

# Six Reasons to Pray

Psalm 27

The hardships of life can be fearful, but God grants us courage when we run to Him in prayer.

LTS: John 1:1-14

I want to invite you to open your bibles to Psalm 27.

At the beginning of the Protestant Reformation Martin Luther encountered incredible hardship. It seemed the whole world was against him. And yet, the reason we so admire this man is because of his amazing and unusual courage. I think of the remarkable story of when Luther was summoned to that fateful meeting with the emperor in the city of Worms. By this point in the Reformation the Roman Catholic leaders – and even the Pope Himself – had all but determined to kill him. Naturally, many of his friends were afraid for his life.

His official invitation to the meeting promised him safe passage but no one believed it. So the big question was, would Martin Luther accept the invitation, risk his life, and go to Worms? Luther's response to his friends was as follows: "I will reply to the emperor that if I am being invited simply to recant, I will NOT come. If to recant is all that is wanted, I can do that perfectly well right here. But if he is inviting me to my death, then I will come. The Lord's will be done." (HIS, 173).

After finally deciding to accept the invitation come what may, his friends pleaded with him to reconsider. They said, the whole thing is nothing but devils." You know what he replied? He famously said, "If there are as many devils as there are red tiles on the roofs of those buildings, I am resolved to go."<sup>1</sup>

We all face hardships from time to time that are more than a little disconcerting and sometimes downright fearful.

- It might be when you are encouraged to share the gospel with someone in the next week.
- Perhaps it's an unexpected opportunity to speak for Christ to an atheistic relative over a holiday meal.

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<sup>1</sup> R.C. Sproul and Stephen Nicholes, *Open Book Podcast*, (Last viewed on Nov. 29, 2018), <https://openbookpodcast.com/r-c-sproul-and-baintons-here-i-stand/>

- Perhaps it will be the occasion of needing to take a moral stand in your workplace
- It could be a time when a brother or sister in Christ needs to be confronted about their sin and its clear that you are the obvious person to do it.

These can be fearful circumstances. Ancient Israel's king David was very much acquainted with such fearful circumstances. In fact, this is the setting of the Psalm before us today. We know David was facing fearful circumstances because he says things like,

- (1) "Whom shall I fear?" and "Of whom shall I be afraid?"
- (3) "My heart shall not fear."
- (6) He mentions "my enemies."
- (7) David cries aloud in anguish!
- And there's more. So, once again, we find David facing fearful "people problems," and he is tempted to be afraid. So, what does he do? In a word – He prays.

I suspect there is hardly a Christian man or woman in this church today who would say they are fully satisfied with their prayer life. So we might justly ask the question, "Why don't we pray more than we do?" There are probably only a few relevant reasons for our lack of prayer. Let me mention three:

1. We don't want to. James teaches us that we do what we do because we want what we want."
2. We don't think we need to. Most of the time we feel so self-sufficient and self-satisfied we sense no need for prayer. Theologically speaking, we are always dependent on the Lord, but we don't always feel that dependence, so we don't feel compelled to pray.
3. We don't think it's worth the time.<sup>2</sup> We always make time for what we truly value, and too often prayer doesn't make it very high on our priority list. If, however, we really knew what faithful prayer actually accomplishes, I suspect

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<sup>2</sup> Nathan Busenitz, audio message on prayer from Psalm 27.

we would we would value prayer much more than we do.

David, on the other hand, was committed to prayer. In fact, the Psalms he wrote are all songs and prayers. Perhaps he prayed so much because he faced so much adversity. Psalm 27 is an example of the kind of praying David engaged in when the hardships of life tempted him to fear. And it is a gift of God to us that he wrote it down so we can learn better how to pray.

And as we study this passage, I think we will learn six motivations for pray.

Before we begin, however, let's start by reading the text before us.

Read Psalm 27

Most scholars see in this psalm two parts. The line of demarcation between the two is drawn at verse seven. The first section is about confidence in God and the second is about David's desperate need for God. But as the congregation would sing these words in worship, they would learn how to approach God personally.

So, as we consider David's words, let's ask, Why should we pray?

## **I. Pray Because Your Confidence is in God. (1-3)**

Read v 1

1. "The Lord is my light..." Throughout the Scriptures light is associated with God in a variety of ways. In Genesis God is the source of light. In Exodus he reveals himself as a pillar of fire that blazed with light. In other texts light symbolizes the truth of God, and the Light of understanding is given by the Spirit of God. But this is the only place in the bible that God is called Light.

2. For David, God is a sun that never sets. He is a light that never gets eclipsed. It is he who gives illumination showing us the right path, imparting necessary wisdom.

3. In Psalm Psa. 36:9 David says of God, "In You is the fountain of life, and in your light, we see light." In other words, we cannot even apprehend light until it is revealed, explained and interpreted by God who is Light. We never really understand anything about this world until God interprets it for us. Listen, beloved, Your worldview is only sound and correct to the degree that it accurately reflects God's light. And It is only in his light that we correctly interpret our problems. And the fact is, David had some serious problems.

A. Many believe that this text was written when David was running for his life

from King Saul.

B. Others think he was running for his life from his own son, Absalom.”

C. These were seriously fearful circumstances! And when you find yourself drifting into the darkness of some fearful circumstance you need God to be your light.

4. Notice how personal this is to David. Over the years I have tried to caution you about seeing every passage as applying to you personally. Many of the pronouns of the N.T. are plural rather than singular. Paul wants us to see ourselves NOT as lone Christians but as fellow members of His body. But here David’s prayer is very personal. The Lord is MY Light

5. To say “Yahweh is my light” is to proclaim one’s confidence in God. It’s a declaration that you believe He cares about Your life personally; that He directs Your path; that the truth of His word is for You. It’s the acceptance of the fact that in this world we walk a path of darkness and that the only way to make it safely to the end is by the Light of God himself. What’s David doing? David is affirming His confidence in God.

6. We know David is affirming his confidence in God because aside from the metaphor of Light, he uses two others. First David says, “Yahweh is my light.”

7. Second, he declares that Yahweh is “my salvation.” Now we need to be careful here. Normally, when we speak of “salvation” we mean spiritual salvation, or regeneration, or being born again. But what David has in mind is temporal salvation. Salvation in this sense means deliverance from his immediate enemies.

8. Listen, David is trusting the Lord to sovereignly govern his circumstances for his good.

A. This is an excellent place to affirm the continuity of the Old and New Testaments.

B. What does Paul teach us in the N.T. book of Romans. He writes, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for God to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

C. David doesn’t know how the Lord will deliver him, or when. What he does know is that God is for him and that His sovereign and good plan will prevail.

D. So, David declares, “The Lord is my light and my salvation. Next David

says...

8. "The Lord is the stronghold of my life." "Stronghold" means a place of safety and protection, a fortified place, a fortress.

A. When Martin Luther was in the throes of his fearful circumstances, do you know what he did? He did what David did. He put his confidence in God.

B. One day, he read these words in Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea."

C. Then Luther did something else that David did. He wrote a song: A Mighty Fortress.

A mighty fortress is our God, A Bulwark never failing; Our Helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing...

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; Were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing; Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is He,

Lord Sabaoth His Name, from age to age the same, And He must win the battle.

9. What do you do when you find yourself in a fearful circumstance? Luther sang "A Mighty Fortress." And David sang (or prayed), The Lord is my light and my salvation. The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

10. And David believed the Lord would deliver Him. Notice what he says next (2-3).

Read v. 2-3

11. The word "they" is emphatic in the Hebrew. His enemies attempt to destroy him but it is they who stumble and fall."

12. You may be thinking, Pastor, when am I ever going to need this psalm? Well,

- If your goal is to live a comfortable life and never risk offending anyone by talking about Jesus and His exclusive gospel, you may never need it.
- If you are resolved to attempt to please people all the time and pursue peace at

all costs, you may never need this text.

- If you are determined to never take a stand for what is right and never confront anyone on their sin, then you may never find yourself running to this text.
- But, if you intend to walk with the Lord, to take up your cross daily and follow him, to risk being ridiculed for your “Jesus talk” and your claims to an exclusive gospel, you will find yourself needing this passage, and a hundred others because you will be tempted to be ruled by fear rather than Faith in your Sovereign Lord who had promised to be your Light, your salvation, and your stronghold.

13. So Pray! Pray Because Your Confidence is In God. Second...

## **II. Pray Because You Want Fellowship with God (4)**

Read v. 4

1. Sometimes we need to pray because we face fearful circumstances and we need to declare our confidence in God. At other times we should pray simply because we desire fellowship with God. This was the expression of the heart of David. He wanted to be close to the Lord. He wanted to fellowship with his God

2. What does David want? “To dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” The house of the Lord was surely a reference to the place where the Tabernacle stood. It was the place that represented the very presence of God on earth. It was the place where the priests ministered before the Lord day and night.

3. David was not eligible to be a priest because he was of the tribe of Judah not the Tribe of Levi. He couldn't be a priest, but he had a holy envy about the privileges of the priests. They got to be in God's presence all the time.

4. In Psalm 26:8 David said, “O Lord, I love the habitation of your house, and the place where your glory dwells.” We should remember here that the Ark of the Covenant was situated in the Tent of the Lord – the Tabernacle. And it was upon the Ark of the Covenant that the visible glory of God would settle as the Israelites wandered 40 years in the wilderness.

5. That visible glory was called the Shekinah. Shekinah is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means “to dwell” or “The one who dwells.”<sup>3</sup> When the shekinah glory of God descended upon the tabernacle it was as if God himself had come to sit upon the mercy seat of the Ark in the secret place called the Holy of Holies.

6. Now, I don’t know if David ever actually saw the light of glory of God cascading from beneath the loose fabric of the Tabernacle, but he certainly knew Israel’s history with the visible presence of glory of God.

7. We also know that David’s physical house was situated very close to the Tabernacle. And I suspect there were many evenings when David would wander from his own house through the even darkness just to be see the tabernacle, to take in the light of the golden Menorah, and to relish the thought of being so privileged as to be able to stand so close to the earthly dwelling of God.

8. It must have been magnificent to see. And it was a privilege that everyone in Israel would anticipate three times a year as they journeyed to Jerusalem to see the tabernacle of the Lord and to worship Him there.

9. Nevertheless, I think there is more going on here than David’s longing to be near the physical tent in Jerusalem, although he is probably writing from exile.

10. The fact is, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain God. He is present everywhere! Furthermore, David wasn’t permitted to “dwell in the [physical] house of the Lord – the Tabernacle. That was a rite reserved for the priests.

11. So what was David’s desire? I want to suggest that Spurgeon may be right when he say that to dwell in the house of the Lord means to see yourself as a child at home with God wherever you may be. To dwell in the house of the Lord means to enjoy his presence; to delight in his fellowship, to hear his word as personal communications with the Father coming from the pages of Scripture.

12. Specifically, David says he wants to do two things in God’s house. First, he wants (4) “to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.” That is, to consider and meditate on the character of the Most High. As Paul was say it, “That I may know him...”

- How do we get to know God? Answer: He has revealed Himself by His word.
- It is in the pages of holy Scripture that we learn of his infinite love, his matchless mercy, the heights of his holiness, the depths of his patience, the breadth of his care.

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<sup>3</sup> Precept Austin (website; last visited on Nov. 19, 2018), [https://www.preceptaustin.org/shekinah\\_glory](https://www.preceptaustin.org/shekinah_glory).

- When you are child in His house you get to see and experience the things of God that only his children know.
  - Some can theorize about him.
  - Others can read books about Him.
  - But only the children of the house really know the heart of the Father.

13. So the first thing David wants is to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. Second, David wants to inquire in His temple.

- God always intended His temple to be a house of prayer for the nations. He invites people to come to Him and pray. And he promises to hear us and answer our prayers.

14. This is fellowship with the Lord. But there is one more thing we need to notice here (v.4). David begins this verse by declaring, “One thing I have asked of the Lord, and that will I seek.”

15. The phrase, “One thing” indicates something of highest importance.

- A. Mark 10:21. When Jesus spoke with the rich young ruler he said, “One thing you lack...”
- B. Phil. 3:13. Paul says, “This one thing I do...”
- C. Luke 10:42. With Mary sitting at his feet listening to his words, Jesus says to her sister Martha, “One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.”

16. To David, fellowship with God was the most important thing on his agenda. Only as a child living in the house of the Lord day in and day out, would David find His heart’s desire. Only then would he see the beauty of the Lord.

17. And I would suggest to you that such fellowship doesn’t happen apart from prayer any more than fellowship with your spouse can happen without speaking and spending time with one another.

18. By the way, seeing the glory of the Lord should be an especially relevant term for us. The biblical term that usually refers to the Shekinah is “the glory of the



Lord.” Often the glory of the Lord would appear in the Tabernacle of God. In Greek the word Skenos is a verb that means “to tabernacle” and is derived from the Heb. Shekinah.

Now that may sound like nothing more than a boring word study, but consider this. At the beginning of John’s Gospel where Jesus is first being introduced, the text says, “and the Word became flesh and tabernacled [shekinahed] – among us (Jn. 1:14). In other words, The Lord Himself took on flesh and pitched a Tabernacle for His glory among us. And then John says, “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father.”

19. And when we come to Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians (4:6) For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

20. In other words, Jesus Christ is the manifest glory of God. He is the Shekinah of God.

21. O my friend, we have the privilege of fellowshiping with David’s greater Son. He is your light and your salvation. He is the stronghold of your life, and the fulfillment of your souls deepest desire.

22. Why pray?

- Pray because you have confidence in God.
- Pray because you want fellowship with God.

The hardships of life can be fearful, but God grants us courage when we run to Him in prayer.