

## **Psalm 27** **“The Lord’s Face”**

### **Introduction**

- We've been fighting against the spread of the corona virus for over a year and a half now. Telework, working from home, has become the norm. I hear some say without commute time and interruptions, they can get more done. But at the same time it's harder to stay motivated, and communication is difficult.
- According to recent statistics, when asked "Do you think the lack of communication among employees is an obstacle to work?" 69% of respondents answered "strongly agree" and 25% answered "somewhat agree". 94% of respondents were dissatisfied with the lack of "speedy information sharing," saying it interfered with their ability to "casually consult and ask questions during work" and causes a lot of stress.
- You could probably say we're experiencing something similar at church. It is wonderful that we can worship and have community groups online. The kids and youth are giving it their best. However, when we communicate face to face, we gain a deeper understanding and empathy, and we richly experience the Word and the presence of God.

Today's scripture passage refers to the "face" of the Lord. Just as we need face-to-face intimacy and physical contact in our work and relationships, God wants face-to-face intimacy with us. We need it, too. Today, let's read Psalm 27. Let's see what encouragement and hope we can find in the face of the Lord.

### **Psalm 27**

- <sup>1</sup> The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- <sup>2</sup> When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes,  
it is they who stumble and fall.
- <sup>3</sup> Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;  
though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.
- <sup>4</sup> One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after:  
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 inquire in his temple.
- <sup>5</sup> For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.
- <sup>6</sup> And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me,  
and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.
- <sup>7</sup> Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!
- <sup>8</sup> You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, Lord, do I seek."
- <sup>9</sup> Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger,  
O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!
- <sup>10</sup> For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.
- <sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.
- <sup>12</sup> Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they breathe out violence.
- <sup>13</sup> I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!
- <sup>14</sup> Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

Let's look at three points from today's scripture passage: trust, worship, and prayer to the God who gives Himself to us face to face. First, knowing who God is enables us to trust in Him at all times, and produces inner strength and hope.

•Secondly, let's put the focus, the center, the focal point of our hearts and lives on our relationship with God. When the priorities of our lives are placed on something far greater and more beautiful than ourselves, then we gain a true purpose in life.

•And thirdly, let's pray looking forward to God's promises for the future. Prayer is the source of our hope. The One who hears our prayers will never abandon us.

## 1. Trust

- Psalm 27 starts with a bold statement. As David turns the eyes of his heart to God, he says, "whom shall I fear?" "of whom shall I be afraid?" Especially during this Covid time full of frustration, this is the kind of secure heart we want to have. You could call it the ideal picture of faith in God.

*27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

- Of course, David knew from personal experience that life is full of danger and suffering. He is aware of the fact that he will have to suffer. That is why he is trying to kindle his faith in advance. It's easy to get caught up in anxiety and fear, so first (in the first half of the Psalm) he expresses trust and faith. In the second half of the Psalm, from verse 7 onward, we can see that the psalmist is in an extremely difficult situation and is praying.
- In other words, as a person who knows his own weaknesses, because he has had the experience of wallowing in suffering, it has stirred up his trust in God. He has a clear picture of who the Lord God is and what we can expect from Him. It reveals the secret of how we can trust in Him and not be afraid.
  - In that sense, David is demonstrating here (if a bit exaggerated) a biblical worldview/view of life. In fact, everyone subconsciously has a worldview of how they view the world and life. Al Walters defines it as "a comprehensive framework of basic beliefs that people have about things; patterns that serve as guidelines for living."
  - For example, many people believe that there is no God, that the world is an accident and will eventually die, and that our lives are empty, ending in death. Therefore, they believe that we have to do our best by ourselves. David, on the other hand, sees God as light, Creator of everything, and that the world is protected by His love and power. Therefore, it becomes very important to know what kind of relationship we have with this God of light.
- "My light", "my salvation", "stronghold of my life", refers to God himself. In particular, the God who is referred to as "light" is the one who created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. He is like a guardian who gives life to each one of us and is constantly doing what is best for us. The phrase "my light" reminds me of the creation story in the beginning of the Bible.

*Genesis 1:3-4*

*"And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness."*

- "When God declares, "Let there be light" light is created and all things are illuminated by God's light. Darkness is erased. According to the Bible, "darkness"

means chaos, evil, confusion, and despair. In other words, God, the Light, illuminates our lives, warms our hearts, and encourages us so that we can be delivered from evil, disorder, and all suffering. God can remake even your environment and circumstances.

- The description in verse 2 as if he were attacked by a fierce and dangerous animal and bitten by a wild beast is probably due to David's background and actual experience as a shepherd. The use of warlike expressions in verse 3 also indicates that he walked through the valley of death as a warrior, fighting against his enemies and in mortal danger. In such a crisis, "the Lord is my light"; God is the one who will rescue you.
- God who is light does not only warm and encourage you. He is also fire. The God who appeared to Moses, who revealed Himself to Israel, and who came as a man, is also fire. He is the fire that consumes the wicked and burns up the heart of unbelief and disobedience. He is the fire that burns away the wicked, and burns up the unbelieving and disobedient hearts. He cleanses your unsure heart and transforms you into a person who trusts in the Lord.

## 2. Worship: The Presence of God

- David portrays God in this Psalm as one who is very close to him. He sings passionately about meeting and spending time with God as a joy that makes his heart sing.

*27:4 "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: 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 inquire in his temple."*

- This is based on the experience of spending time with God in worship, but the "beauty and splendor" David is referring to is not about the building. It is about God Himself. He is praising the beautiful, great, and glorious God who loves David, protects him, rescues him, supports him, and walks with him.
  - It can be compared to a gift given by a lover and the lover himself. No matter how good the gift is, it is not better than the lover. The lover himself is far superior. David rejoices in the encounter with God and in God Himself, rather than in the blessings, security, and safety that God provides.
- What a comfort it must have been for David, having experienced a time of war, to come away from the battlefield to the tabernacle (sanctuary) to sing praises and pray. It must have been a taste of safety, a time of having his heart cleansed, filled with renewed enthusiasm and joy.

*27:5 "For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock. 6 And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord."*

- How about you? Everyday life is busy. You have to work under pressure; it can feel like a battle. You can't cut corners on housework or childcare. Even though you love your children, you are exhausted. Are you escaping that stressful environment for a moment and spending this time with our beautiful Lord?
- Spending time with God in this way is, according to David, the "one thing" - the one and only, irreplaceable priority. In verse 5, he says, "he will conceal me under

the cover of his tent". The "cover of his tent" probably refers to the innermost part of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, which is partitioned off by a thick curtain.

- However, even kings were not allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest was allowed to enter once a year. This was to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins of all the people. In other words, the beauty of the Lord that David feels comfort and joy in, and the praises he sings to the Lord, ultimately refer to the sacrifice of Christ's love.
- It is as if David had been invited by God to the Holy of Holies, where he was treated tenderly and abundantly showered with the forgiveness and love that Christ accomplished. God Himself (Christ) took on the hostility, the opposition, the ridicule, the suffering, and finally even our sins that we deserve to bear.
  - A pastor friend of mine is a prison chaplain. He preaches the gospel message to inmates, teaches them the Bible, provides personal counseling, and supports them in their walk to restore their lives. However, when he first became a prison chaplain, he hesitated to tell the victims and their families (Kumamoto Prison, where he is in charge of, houses serious criminals) that "in Christ everyone is forgiven and everyone is loved."
  - However, he grew to boldly say that even if they are in prison, serving a sentence, and have to pay the penalty for their crimes, everyone is loved and forgiven in Christ. Those who accept this gospel have the Light shine in the darkness of their hearts; they meet God, experience forgiveness and love, and repent. They have a deep sense of peace and are able to face their sins and their problems head on. "Anyone can start their life over if they their heart has a place it belongs."
- Christ Himself is the sanctuary for the chaos of everyday life. He is our heart's home. Where battles and stresses and pressures continue, where we are driven by responsibilities and obligations, he is the neutral zone. With God, there is forgiveness, peace, joy, hope, and passion. Therefore, let us rejoice in the beauty of the Lord and face the challenge of life not with anxiety and fear, but with trust.

### 3. Prayer

- So please directly ask God your petitions and prayers. In verse 7, David pleads, "Hear me" "be gracious" and "answer me." In verse 9, he repeatedly cries out, this time praying that God will *not*: "Hide not" "don't turn me away" "don't cast me off" "forsake me not". Earnestly praying for God's help. What strikes me here is verse 8:

*"You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, Lord, do I seek." 9 Hide not your face from me."*

- In the Bible, the face of the Lord refers to the real and tangible presence of God Himself. It is a beautiful expression of God's presence with us, and of His mercy and love. In the famous blessing of Aaron, we read:

*Number 6:24 "The Lord bless you and keep you; 25 the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; 26 the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."*

- Of course, there are times when God turns His face away and doesn't look towards us. That is, when we disobey and sin against God, He hates it and turns His face away. We are sinners from the start, deserving God's wrath and unable to see His face. That is why the prophets were afraid to look at the face of God. If

we do not perish in the light of the Lord's face, it is only because of God's mercy and grace.

- But how can we see the face of the Lord (which we cannot see with our eyes)? We are not actually told to "see" the face of the Lord here; it seems to carefully avoid that. We are told to "seek" His face. But how do we do that?
- Verse 8 is a mixture of the psalmist's words and God's words. The literal translation is "My heart says to you, 'seek my face'. O Lord! I will seek your face." The phrase "seek my face" is the word of God. Because the psalmist heard God's word encouraging people "seek my face," he vents to God, "You said to do this!"
- So David clings to this word of God and uses it as he seeks. "You have said, 'Seek my face,' and I will seek it. Therefore, I recall and meditate on the words of your encouragement and promise, "Seek ye my face". With gratitude and faith, I sincerely seek you and say to you: O Lord. I seek your face."
- Everyone, seek the face of the Lord through the Word. In the midst of sorrow and suffering, meditate on the promise of God's grace manifested in Christ, who is the very face of the Lord. As you remember the message of love for us in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the light of His face will shine on you and warm your heart. The light of His face will illuminate and warm your heart as you remember His message of love for us in His sacrifice on the cross. He will cleanse your heart of sin, lead you to repentance, and make your heart new.
- Many biblical scholars believe that David's affliction in verses 11-12 is the coup by his son Absalom. Of all things, Absalom had driven his father, King David, out of the capital city of Jerusalem and temporarily become king. David's sorrow and suffering: 2 Samuel 15:30

*"But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went."*

- But God will not forsake you. Since Christ gave Himself up for us, God makes us His children and will hold us as His own.
- Who does the face of the Lord shine in? Whose face should we seek to adore? The Bible calls Jesus the light of salvation.

*John 8:12:*

*"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world.*

*Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

- With Jesus as the light, we have hope, joy and confidence no matter what dangers we have to go through. Let's walk with God. Let's wait for God.

*Psalm 27:14 "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"*

### **(Prayer)**

Heavenly Father, We thank You from the bottom of our hearts that You turn Your face to us, speak to us, and love us. Illuminate our hearts with the light of your love. Blow away the darkness of sin. Transform us into people who trust in you. Lead us by the Holy Spirit to find your face in the Lord Jesus. Remove the covering of our sins that keep us from seeing You, that we all, with unveiled faces, would behold the glory of the Lord. Through the work of the Spirit transform us into Your image from one degree of glory to another. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.