.

I’m sure you’ve heard the story of the foolish man who went up onto the hills one afternoon in fine weather, so didn’t take a compass, or even a map. As time went on, he realised he was lost, and night was drawing in. It began to get dark, and he realised he wasn’t going to get down off the hills before it became totally black.

He had an idea – he thought “if I follow a wall, surely eventually it will bring me down into the valley”. So in order to make sure he was near the wall, he picked up a stick and pulled it along the wall. Things were going fine, walking along in pitch black, until he suddenly realised that he could no longer feel the wall with his stick. He brought the stick in front of him – he couldn’t feel the ground. Doing the same to his left, there was nothing there either. **Now** what should he do? The only ground he could feel was under his feet, so he had to sit down and wait for the morning. Morning came, the sun came up. He looked around. He was in a field, the wall nearby, but he was holding a stick that had broken!

Darkness, lack of light makes us feel lost. We can’t do without light. We are so dependent upon it. We take light for granted, don’t we? We know the sun provides light during the day, and we have artificial light in our homes at night time. We need light and when it’s taken away – say there was a power cut – we’re lost without it. We fumble around in the dark, trying not to stumble over furniture, and we quickly become disorientated. We need light as much as we need food and drink

David says “*The Lord is my light*”. As we depend upon the sun for light, as we depend upon our light bulbs for light at night, to enable us to do everyday things, so David is dependent upon God, his light, to enable him to live a life that is right before God. David needs God. He is totally dependent upon him – otherwise he would go astray, otherwise he would get lost. Without God David would not be able to go on – he would be like the man on the top of that hill, not knowing which way to go.

“*The Lord is my light and my salvation*”, he says. “*The Lord is the stronghold of my life*”. David finds security and safety in God. We read of his enemies attacking him, we read of evil men advancing and wanting to devour his flesh in verse 2, an army besieging him, war breaking out against him in verse 3, but he says “*The Lord is my light and my salvation, the stronghold of my life.*”

We see David’s strong faith. In times where humanly speaking he is weak, he is strong because God is his salvation and stronghold. So he can say “*of whom shall I be afraid? My heart will not fear*”. As king of Israel, king of God’s people, there are **many** seeking his downfall, many enemies all around him, but David remembers the message from the prophet Nathan that we find in 2 Samuel chapter 7:

*“This is what the Lord Almighty says; ‘I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from you. ... Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.’”* God made an agreement with David and his successors, God **promised** to stand by them in their troubles and prosper their reigns, if they reigned on his behalf.

The Lord is David’s light, his salvation, his stronghold – who shall he fear? He fears no-one. David with God on his side will have the victory every time. Even if his family desert him, he knows his God will not. David knows he is dependent upon God for his very life.

In John’s gospel chapter 15 Jesus refers to the Christian life as being like a vine and its branches: *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”*

Isn’t it easy to forget that we are dependent upon God for everything – for our very **lives**. Don’t we often take our blessings in this life for granted? Don’t we often try to do things using our own light, thinking that we are strong enough, thinking that we are secure, that we cannot fall. We can’t afford to do that, our confidence in ourselves is misplaced. David recognised – and we must recognise too – that we are totally dependent upon God. Without him we are lost, in the dark, vulnerable.

Jesus said *“I am the light of the world”* – we need his light.

Jesus said *“I am the Bread of Life – he who comes to me shall not hunger.”* We need him to sustain us.

Jesus said *“Whoever drinks the water I give him, will never thirst.”*

We cannot live fulfilled lives without recognising our dependence on God. We need him. The psalmist’s dependence on God.

Let’s move on. **Secondly, the psalmist’s desire.** Verse 4 *“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.”*

When I was a little boy I wanted to be a train driver. When I was in my early teens, I wanted to be a footballer. When I'd got a job in my mid twenties, I wanted to get married and have children. Now I want to retire!

If someone were to say that they could grant you one wish – what you wish for? Be honest – with yourself at least, I'm not going to ask you to shout it out. Perhaps you'd wish for good health, for yourself or your family. Perhaps you'd wish for greater wealth – to be more secure financially. Or perhaps you'd wish for better relationships with family or friends. Perhaps you'd wish for a better environment for everyone to live in. All, I suppose, to some extent important in today's society. What would be your greatest desire?

Someone once said, "We often desire most what we ought not to have."

What is **David's** greatest desire? "*One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*"

David earnestly prays to God that he may dwell in the house of the Lord – that is that he may be kept close to God all the days of his life. He wants to be in constant communion with God, he wants to be so close to him that he can **speak** to him, and know God listening to **him**. He wants to be able to worship him, to sing and make music to him. His greatest desire is to be so close to God that he can gaze upon his face, "*gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.*" David wrote in Psalm 4 "*Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord.*"

The light of God's favour and mercy are what David desires. He longs to be close to God. If he could only ask one thing, this is it, to know something of the beauty of God, his holiness, his love, his mercy, every day.

The apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians verses 21-23: "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.*" Paul feels close to God in serving him in life, but he desires to be **closer** to his Saviour, and to be with him in heaven after his death. "*This is what I seek; to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*"



How about **us**? Is it our greatest desire to know the closeness of God every day? Do we start off each morning praying that we may dwell in the house of the Lord every day, that we may gaze upon his beauty? Do **we** pray that we will know God close to us, so close we can **feel** his presence?

How can we know this? What does David say he has to do to enable this to happen? Verse 8: *“My heart says of you, ‘Seek his face!’ Your face, Lord, I will seek.”* David realises that **he has a responsibility** to seek his Lord. There’s no point just waiting for something to happen. You can’t just sit around and hope that God will force his way into your life and have his way with you. God **will** draw you closer to himself, but it also requires **you**, it also requires **us** to put ourselves out to seek him.

In verse 11 we read, *“Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.”* David sees that he needs to be taught God’s way. As he goes through life, he needs to learn God’s way. He is only human – he is still tempted by sin, he still makes mistakes. But he wants to be taught God’s way. His enemies, his oppressors are ready to pounce on him if he takes a wrong turn. So he asks that God will make his path straight, so there is less chance of him falling off.

David writes in Psalm 25: 4-5, *“Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long.”*

Oh how we need God to teach us his ways, how we need to get to know his revealed will for us in his Word. How we need to be close to him so that we can talk to him and he can teach us, lead us, guide us in his truth. How we need to spend time with him in prayer, developing that close relationship. Is this your greatest desire? Is it my greatest desire?

*“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.”* The Psalmist’s greatest desire is to be close to God.

We’ve seen David’s dependence on God, his desire to be close to God. Thirdly, we see here **the Psalmist’s confidence in God**.

In verse 13 of Psalm 27 we read, *“I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”*

As someone once said, “Security is not the absence of danger, but the presence of God, no matter what the danger.”

Despite his enemies besieging him, despite their attacks, **even then** David will be confident. “*Even then will I be confident*”, verse 3. Even when his family and friends desert him, the Lord will not desert him, verse 10. Even if war breaks out around him, David is **confident** that he will continue to see the goodness of his God all the days of his life.

In Psalm 23 we read those well known verses, “*Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*” David’s confidence and trust is in his Lord. God’s true goodness and love will accompany him all the days of his life. What a wonderful thought – to be so secure in that thought – like the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans – that nothing, absolutely nothing in all creation, can separate him, can separate the Christian, can separate **us** from the love of God that is Christ Jesus our Lord.

The reference in verse 13 of “*in the land of the living*” here means “the present time, the present life” – so David is confident that he will continue to see the goodness of the Lord in his life. But Matthew Henry in his commentary adds an interesting thought here, that the land of the living can only **fully** refer to heaven. The land of the living - the land where only those who know the true Way, Truth and the Life – that is Jesus - are present with their creator God. This life on earth is the land of the dying, look around you, this is the land of the dying. Jesus said in John:10, “*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*” Those who are resting in the salvation which Jesus won on the Cross and in his resurrection – **they** are the ones who will populate the land of the living.

David is confident that he will see the goodness of God in the land of the living – now and into eternity. This gives him strength. This gives him hope. This gives him victory over the enemies all around him.

David’s future is assured. He is confident that he will enjoy the goodness and love of God forever. If we know God, if we have put our trust in the sacrifice of Jesus on that cross for our sins, if we depend upon God for our light and salvation, then we also can live lives of confidence, of hope, because we can say with David “*Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*”

We have seen that David's life depends fully upon the presence of God; his greatest desire is to live close to God; and that he is confident that God will be with him in this life and into eternity.

Here is a man described by God as 'a man after my own heart.' How do we shape up? How much do we depend and rely upon our God? Do we desire above all other things to be close to God? Are we living in the confidence that nothing can separate us from the love of God until that day when we shall see God face to face in heaven?

We started off by reading "*The Lord is my Light and my Salvation.*" One day we won't depend upon the sun for our light – we read in Isaiah chapter 60, "*The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light.*"

And at the end of the book of Revelation we read, "*They (God's people) will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*"

*"The Lord is our Light and Salvation."*

You are my Anchor.

Read Ephesians 3:17b-21