

PSALMS

Chapter 27

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. 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!

Ps 27 David's triumphantly confident prayer to God to deliver him from all those who conspire to bring him down. The prayer presupposes the Lord's covenant with David (see 2Sa 7). Faith's soliloquy (in two stanzas: vv. 1–3, 4–6), which publicly testifies to the king's confident reliance on the Lord, introduces the prayer of vv. 7–12. The conclusion (vv. 13–14) echoes the confidence of vv. 1–6 and adds faith's dialogue with itself—faith exhorting faith to wait patiently for that which is sure, though not yet seen (see Ps 42–43; Heb 11:1). (CSB)

Note the change of mood: the first six verses express David's confidence in God; vv 7–13 are a prayer for His help, forgiveness, and guidance. This structure may indicate that this psalm was used as part of the tabernacle liturgy. If so, a sacrifice and prayer may have been offered after v 6. (TLSB)

Format: V 1, fearless with the Lord; v 2, foes fall; v 3, confident; v 4, a prayer to dwell in the Lord's house; v 5, the Lord's protection; v 6, sacrifices of joy; vv 7–10, a prayer for the Lord to answer; vv 11–12, a prayer for guidance; vv 13–14, wait for the Lord. (TLSB)

The 27th psalm is a psalm of thanks. However, it also prays much and gives us comfort against the false teachers who give a false witness, blaspheming without any hesitation. For only entirely foolhardy saints would give a witness, bold and imprudent, before God – from whom they have no command! Yet we see it daily: the more foolish they are to preach and to teach the whole world. No one knows anything; they alone know all. They prepare themselves to make war and revolt against the true saints and God-fearers. This psalm belongs in the Second and First Commandment and in the First and Second Petitions. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

The psalmist, expressing great confidence in the Lord despite of a host of enemies who threaten his life, prays for help and comfort in his time of need and rejoices in the hope of waiting on the Lord. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

This psalm continues the themes of the preceding psalms, namely protection from enemies and dwelling in God’s presence. However in this psalm joy in the presence of God is more prominent than concern with the enemy. (PBC)

27:1-3 Safe in God’s Fortress – (PBC)

David begins with a triumphant assertion of God’s power in his life. Two great blessings of salvation are joy and security. In the Bible light is often a symbol of joy and happiness. In English too we sometimes speak of a “light” mood. Here the Lord, the source of our joy, is called light. Security is symbolized by calling God a stronghold under whose protection a believer is safe. No army of enemies is strong enough to deprive David of the joy and safety he has in the Lord presence. (PBC)

The king’s security in the Lord in the face of all that his enemies can do (see Ps 2). (CSB)

These verses exude an expression of strong confidence in the Lord. Regardless of how great the adversities, the psalmist looks at the greatness of the Lord in relation to the insignificance of his own problems – “evil men” (v. 2) or “an army” (v. 3). The “evil men” are individual enemies in contrast with the national enemies (“my enemies,” “my foes” ; cf. (v. 3: “army,” “war”). The opposition and outright “war” do not touch him, for his “heart” is strengthened as he remains focused on the Lord. The phrase “my heart” points to the source of personal fortitude. Because of confidence in the Lord, the psalmist is not afraid. In his inner being there is no fear. This confident confession is God’s saving love is similar to Paul’s confession in Romans 8:31-39. (Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Psalms)

Any Christian might well wish that he could in times of trouble always occupy as lofty a ground as do these verses. (Leupold)

27:1 *light* – Reveals things for what they are, dispelling the darkness of sin, evil, or despair. Jesus is the “light of the world” (Jn 8:12). Aug: “The Lord is ... my light, for He removes my ignorance; my salvation, for He takes away my infirmity” (NPNF 1 3:264). (TLSB)

The metaphor of “light” signifies the joy of life, the perfection of holiness, and the illumination of the way of truth. Light dispels darkness, and darkness represents evil, confusion, gloom and despair, often because of war (cf. Is. 8:20-9:2). The same metaphor is used in Micah 7:8-9 in the context that describes how the enemies will be put to shame as the Lord brings his people into the light, meaning a joyous victory. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Light means more than intellectual insight and salvation. It also means deliverance from every form of evil. Light includes joy, hope and life. (Leupold)

my salvation – My Savior (see v. 9). (CSB)

Two great blessings of salvation are joy and security. (PBC)

The second figure used here therefore flows from the image of the light: The Lord is his salvation, meaning that the Lord brings him victory or deliverance (for “salvation” s.v. Psalm 3:2) (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

stronghold of my life – Offering safety and protection. With God’s protection, we have nothing to fear. (TLSB)

The Lord is our security, a security no army can take away. The strength of the Lord sustains His people and is our continual strength and joy. (LL)

This is the Lord providing safety and protection – the Lord securely protects the psalmist’s life. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Be afraid of – I know for a certainty that I have a kind and loving God. Therefore, from whom shall I flee? Of whom shall I be afraid? For I know that he is a God who is kind and loving toward humanity. If you can be convinced of this on the basis of this word [“kind,” Titus 3:4], [then] there is no doubt. Then follows praise and thanksgiving, and you do not remain joyless but say: “Now this is a God who does not send lightning and thunder down on me, but who will to deal with me in a kind and loving way.” He is always with you and you with him, and there is mutual conversation between him and you. He speaks with you like a good friend [Exodus 33:11], and you in turn praise, proclaim, and call upon him. (Martin Luther – Psalm by Psalm – LW-58:392-93)

27:2 *evil-doers* – Describing these people as “evil-doers” indicates their activities caused pain and destruction. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

devour my flesh. As a young shepherd, David had been attacked by lions (see 1Sa 17:34–35). But it is also a convention in the Psalms to liken the attack of enemies to that of ferocious animals, especially the lion. (CSB)

Their purpose was “to devour” his flesh, the figure (an implied comparison with predatory beasts) clearly affirming that they wanted to annihilate him. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Figure of speech for giving false witness. Gossip and lies are destructive. (TLSB)

The “adversaries and foes” could well be the opposition party at the time of Absalom’s revolt. (Leupold)

27:3 *though an army encamp against me* – The words “army camp” refer to the warriors in the camp and word “war” refers to the army in the war, he would not be afraid. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

heart – In Biblical language the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action—“the wellspring of life.” (CSB)

I will be confident – No matter how great and threatening a danger may arise against me, I refuse to be afraid; I shall still be confident. (Leupold)

In faith, David is not anxious about the outcome of a battle or any other crisis. (TLSB)

27:4-10 Happy in God’s Temple (PBC)

Although David's enemies are still lurking in the background, David's joy in the presence of the Lord comes to the foreground in this section. His greatest joy comes not from his wealth or his honors, but the freedom to worship in the Lord's tabernacle. The greatest grief David suffered during his exile was being deprived of this privilege of worship. David's greatest desire is that the Lord will preserve his freedom of worship. Do you suppose that in our country, in which we enjoy so many blessings, many people would list freedom of worship as their greatest blessing, the privilege they value above all others? By the priorities he sets in this prayer David teaches us to put first things first. Let our prayer also be, "One thing I ask of the Lord: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." (PBC)

Although David boldly proclaims his commitment to the Lord, he also confesses his sins. He pleads with the Lord not to forsake him, even though he deserves such treatment because of his sins. David emphasizes the greatness of God's love by declaring that it surpasses even the love of parents for their children. Earthly parents sometimes abandon their children, but the heavenly Father could never go back on His covenant and forsake His children. (PBC)

27:4–6 The Lord's temple (or tabernacle) is the king's stronghold—because the Lord himself is his stronghold. God's heavenly throne (see v. 7) has its counterpart on earth in his temple at Jerusalem, from which center he rules the world. (CSB)

27:4 *seek* – To seek God's counsel by coming to the tabernacle. May also be translated "meditate," in which case David is restating his desire to worship. (TLSB)

To do this in the temple in God's presence would inspire greater confidence for an answer, because in the sanctuary he would hear the praises and be reminded of God's covenant blessings and promises. He could recall these elsewhere, but in the sanctuary he would be surrounded by a cloud of witnesses to these blessings as well as priests who would assist his inquiry with appropriate sacrifices and words of assurance that God accepted him. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

David could have asked for anything. For instance, to conquer his enemies. But instead he simply asks to be near the Lord all of his days. David expresses that desire in a three-fold way: He wants to continue to be close to the Lord and to have an intimate relationship with Him. He also asks that he never lose sight of the Lord or of His ways. Finally, David says that he desires to seek the Lord in prayer in such a way that he is never isolated from the Lord's mercy and help. David knew that if he was right with God, then he (v. 5) need not fear no enemy nor any other danger. What David wants is not the physical security of the temple walls, but the security that comes from close fellowship with the Lord. The world today looks to money and power for security. (LL)

dwell I – Not as a priest but as God's guest in his holy, royal house, the temple. (CSB)

David is not asking to become a priest; he wants to enjoy God's presence throughout his life. (TLSB)

The psalmist desires to dwell in the temple of God for the rest of his life (cf. 15:1; 23:4-6). The temple was the visible expression of God's presence and was sought after by the godly. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

Dwelling in the sanctuary would mean participating in the worship activities, and participating in sanctuary worship would mean being preserved by God's covenant provisions (Ps. 61:1). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

We now come to the roots of this bold faith. The psalmist had kept in closest communion with his God. But he also knows that such fellowship cannot be continued unless it is continually fed by prayer. Fellowship may be vicariously expressed as living with God. (Leupold)

beauty of the LORD – His unfailing benevolence (see 90:17: “favor of the Lord”). (CSB)

As sinners, we cannot physically see God in worship, but we recognize God's goodness and character. God's children who come in faith do not find a wrathful, terrifying God. God is beautiful to those who receive the Gospel. (TLSB)

In Psalm 90:17 in conjunction with having the works of one's hands established; in that psalm it comes in a sequence of petitions for God's loyal love, gladness, and deeds of splendor. In this psalm the desire to see the delightfulness of the Lord would be the desire to see the things that God does for his people that are delightful and those things would be primarily in answer to prayer. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

27:5 *shelter of his tabernacle* – The tabernacle, God's dwelling place. God offers safety and protection to those who come into His home. (TLSB)

The Lord will hide him in a “shelter” and in the “secret place of his tent,” both places referring to the sanctuary in general. In the presence of the Lord where he hears the proclamation of the power of God in the lives of people and receives assurances of being accepted by God from the priests, the psalmist would become more aware of God's provisions of safety and security. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

God hid his child so that the adversary could not find him. (Leupold)

High upon a rock – The feeling of safety would be like being set high on a rock like a stronghold (see Ps. 18:1-2). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

27:6 *head will be lifted up* – Depicting victory. His enemies will be brought low, but he will be exalted in honor. He can hold his head up high. (TLSB)

will I sacrifice – Such praise was usually offered with thank offerings and involved celebrating God's saving act in the presence of those assembled at the temple. (CSB)

I will sing – The praise of God in the Psalter is rarely a private matter between the psalmist and the Lord. It is usually a public (at the temple) celebration of God's holy virtues or of his saving acts or gracious bestowal of blessings. (CSB)

Instead of the expected “sacrifices of praise” he has sacrifices of “shouts of joy.” He substitutes word “shout” for the praise, emphasizing that his praise would be enthusiastic, loud and clear. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

He will worship not from obligation but in response to God's gifts. David will add his own joyful shouts and music to the sacrifices offered. (TLSB)

Such outward formal tokens of true appreciation will be accomplished by his personal songs and the music that he makes unto the Lord. (Leupold)

27:7–12 Prayer for deliverance from treacherous enemies. These remain unspecified, whether from inside or outside the kingdom or both. Their chief weapon is false charges intent on discrediting the king. (CSB)

27:8 *seek my face* – Translates two terms: Hbr *baqash*, “look for”; Hbr *darash*, “care about, examine, inquire.” The Lord is sought in three ways: (1) through calling on His name in prayer, (2) by consulting Him through Urim and Thummim Objects placed in the breastplate of the high priest. Their exact nature is unknown. They were used, however, to determine the will of the Lord (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21) administered by the high priest, and (3) through the study of His Word. A visit to the tabernacle or temple is frequently implied. Unbelievers do not seek God. Believers seek Him in an attitude of repentance, not selfishness. (TLSB p. 843)

Urim and Thurmim are objects placed in the breastpiece of the high priest, Their exact nature is unknown. They were used, however, to determine the will of the Lord (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21). (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

The psalmist’s decision to see the Lord’s face harmonizes with his desire to see the Lord’s delightfulness. Seeking the face of the Lord means praying for his grace. Psalm 105:4 uses it in conjunction with trusting in the Lord’s powerful presence. Similarly, the shining face signifies that Lord’s gracious intervention (Ps. 31:16; Num. 6:25). The expression signifies that the psalmist was looking for the Lord’s gracious intervention. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

27:9-10 David’s greatest fear (v. 9) is that he could lose what he has received from the Lord. All who are sinners sense their own unworthiness before God. At times, we fear that God will someday stop answering our prayers. Yet we, like David, can draw confidence (v. 10) from God’s long-suffering nature. (LL)

27:9 *hide your face* – For use in combination with “forget.” In moments of need the psalmists frequently ask God why he hides his face, or they plead with him not to do so. When he does hide his face, those who depend on him can only despair. When his face shines on a person, blessing and deliverance come. (CSB)

To hide the face would mean to refuse favor and blessing (Pss. 22:24; 143:7) and the result would be terrifying (Ps. 30:7) (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

anger – God’s anger is always an expression of his righteousness. (CSB)

This means to not reject his prayer with anger. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

you have been my help – Or “be my helper.” (CSB)

His past experience affords him a footing for the future. (Leupold)

Cast me not off; forsake me not – If the Lord abandoned him now he would be on his own, and that would certainly means destruction (compare Pss. 44:9ff and 78:60) – there would be no light, and there would be no protection like a stronghold. The appeal not to forsake is actually an appeal to intervene to deliver him. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

27:10 *the LORD will receive me* – Or “may the LORD receive me.” (CSB)

This probably does not mean his parents abandoned him as one might think. It could be a proverbial expression indicating that is friendless and forsaken like a deserted child, but it may be a reference to their death. If this is the case, then the psalmist felt that he had no one to turn to for advice or support; and so the appeal to the Lord is more urgent. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Likely a hypothetical statement, since there is no biblical record of David’s parents forsaking him. Even if his family abandoned him, God would remain faithful. (TLSB)

Earthly parents sometimes abandon their children, but the heavenly Father could never go back on his covenant and forsake his children. (PBC)

No one could stand by him except the Lord. (Leupold)

27:11-12 *Walking in God’s Path* (PBC)

Because God is long suffering, David confidently asks (vv. 11-12) two blessings from the Lord:

- Teach me, so that difficulties of life never shake my faith.
- Protect me from my own sinful desires and from others who might take me from my God.

What blessing would you ask from God so that you remain close to Him? (LL)

27:11 *Teach me your way* – Only those who know and do the Lord’s will can expect to receive favorable response to their prayers (see Ps 24–26; see also 2Sa 7:14). (CSB)

It then means, show me what line of conduct I should follow to be well-pleasing to Thee. (Leupold)

The request is for the Lord to guide him in keeping the covenant so that he might receive God’s blessings. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

lead me in a level path – May the way down which you lead me be straight, level and smooth, free from obstacles and temptations. (CSB)

Show me a road to follow where there are no troubles or dangers. (Leupold)

A way of life that is “level” is one that is straight, steadfast and firm; it is free of obstacles and difficulties. The level path will lead to place of safety and prosperity. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Only the Lord can take the psalmist and God’s people out of their distress and lead them into safety. (Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Psalms)

27:12 *enemies* – David does not specifically identify these enemies. May refer to a specific crisis or, in general terms, to those who opposed his kingship. (TLSB)

Their desire was to find something in his life they could use against him, because they were false witnesses and determined to bring him down with violence. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

If God is with his people, there can be no force sufficiently powerful to oppose the Lord. Regardless of who the enemies are, whether personal or national, they have arisen to undo the work of God. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

27:13–14 Concluding note of confidence – A common feature in the prayers of the Psalter is a concluding expression of confidence that the prayer will be or has been heard.). (CSB)

Despite the difficulties, the royal psalmist leads his people into a deeper faith. He is strongly convinced that the Lord will come to the rescue of his people. He believes that he will taste God's "goodness" in fellowship, protection, guidance, and victory (cf. Ps. 23☺). The hope is based on the promises of God and on God's covenantal name "Yahweh." (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

Verses 13-14 are an appropriate conclusion to the psalm and constitute an inclusionary motif with vv. 1-3. The words of encouragement are reminiscent of Moses's words to Joshua (Dt. 31:7, of God's commission of Joshua (Josh. 1:6-7, 9, 18), and of Joshua's word to the people (10:25; see Paul's words of encouragement in 1 Cor. 16:13. Redemptive history did not conclude with the conquest. It continues as long as God's people "wait for the Lord" and do his will (cf. Hag. 2:4-5). (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

The attacks of David's enemies lead him to make two requests. He asks for further instruction from God's word so that these tribulations will not shake his faith, and he asks for protection from his enemies. (PBC)

David concludes with an expression of confidence in the Lord's continuing protection and eternal life. Finally, he encourages his fellow believers to join him in waiting patiently for the Lord's help. (PBC)

Psalms 27 is an excellent prayer in time of adversity or sickness. Reread verses 1, 4, 5, 13, and 14, and keep them in mind as a short prayer you may want to use in times of sickness or danger. (PBC)

(Verse 13) Because of God's goodness and mercy, David is confident that God will answer his prayers for continued closeness. David will fail, but God will never fail David. (Verse 14) In humility, David then calls others to remain close to the Lord as He works out His will for their lives. To us, here and now, David would say, "Wait patiently for the Lord and for His answers instead of trying to find your own solutions to your problems. (LL)

27:13 *goodness of the LORD* – The "good" things promised in the Lord's covenant with David (see 2Sa 7:28; see also 31:19 and note- David deposits his life in the hands of God to share in the covenant benefits that God has stored up for his faithful servants.). (CSB)

land of the living – This life. (CSB)

Although it's possible to see this as a reference to heaven, more likely it affirms God's action in this world. David saw God's protection and blessing in this life. (TLSB)

He confidently believes to see proof of the "goodness of the Lord," which he is still living. (Leupold)

27:14 *Wait for the LORD* – Faith encouraging faith (see 42:5, 11; 43:5; 62:5). (CSB)

The word “wait” (s.v. Ps. 25:3) indicates confident expectation, albeit with some tension or restlessness as part of the waiting. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Psalm 27 is an excellent prayer in time of adversity or sickness. Reread verses 1,4,5,13 and 14, and keep them in mind as a short prayer you may want to use in times of sickness or danger. (PBC)

This short phrase is repeated doubly to impress it on the faint heart. (Leupold)

Ps 27 David recognizes that when the Lord is on his side, he has nothing to fear. Human beings are prone to fearful responses. We worry about problems in this life, acting as if we face them alone. Yet God is our light and our salvation. Since He has redeemed us, we have nothing to fear. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rm 8:31). • O Christ, my light and my salvation, comfort me and strengthen my faith. Amen. (TLSB)