

Do Not Be Afraid . . . Wait for the Lord!

Introduction

The Text

A. So we carry on in our “Do Not Be Afraid . . .” series, and this morning we come to [Psa 27](#) (a Psalm of David) . . .

¹The 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? ²When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. ³Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

⁴One 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. ⁵For 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. ⁶And 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.

⁷Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! ⁸You have said, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, Lord, do I seek.” ⁹Hide 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! ¹⁰For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in. ¹¹Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. ¹²Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence.

¹³I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! ¹⁴Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord! (Psa 27:1–14)

Coloring Between the Lines

A. Sometimes, in the Psalms, we are told of the particular occasion that stands behind them and gave rise to them, but here we are not given any such detail. We know it is a Psalm of David, but beyond that we are left only to conjecture.

B. And this ambiguity is actually part of the strength and pastoral helpfulness of the Psalms. For the ambiguity, it seems to me, allows us, even invites us, to come and fill the words in with color and details from our own situations and stories.

1. It’s as if God through David, with Psalms like these, hands us one of those coloring sheets your kids would get when you go out to dinner (if you even remember what that was like?!). There’s an outline, you can see the pattern and the overall shape of things, but you get to supply the color and particulars. It is a template that you can personalize and make your own.

C. In many ways this Psalm is like that. We know something of David’s trial here, but not much:

1. He speaks of “evildoers,” “adversaries,” and “foes” (v. 2).

2. He speaks of “enemies” (v. 11) and “false witnesses” (v. 12).
 3. They are circling like a pack of wild dogs—they “assail me to eat up my flesh,” (v. 2).
 4. Their “army” is encamped against him (v. 3).
 5. He is facing “war” (v. 3) and “violence” (v. 12).
 6. It would seem that even the closest of kin have abandoned him: “[M]y father and my mother have forsaken me” (v. 10).
- D. That’s as much as we know about the occasion. Here is all we can say about the circumstances that led to the composition of this Psalm. It’s a basic outline. And we’re invited to start coloring, personalizing, relating . . .
1. Anyone feel surrounded by enemies?
 2. Anyone feel like a pack of wild dogs is howling round about you?
 3. Anyone feel like you’ve been forsaken or forgotten?
 - a. I mean isn’t that language that can describe, at least metaphorically, a lot of what we’re feeling now with the Coronavirus and all this going on around us? It feels like we’re under attack—like our world is coming undone.
 - i. So while, no doubt, our situations are different from David’s, there is a certain commonality to it all as well. In some ways we’ve been there. In some ways we are there. We get it. We feel it.
- E. And what’s so helpful about this Psalm is we learn what God is up to in hard times like these—and begin to see then why we don’t need afraid of them, and how we should be responding to them.
1. So let me bring out from this Psalm six things we see God is up to in our trials: (1) He’s Driving Head-Knowledge Deeper into Our Hearts; (2) He’s Refining Our Devotion; (3) He’s Opening Us Up to Instruction; (4) He’s Galvanizing Our Hope; (5) He’s Leading Us to Jesus; and (6) He’s Calling Us to Wait.

(1) He’s Driving Head-Knowledge Deeper into Our Hearts

- A. It seems to me, there are just certain things we are never going to truly get of God until they’ve been burned into us, so to speak—until we’ve had them tested in trial, in the fire, and found them to be real and significant, and come out the other side the better for it.
1. There are things of God we know with our heads that we don’t really know fully with our hearts. The seemingly small space between the head and the heart can truly be one of the longest distances to travel.
 - a. “I know God is good and powerful and that He forgives and provides and will keep me and things . . . but do I really know it?”
- B. And what we see in this Psalm is that God, through hardship and trial, is taking David (and us) on this journey from head to heart. He’s driving these things deeper in. Let me show you where this comes out in particular . . .

1. The Psalm itself begins with these bold expressions of what David knows to be true of God: “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? ² When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. ³ Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.”
 2. And in v. 5 he carries on: “⁵ 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 . . . my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me . . .” “I’ll be full of joy and song.”
 3. But then, interestingly (and I wonder if you noticed this), it’s almost as if all of these things, one by one, are brought back into question suddenly as we make the transition there towards v. 7: “Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!” And v. 9: “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!”
- C. You see what is happening here, don’t you? David knows things of God, but God wants him to really know it. So this head-knowledge is being tested. And David’s heart isn’t quite there yet. Though he speaks with confidence, his prayers show he’s a bit shaky.
1. “Is it me You are hiding from my enemies” (v. 5); or is it You that is hiding . . . from me (v. 9)?”
 2. “Are you my light, my salvation, my stronghold, my shelter (vv. 1, 5); or are you angry with me and, even, against me (v. 9)?”
 3. “Are you lifting me high upon a rock (v. 5); or are you casting me off and away (v. 9)?”
 4. “Are you taking me in and accepting me (v. 10), or have you forsaken me (v. 9)?”
- D. You see?! There is this existential crisis taking place here—this tension between what David knows with his head and what he feels, and even fears, with his heart. And God is trying to bring the two together.
1. He wants the coin to drop, so to speak. He wants to turn the potential energy of our doctrine into the kinetic energy of doxology and practice. He wants what we know to merge with what we feel and live.
 - a. That’s what trials do. They drive this stuff deeper into us.
- E. Listen, you can’t really know God as light until you’ve met Him in the place of darkness. You can’t really know God as salvation until you’ve met Him in the place of deep distress. You can’t really know God as stronghold or shelter until you’ve met Him in the place of weakness and exposure. You can’t really know the fullness of God’s acceptance and welcome until you’ve grieved as one forsaken and rejected by men.
1. There is something to this. We can know God as such in theory, in principle, in concept, but it is only through trial that we come to know Him as such in experience and reality.
 - a. Examine your own testimonies, you will find it to be so. And with each trial, properly handled, we are taken deeper into these things, we get a little bit more

about who God is and what He's done, a little bit more of that head-knowledge is driven into our hearts.

F. Just a couple of nights ago, I got a sorry illustration of this tension and misalignment in my own life.

1. It was the end of a long day and I was doing the dishes, finishing things up, and I was anticipating getting done and getting to slow down and sit a bit with Megan, when all of a sudden the water starts to rise in the sink and stuff starts backing up. I knew what was going on, because this has happened before. I put too much old food down the drain at one time and the disposal couldn't keep up and the pipes were clogged. The only way to get things back in working order when this happens is to disassemble all the pipes under the sink and let the nasty food and throw-up looking stuff just spill out everywhere in a bucket and on me and the floor.
2. And, can I just say, I threw a tantrum. I mean, I threw a tantrum on par with one of Levi's. Just ridiculous. Like a little toddler. Pouting. Angry.

G. What's that all about?

1. Well, I'm not believing that God is my light and my salvation and my refuge in those moments. O sure, I can preach a sermon on that. I spent the day preparing to preach a sermon on that. I know all about it up here. But I wasn't believing it in here.
 - a. My refuge is getting all these chores done so I can go set up camp on the couch and relax. That's my salvation. "It's been a long day. I'm tired. I don't want this."
 - i. God was trying to drive what I know with my head deeper into my heart. He's exposing things that are misaligned and bringing them to a merger as I repent and re-root in Him.

H. And, I'm sure, this is the sort of thing that's happening right now with this pandemic.

1. It's easy to say you know God provides or keeps or cares, but it's another thing to trust Him for that even now. No doubt you've seen more anxiety and fear and, perhaps, anger or depression cropping up lately.
 - a. And God's trying to realign this stuff and drive what you claim to know deeper in to where you really know it. He wants you to be that stable saint we've been talking about.

(2) He's Refining Our Devotion

A. We've spoken of this idea before, but one of the things that God is doing in our hardships and trials is exposing our idols and unhealthy attachments to worldly stuff and He's refining, purifying our devotion to Him. He's bringing us back to a singleness of focus and passion.

- B. This is really what comes out especially in v. 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.”
1. The same idea shows up again down in v. 8: “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your face, Lord, do I seek.’”
- C. That’s it. David says there’s just “one thing” that I’m asking for, “one thing” that I seeking after, “one thing” that I want. What is it?
1. God! To dwell with Him. To behold Him. To know Him. To enjoy Him.
 - a. The language of “house” and “temple [palace]” (v. 4) and “tent” (v. 5) and “sacrifice” (v. 6), shows that he has in mind the idea of worship, of coming into the place of worship and giving thanks to God for all that He is and all that He has done.
 - i. But you get it, don’t you? There’s this singleness to it. There’s “one thing.”
- B. Before times of trial and hardship, if we’re honest, there’s often many things that we are after. But trials tend to trip up and expose our idols. They show the foolishness of it and we come to this fork in the road where we can either go down with the ship or we can push all our chips in on God.
1. It’s that place where the disciples are in John 6, when everyone is turning from Jesus because they’re realizing that following Him is going to be hard, and Jesus turns to them and asks “Do you want to go away as well?” (v. 67). But how does Peter respond? “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life . . .” (v. 68).
- C. God wants us to be safe. He wants all of our hearts, not because He’s selfish or a megalomaniac or something, but because He alone can protect and satisfy our hearts.
1. If you give your heart to anything else under the sun then you’re not safe anymore, you’re endangered, you’re in trouble. You tether your heart to your possessions or your job or your relationship and when that stuff goes as inevitably will, your heart and joy go with it.
 - a. But if God is your “one thing” then you cannot be touched. There will be a certain invincibility to your life. That’s what God wants for you. That’s what David is learning here.

(3) He’s Opening Us Up to Instruction

- A. This an interesting one. You see trials not only solidify for us that which we already know, they also open us up to things we didn’t know—they offer opportunity for new vistas of insight and revelation and application. They help us get out of ruts and things and open us to the idea of redirection and change.
- B. We see this there with David in v. 11 in particular: “Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path . . .”

1. You see, he's open to instruction. He may have thought he had his life figured out, but then trial comes, and you realize I don't know much. I need help. You show me what to do God.
- C. And I think for this moment that we're in as a church, as a nation, as a world right now, this is big.
1. God is wanting to humble us in some ways and open us up to instruction and reorientation and change. He's doing something here and we don't want to just get through this and get back to "normal" (whatever that means). We want to catch what He's saying and let Him redirect us. So we say with David: **"Teach me!"**
- D. I remember talking with some of you at our various prayer meetings and just saying, you know, I'm typically the kind of guy who's not into change. I get my systems and my plans and my way of doing things and I don't like it all messed up.
1. But this pandemic has just come in and made a wreck of everything, right? And this is hard, and it's stressful, but it's also opened us up.
 2. Now it's like, what's the big deal with change? What do we even have to hold onto anymore? Where does God want us to be? What does He want us to be doing? It's all on the table now. We're just open-handed and ready for Him to instruct and redirect.
 - a. And that's a good thing. That's what we should have all the time. A living surrender to Him, a permission slip that says you can do what you want with us. We're your servants, not the other way around.
- E. It's not lost on me that the last sermon I preached in person before all of this went crazy was the second part to our Week of Prayer, randomly placed near the end of February because I couldn't get my act together in January. That's not a coincidence. And that week was all about: "God, what do you want for us? What do you have for us? Where do you want us to go?" And then . . . this! He's moving. Not exactly what I thought. But He's moving.
- F. So everyone tuning in, I'd encourage you, think and pray hard about this. What is this season teaching you? What is God saying? What do you hope to take with you from this season into the years to come when, God willing, this has passed?
1. You should not be the same. God is wanting to open you to instruction here and change some things. Don't miss that!

(4) He's Galvanizing Our Hope

- A. As our knowledge of God is pressed deeper into our hearts, as our devotion is refined and He becomes more and more our "one thing," as we're open to Him redirecting and guiding us and we get a sense that He's doing just that . . . well, I'll you, we'll grow in confidence, in faith, and in hope.
1. And that's part of what God is doing in all of this. He's galvanizing our hope.

- B. I think that's really what we see happening for David there in v. 13: "I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" "I don't see it yet. I'm not sure how it's all going to play out. But I know how it's going to end. I have hope that it's going to go good for me."
1. As Paul writes in Rom 5: " ³we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame . . ." (vv. 3–5). Why? Well, simply put: Because God is going to come through.
- C. Now, we need to say something about this particular statement of hope that David makes here. I have heard it thrown around and I fear it is often misunderstood and misapplied: "I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" (v. 13).
1. "Does that mean that I shall not get sick with Coronavirus? Certainly it means I won't die of it! Does that mean that I shall not lose my job, or my money, or my family, or my health? Does it mean that even though things look bleak for me now, if I hold on in faith, I shall soon see prosperity coming my way . . . not just in heaven—we all know it'll be fine there—but in the here and now. David says 'in the land of the living.' That's where I want it. That's what God promises, does He not?! Far be it from me to not lay hold of that promise and claim it for myself—by faith, of course."
 - a. Well, I fear, if you take it this way, not only are you sadly misguided, but you shall be sorely disappointed.
 - i. And I dare say, you have fallen into the devil's trap.
- D. I wonder if you remember how the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness?
1. It was with a verse from a Psalm not unlike the one we are here considering. In Psa 91, the Psalmist writes: " ⁹Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—¹⁰no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. ¹¹For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. ¹²On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone" (vv. 9–12). That's sounds nice, doesn't it? It sounds like if you trust in God, you'll just skate through life.
 2. And so there in the wilderness, the devil, seeing that Jesus appreciates Scripture, decides to quote Scripture for himself. And he takes the latter part of these verses. He carries Jesus up to the pinnacle of the temple there in Jerusalem and challenges Him: "Throw yourself off from here, if you are the Son surely this promise will be kept for you. The angel's will cushion your fall. You won't even come away with a scrape or a bruise. That's what it says (cf. Luke 4:9-11)."
 3. He's trying to get Him to misinterpret and misapply—to think that God, if He loved Him and was true to His promise, would not let Him suffer at all. He's tempting Him to abandon the idea of the cross in the very place where Jesus in but a few years' time would be delivered over to it.

4. So what does Jesus do? He stands His ground. He doesn't cave in. He sees these promises in view of the whole scope of biblical revelation and the entirety of God's plan. He sees the timeline extending beyond this world and into eternity. And that makes all the difference.
- E. It is absolutely true that we shall see the goodness of God in the land of the living, but where is this land of the living?
1. Well, for sure, it is here in part, and we shall experience something of God's goodness in this place, no doubt—and we can all testify to that.
 2. But understood ultimately and (pardon me) eschatologically, the land of the living is the new heavens and new earth, the land that will be in the age to come where we shall rise never to die again, where there shall be no sorrow, no tears, no death. There we shall see in all fullness the goodness of God to us in Christ—that not one word from His mouth has been spoken in vain and not one promise from Him to us has failed.
 - a. Here is why Jesus would tell His own disciples in [Luke 21](#): “¹⁶ You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. ¹⁷ You will be hated by all for my name's sake. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your lives” (vv. 16–19).
 - b. Here is why Paul would write so scandalously, it would seem, in [Rom 8](#): “³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (vv. 35–37).
 - i. Which is it Paul?! Are we going to suffer and struggle and die? Or are we going to stand and conquer and live?! Yes!
- F. So Mercy Hill, set your hope not on the fact that your stocks will rise, or God will bring you a new job in time. That's not good enough. As Peter says: “[S]et your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” ([1 Pet 1:13](#)).

(5) He's Leading Us to Jesus

- A. In every Psalm there is this dynamic taking place between two parties. First, there is the one singing. And second, there is the one sung to. The former is, obviously, the place of man. The latter, the place of God. In the Psalms, man is singing to God.
- B. But here is what we must see. Jesus, as fully man and fully God, is always the essential fulfillment of both sides of this dynamic.
 1. On man's side is it not that Jesus could sing this out as the new and greater David?

- a. Was He not assailed by evildoers, adversaries, and foes—with an army of enemies encamped around Him, hurling false accusations, bloodthirsty, breathing out violence?
 - b. Is it not true that, as David says “my father and my mother have forsaken me” (v. 10), so too Jesus was abandoned by His closest friends. Only where David’s consolation was that God would surely not abandon him but would “take me in”—for Jesus on the cross even the Father did no such thing: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46).
 - c. And yet in it all He remained single-minded with pure devotion—one thing He lived for: to glorify His Father. That was His hope, that was His strength, that was His confidence.
 - d. And as He held on in faith, in His resurrection He did very much see the goodness of God in the land of the living!
2. And then, on God’s side, it is Jesus to whom we can sing all of this now too, right? He takes all that David knew of God and puts it in High Definition.
- a. Because of the gospel, because of the cross, He is my light, my salvation, my stronghold, my shelter. The wrath of God due my sin, He covers me, He takes it for me. The ancient enemies of Satan, sin, and death, they assail Him instead of me.
 - b. And it’s now by looking at Jesus that I gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. We behold “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6).
 - c. He is the fulfillment of that the tabernacle and temple stood for. He is my dwelling place. My acceptance with God. My hope for life eternal.
- C. It’s all about Him. Both sides of this Psalm. God is leading us to His Son! In our hardships, in our trials, Jesus is ever present. He is no stranger to them. He is no victim of them. He has experienced the sorrow and death and passed through to the joy and everlasting life.
1. And I suppose that’s why I’m inclined to hear the last words of this Psalm as coming, not so much from David, but from Jesus . . .

(6) He’s Calling Us to Wait

- A. The Psalm ends with this exhortation to take courage and wait for the Lord. And I think this is precisely what Jesus Himself would be saying to you and I in this moment we find ourselves in.
1. It’s hard. We are tempted to think God is against us, God has abandoned us, that He’s going to let us flounder and fall in all of this. Jesus knows all about it.
- a. But He’s passed through the shadow of the cross to the new day of the resurrection. And standing there on the far side of this broken world, with life eternal and glory incorruptible, at the right hand of the Father, He speaks to us: “Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” (v. 14).
- B. That’s really what I wanted to leave you with. Brother, sister, we don’t need to be afraid. God is up to good. He’s driving head-knowledge deeper into our hearts, He’s refining our devotion, He’s

opening us up to instruction, He's galvanizing our hope, He's leading us to Jesus . . . so wait for Him, don't give up on Him, hold out, stand firm, He will be there for you.

1. Do not be afraid . . . wait for the Lord!