

Pursuing God

In Step with the Psalms

Lesson 8: Psalm 27

Steps to Communion with God

Stay on the Path ~

The famed preacher John Wesley is remembered as a devout believer, a trailblazer, a man full of faith, or so he thought until one fateful day his faith was tested. Having just completed a missionary assignment in the United States, Wesley boarded a ship bound for England and before too long the vessel encountered a violent storm. Fear gripped everyone on board—including John Wesley—with the exception of a group of traveling Moravian missionaries.

After the storm had passed, Wesley inquired of one of the missionaries, “Were you not afraid of the storm?” The Moravian replied, “Afraid? Why should I be afraid? I know Jesus Christ!” He then turned to Wesley and with an abrupt frankness asked him, “Do you know Christ?” Wesley was a trained theologian, educated at Oxford and ordained as a minister but, in that one moment to his own surprise, he realized that he had limited experiential knowledge of the Lord. The terrifying storm that threatened his life was the first time John Wesley questioned his own faith. The encounter with the man he had just met but who had visibly demonstrated his faith in God, prepared the way for Wesley to later have his own personal encounter with God that would give him the faith to endure to the end.

Problems can do that—put us face to face with others who seem to have a vibrant faith that causes us to question our own. It is at that point we may turn to look inwardly and wonder what’s wrong with us. Some believers live out their Christian lives with the idea that if they muster up enough faith, God will intervene and act on their behalf. But here in Psalm 27, David’s life experience reveals that genuine faith is actually the believer’s response to the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God who comes near to us in our problems. The closer we get to Him, the greater our faith becomes to deal head on with life’s problems.

Did you know ~

Charles Haddon Spurgeon through his own suffering found in the psalms the words to give his life meaning as well as the power and strength to keep going when all seemed hopeless. He drew heavily from the psalms for both his prayers and his writings. He once said that the *beauty of the Lord is the one thing which, if a Christian had, he needs desire no more. It is enough even to satisfy us, the fruition of God, and the beholding of him . . . to have correspondence and fellowship and communion with him there.*

Psalm 27

An exuberant Declaration of Faith.
A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked came against me
To eat up my flesh
My enemies and foes,
They stumbled and fell.

3 Though an army may encamp against me
My heart shall not fear;
Though war may rise against me,
In this I will be confident.

4 One thing I have desired of the Lord,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord
And to inquire in His temple.

5 For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.

6 And now my head shall be lifted up
Above my enemies all around me;
Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy
In His tabernacle;
I will sing, yes, I will
sing praises to the Lord.

7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice!
Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8 When You said, "Seek My face,"
My heart said to You, "Your face,
Lord, I will seek."

9 Do not hide Your face from me;
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;
Do not leave me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation.

10 When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then the Lord will take care of me.

11 Teach me Your way, O Lord,
And lead me in a smooth path,
Because of my enemies.

12 Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.

13 I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the Lord
In the land of the living.

14 Wait on the Lord;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the lord!

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Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Read Psalm 27.

Listen to the psalm ~ First impressions

What is the *tone* of Psalm 27? What stands out to you from your initial reading?

Are you seeking God with your fellow believers by attending church on a regular basis? How does this strengthen your heart in difficult times?

- a. How did God show His faithfulness to David? v. 2

- b. What was David's heart response toward God? v. 3

What David needed most in the midst of his problems only God could give: God gave light because He is light. He desires to show His children *what* to do (knowledge) coupled with *how* to do it (wisdom). In addition, He gives us the will to be obedient to Him. The word *salvation* in verse 1, simply means deliverance—a way out of the unsolvable.

- 2. If we read Psalm 27 in the light of the Gospel message, we remember the words of Jesus. Look up the references below and note your findings.
 - a. John 8:12

 - b. John 14:6

 - c. John 16:33

- 3. What God did for David in times past had taught him to trust in Him. Building on this confidence when facing further difficulties led to one dominant desire—what was it? v. 4

Pause & ponder ~

Problems can either drive people away from God or bring them closer to Him. David allowed the loneliness and magnitude of his problems to drive him to God. What this lesson teaches us is that in our problems our contemplation of God should lead us to want to be with Him. When we are, how does His presence benefit us? What should our heart's response be? vv. 5–6

II. God's answer to our dilemma is Himself.

When we allow our problems to lead us to God, then we are ready to hear what He has to say. Usually it is at times like this that we have nothing to give Him but our prayer: *Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.*

- I. What did God say to the psalmist? v. 8
 - a. What did David say in reply?

The word *face* in Hebrew means both *face* and *presence*. The Old Testament usage of the word was represented in situations such as the Lord promising Moses: “My presence will go with you and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33:14–15). Moses was so desperate to have God accompany him that he replied, “If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us?”

God is constantly sounding the invitation to come and seek His face. When problems arise, listen! In your heart and soul you will hear the call, “Seek My face.” And your first response should be, “Your face, Lord I will seek.” We should not merely talk to God but listen for His still small voice. Our desire to pray and spend time with Him is motivated by His prior desire to commune with us.

Touchpoint ~

The admonition to seek God's face is repeated in the New Testament by Jesus Himself. Read the story in Luke 10:38–42. Think carefully about answering the following . . .

- a. What was Martha's priority and what was her heart attitude? v. 40
- b. How did Mary's priority to sit at the feet of Jesus benefit her? v. 39

Martha wasn't doing anything wrong; in fact she was doing a good thing by preparing a meal to serve the Lord and His followers. But Martha's busyness led her to take her focus off the Lord and to feel sorry for herself that she had to do so much. There are times when even a good thing can become a bad thing if it keeps us from the best thing—and the best thing is spending time with Jesus!

- c. What did Jesus say to Martha about the blessing that comes from seeking Him first?
vv. 41–42

III. Assurance follows face to face communion with God.

The beauty of the Lord is the *one thing* desirable that Jesus says shall not be taken away from us! This is what David was speaking about in Psalm 27—the faith to see from God’s perspective by spending time alone with Him. David now launches into the outward expression his renewed inner faith has given him.

1. What is David’s prayer of assurance in the following verses that emanates from his time of communion with God?

a. v. 9:

b. v. 10:

c. v. 11:

d. v. 12:

Communion with God makes us right with Him and gives us the capability and staying power to face our problems. No wonder David was able to say: *I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!* It is an outward exclamation of inner faith that is the gift of a generously loving heavenly Father.

2. The Apostle Paul also gives us the blueprint for how to shrink our problems down to size as our faith deepens in dimension when we are face to face with the Lord. Take a close look at Romans 5:1–5 to see firsthand what faith does for you in your problems. List as many of the blessings and benefits that you can find in the space below.

Live the psalm ~

Thinking that you will one day arrive at a plateau in life where all your problems will disappear is a mistake. There is always a new dilemma just around the corner waiting for you. The secret is to face the problems that come your way by taking them to God—seeking His face! The answers He reveals to your soul will not be taken away. Briefly note the difficulty you are facing today and the effect it is having on your life.

Pray the psalm ~

Now take that problem to the throne of God where you will find His grace is not only sufficient, but it will more than meet your need. Claim His truth in 2 Corinthians 12:9 as yours today. Write it out in the space below as you let Him give you a greater revelation of who He is!

Unless men see a beauty and delight in the worship of God, they will not do it willingly.

John Owen

