

Psalm 27 • One thing have I asked of the Lord

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Psalm chapter 27. Every time we get into the Psalms, I feel like I'm learning a little bit more how to pray as I'm just looking at David, watching, listening how he responds to the Lord, how he speaks to the Lord. It's just so insightful. We're going to begin by reading through Psalm chapter 27. It's not terribly long. It goes like this,

"1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?...

2 When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they (who will) 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.

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.

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.

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!

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. 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!

10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.

11 Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

12 Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence.

13 I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

14 Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" (ESV)

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, Lord I feel sometimes when I read the Psalms of David like I'm standing on holy ground. And the communication with You is so rich and so poignant and so intimate.

Lord, help us to understand it and help us to apply it. We ask you Lord to use these words to really challenge our hearts to draw nearer to You.

We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen

The Psalms have a powerful way of making us gaze into a mirror that I think sometimes we would rather not look at. I got to tell you, I struggled today. I felt like I was kind of giving birth. I know, not even close. I get it. But, in a similar sort of a way, I really felt like I was struggling with this Psalm because I see in it, I see in the Psalms particularly, a mirror that casts back to me my own reflection. And honestly it makes me cringe what I see.

It's kind of that feeling you get when you see a piece of clothing in the catalog or online or even on a mannequin in the store. And you're thinking, wow, that looks really good! And then you go grab one in your size, take it into the dressing room, put it on, and you look in the mirror and you're like, that doesn't look anything like that thing made it look, sort of a thing.

And suddenly you realize that - that model of what you saw didn't really show you how good that those clothes looked. All they did was show you how bad you looked by comparison. That's what this Psalm does for me. But in a good way because I want to bring it to the Lord.

In this Psalm, David talks about his all-consuming passion or desire of his heart. And it is bound up in what is in verse 4. Look with me there in verse 4 once again.

It says, *"One thing have I asked of the Lord, (and) that will I (in fact) seek (or run) 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."* That's the verse I want you to be thinking about for just a little bit here.

David speaks of *"One thing."* He's one of those one thingers. There are people, you meet them and they're one thingers. They're not... They don't have a huge sort of a thing, stuff that they run after in life. They've just got one passion, sort of in their life.

And that's what David is expressing here. This one overriding passion. Not 2, not 3. He says there's one thing that I have asked of the Lord. The New King James Version (NKJV) says, *"One thing have I desired of the Lord."* And then he goes on to say, and I'm determined to have it. I'm going to seek after it with all of my heart.

And there are 3 things that are listed in this one thing.

To dwell with God all the days of his life. To always gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. He said, that's my request. I want to talk to God I want to dwell with Him. I want to gaze upon Him, and I want to inquire of Him in His presence. Notice he says, *"in his temple."* Keep in mind, the temple wasn't built. He's not talking about an earthly temple here. He's talking about the very presence of the Lord.

And, we read these, this verse, and his statements here, and it sounds to us like a beautiful piece of Biblical poetry. But we seem, I don't know, maybe I should just use the first person. I seem so entirely unable to relate to this level of devotion, and godly desire that says, there's one thing that I desire of the Lord. I mean, if God came to me and said, I'll give you one desire of your heart, I have to ask myself, what would I ask for?

Because I believe this is what David, this is, well, this is what David asked for. I don't think he ever got that question. His son did, believe it or not. What do you want? Ask it and I'll give it to you. (1 Kings 3:5) But if... had the Lord spoken to David in this manner, just, what is your desire? Hey I want to dwell with You. I want to behold You. I want to talk to You, always, in Your glorious presence.

That's what I want. I wonder sometimes what I would what I would answer the Lord if I were asked that question.

We read this and we wonder, why is it that David wanted so much these things above other earthly desires? Because in my life, I think about... I got a lot of other earthly desires that I know I probably shouldn't, or at least shouldn't take the place of the Lord. And I wonder sometimes, why was it that there was such a purity to David's desires? And assuming that is his true focus, and there's no reason not to, we're forced to admit sometimes that it's not ours. And we wonder why it's his.

But if we go back and read in the Bible about David's life, particularly, going through reading through 1st and 2nd Samuel, that sort of thing, we begin to learn and understand why David's focus was so singular toward the Lord. And it was because he suffered so much during his life. And we forget that. Sometimes we just think, that was David the king. He was cool, he was pretty cool, he was the king. Had all those wives. Boy, didn't that bring him heartache.

David went through a tremendous amount of suffering in his life. And he was quite literally pressed into sort of a seeking of a posture of seeking God. And I've seen it happen in my own life. And I've seen it happen in the lives of others when we are going through challenges. I mean scary challenges that keep you up at night sort of stuff. There is a place in our lives where you know we have the, that freedom I guess, or impetus the motive, motivation to press in on the Lord.

But not everybody does. Just because somebody's going through a hard time doesn't mean that they're going to press in on God. But I believe that is what was going on in David's life. That's what happened. The more struggles that he faced, the more he pressed in on God. The more he wanted to know God and so forth.

And it's always an unsettling thing when something happens in our lives that causes us to see and admit that the relationship that we had with God that was good enough yesterday, isn't good enough or deep enough for today. I don't know if you've been there. I trust most of you have. If you haven't, you will.

And that's a challenging realization to come to. In other words the resources of my walk with God may have been sufficient for what I was dealing with yesterday. But those resources are not going to get me through that level of relationship with God, that level of intimacy with God, that amount of prayer and devotion is not going to get me through now. This is... I have to step up. I

have to press in. I have to know him more, better. I have to find a deeper walk with God or I'm not going to make it.

But once again, even though I think that realization hit David pretty often, it's not necessarily the response of everyone to go through a difficult season and then respond by pressing in. But, in David's life, his suffering seemed to refine his desires in such a way that this just became this all-consuming passion for the Lord in his life. In other words, the Lord became his one thing.

We should get a T-shirt made up. I always think about getting a T-shirt. I don't think I've ever done it once. But mine would say, I want the Lord to be my one thing. It doesn't mean David was perfect. It doesn't even mean that he stopped struggling with fear. When he dealt with issues and stuff, it just means that his focus became refined.

Let me show you on the screen the New Testament sort of a clarification of this refining of one's attention. Paul writes,

Colossians 3:1-2 (NIV)

Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Now, what does Paul have in common with David? He was pressed into this posture, wasn't he? He was pressed through the circumstances of life into this place of making God his one thing. And so, his word to other people was, set your minds on that one thing; to focus your heart on the Lord and not to be focused on earthly things.

When you haven't been pressed through difficulties and trials, the things of this world seem inviting. And you even think to yourself, I don't know, I think I'd like to try that. Or I'd like to be involved in that. Or I'd like to experience that. And then when those things are brought into a dim focus because of the difficulties of suffering in this life and the realization that this life is over in a whisper, it causes an individual to become refined in their focus. And to make God their one thing.

As we go on in this Psalm, by raising his eyesight above the threat and fixing his gaze on the face of God, David was able to say what he did here in verse 5 and following. Look with me in your Bible.

"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. 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."

I want you to know that when David wrote these things, he was under attack. I want you to know that when these words came to him, he was struggling. He was challenged. And yet, because he had made God the one thing in his life, he was able to come back and say, but this is what the Lord's going to do. He's going to take care of me. And you can actually sing and make melody in your heart, even in the midst of some of the most challenging and trying circumstances of life. And that's when you know you've made God your one thing.

But that doesn't mean David, doesn't lay out his request to God. Verse 7, he says, hear me or, *"Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me..."* and so forth. I love verse 8 too. *"You have said, 'Seek my face.' My heart says to you, 'Your face, Lord, do I seek.'"* Wow! Just coming right back at God. You said, seek my face. I'm here. I am seeking your face.

His prayer in verse 9 is, *"Hide not your face from me."* Don't turn away. Don't be angry. You've been my help, so don't cast me off. Don't forsake me. Because You are my deliverer, he says. He calls Him *"God of my salvation"* which means, God of my deliverance.

And then he continues his prayer in verse 11 says, *"teach me your ways, O God, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies."* Ah, that's interesting. That is interesting. When I'm talking to God about my enemies, I'm usually not asking him to help me be more obedient. But that's what David is saying, help me to be more obedient because of my enemies.

I usually pray and say, help me to be courageous because of my enemies. Help me to get rid of my enemies, or Lord, overcome my enemies, sort of a thing. But when's the last time you prayed, Lord, make me more a reflection of who You are because of my enemies. Wow!

Verse 12 says, *"Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence."* And this is what's going on. This is what is happening.

And then these 2 final statements made at the end of the Psalm deserve our attention. The first is a word of faith. Verse 13, *"I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!"* And by the way, this is quite a statement, when you know that David and the situations that he went through in life were often life-threatening. There were people that wanted to kill him, even when he was king. One of them was his son. That's pretty stinky.

But when you know that people are not just wanting to remove you from your job, or from the family, or whatever they want to remove... They want to snuff out your life. To come back in prayer, when you're praying for the Lord's deliverance and to make a statement like this that says, I believe that I'm going to see the goodness of the Lord right here in the land of the living. What David is saying, and this is not just positive thinking, he's saying, I believe God is going to protect and preserve my life. I believe it.

And it's hard and I know this. It's hard to express words of faith when we're going through intense challenges. And when we're even unsure of what the future holds. But I think it's important to speak words of faith. Speaking faith in God's ability to make a difference in our lives, to protect us, to deliver us from whatever present threat we happen to be facing.

And it was David's regular practice. And if we're going to approach the Psalms in such a way as to say, Lord teach me to pray. Right? Teach me how to pray, because I stink at this prayer business. Then I'm going to take like this and I'm going to consider this, what I need to understand as it relates to learning how to pray.

David is showing me an example that in the midst of trials, in the midst of petitions for deliverance, to speak that word of faith. Lord, I believe. I believe in You. I believe in Your ability to protect. I believe in Your ability to preserve. I believe in Your ability to deliver. I believe that You are there and you're hearing me, and so forth. I think that's, I think that's really important.

And then the final statement in this Psalm is a word of encouragement to others who are facing the same challenges. And David says, *"Wait for the Lord;"* In fact, he repeats it at the very end of the verse, *"wait for the Lord!"* So 2 times there.

And once again, as we said last week, and it's very important reminder, waiting on the Lord speaks of a positive, patient, eager anticipation of the Lord's work in your life. It is not sitting around twiddling your thumbs. It is not sitting around wishing, hoping upon a star, I really hope. No, it is an eager expectation. Obviously it's not something you currently have. That's why you're waiting for it. It's very important to see that.

And then sandwiched between those two exhortations to *"wait for the Lord,"* he says this, *"be strong, and let your heart take courage;..."* Be strong. Be strong.

Just this last Sunday in our study of Ephesians chapter 6, the apostle Paul spoke to us about being strong too, during spiritual warfare. And he said,

Ephesians 6:10 (ESV)

...be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

...be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

And that's how we are to be strong. The Bible doesn't expect us to be strong in ourselves. God doesn't expect you to be strong in yourself. Be strong in Him. Be strong in the Lord. Let your strength come from Him. Right?

And then, the words of Jesus from John chapter 14.

John 14:27 (ESV)

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

He says, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*

These are very similar exhortations to what David is saying at the end of this Psalm; *"be strong...let your heart take courage."* Don't let your heart be troubled. Don't become afraid. Keep your focus and trust in the Lord.