

PSALM 27

Some think David penned this psalm before his coming to the throne, when he was in the midst of his troubles, and perhaps upon occasion of the death of his parents; but the Jews think he penned it when he was old, upon occasion of the wonderful deliverance he had from the sword of the giant, when Abishai succoured him (^{<1216>}2 Samuel 21:16, 17) and his people thereupon resolved he should never venture his life again in battle, lest he should quench the light of Israel. Perhaps it was not penned upon any particular occasion; but it is very expressive of the pious and devout affections with which gracious souls are carried out towards God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Here is,

- I.** The courage and holy bravery of his faith (v. 1-3).
- II.** The complacency he took in communion with God and the benefit he experienced by it (v. 4-6).
- III.** His desire towards God, and his favour and grace (v. 7-9, 11, 12).
- IV.** His expectations from God, and the encouragement he gives to others to hope in him (v. 10, 13, 14). And let our hearts be thus affected in singing this psalm.

^{<1216>}PSALM 27:1-6

DEVOUT CONFIDENCE

A psalm of David.

We may observe here,

I. With what a lively faith David triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him.

1. *The Lord is my light.* David's subjects called him *the light of Israel*, ^{<1217>}2 Samuel 21:17. And he was indeed a burning and a shining light: but he owns that he shone, as the moon does, with a borrowed light; what light

God darted upon him reflected upon them: *The Lord is my light*. God is a light to his people, to show them the way when they are in doubt, to comfort and rejoice their hearts when they are in sorrow. It is in his light that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever.

2. "He is *my salvation*, in whom I am safe and by whom I shall be saved."
3. "He is *the strength of my life*, not only the protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain, but the strength of my frail weak life, who keeps me from fainting, sinking, and dying away." God, who is a believer's light, is the strength of his life, not only by whom, but in whom, he lives and moves. In God therefore let us strengthen ourselves.

II. With what an undaunted courage he triumphs over his enemies; no fortitude like that of faith. If God be for him, who can be against him? *Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid?* If Omnipotence be his guard, he has no cause to fear; if he knows it to be so, he has no disposition to fear. If God be his light, he fears no shades; if God be his salvation, he fears no colours. He triumphs over his enemies that were already routed, v. 2. His enemies came upon him, *to eat up his flesh*, aiming at no less and assured of that, but they fell; not, "He smote them and they fell," but, "*They stumbled and fell*;" they were so confounded and weakened that they could not go on with their enterprise. Thus those that came to take Christ with a word's speaking were made to stagger and fall to the ground, ^{<BIB>}John 18:6. The ruin of some of the enemies of God's people is an earnest of the complete conquest of them all. And therefore, these having fallen, he is fearless of the rest: "Though they be numerous, *a host* of them, — though they be daring and their attempts threatening, — though they *encamp against me*, an army against one man, — though they wage war upon me, yet *my heart shall not fear*." Hosts cannot hurt us if the Lord of hosts protect us. Nay, in this assurance that God is for me "*I will be confident*." Two things he will be confident of: —

1. That he shall be safe. "If God is my salvation, *in the time of trouble he shall hide me*; he shall set me out of danger and above the fear of it." God will not only find out a shelter for his people in distress (as he did ^{<BIB>}Jeremiah 36:26), but he will himself be their hiding-place, ^{<BIB>}Psalms 32:7. His providence will, it may be, keep them safe; at least his grace will make them easy. His name is the strong tower into which by faith they run, ^{<BIB>}Proverbs 18:10. "*He shall hide me*, not in the strongholds of En-gedi

(~~1029~~1 Samuel 23:29), but *in the secret of his tabernacle.*” The gracious presence of God, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his Spirit in the hearts of his people — these are the secret of his tabernacle, and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and serenity of mind in which they dwell at ease. This sets them upon a rock which will not sink under them, but on which they find firm footing for their hopes; nay, it sets them *up upon a rock* on high, where the raging threatening billows of a stormy sea cannot touch them; it is a rock that is *higher than we*, ~~1030~~Psalm 61:2.

2. That he shall be victorious (v. 6): “*Now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies*, not only so as that they cannot reach it with their darts, but so as that I shall be exalted to bear rule over them.” David here, by faith in the promise of God, triumphs before the victory, and is as sure, not only of the laurel, but of the crown, as if it were already upon his head.

III. With what a gracious earnestness he prays for a constant communion with God in holy ordinances, v. 4. It greatly encouraged his confidence in God that he was conscious to himself of an entire affection to God and to his ordinances, and that he was in his element when in the way of his duty and in the way of increasing his acquaintance with him. If our hearts can witness for us that we delight in God above any creature, that may encourage us to depend upon him; for it is a sign we are of those whom he protects as his own. Or it may be taken thus: He desired to dwell in the house of the Lord that there he might be safe from the enemies that surrounded him. Finding himself surrounded by threatening hosts, he does not say, “*One thing have I desired*, in order to my safety, that I may have my army augmented to such a number,” or that I may be master of such a city or such a castle, but “*that I may dwell in the house of the Lord*, and then I am well.” Observe,

1. What it is he desires — *to dwell in the house of the Lord*. In the courts of God's house the priests had their lodgings, and David wished he had been one of them. Disdainfully as some look upon God's ministers, one of the greatest and best of kings that ever was would gladly have taken his lot, have taken his lodging, among them. Or, rather, he desires that he might duly and constantly attend on the public service of God, with other faithful Israelites, according as the duty of every day required. He longed to see an end of the wars in which he was now engaged, not that he might live at ease in his own palace, but that he might have leisure and liberty for

a constant attendance in God's courts. Thus Hezekiah, a genuine son of David, wished for the recovery of his health, not that he might go up to the thrones of judgment, but that he might *go up to the house of the Lord*, ^{<380>}Isaiah 38:22. Note, All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? Not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man, that turns aside to tarry but for a night, nor to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abides not in the house for ever, but to dwell there all the days of their life; for there the Son abides ever. Do we hope that praising God will be the blessedness of our eternity? Surely them we ought to make it the business of our time.

2. How earnestly he covets this: “This is the *one thing I have desired of the Lord* and which I will seek after.” If he were to ask but one thing of God, this should be it; for this he had at heart more than any thing. He desired it as a good thing; he desired it of the Lord as his gift and a token of his favour. And, having fixed his desire upon this as the one thing needful, he sought after it; he continued to pray for it, and contrived his affairs so as that he might have this liberty and opportunity. Note, Those that truly desire communion with God will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, ^{<381>}Proverbs 18:1.

3. What he had in his eye in it. He would dwell in God's house, not for the plenty of good entertainment that was there, in the feasts upon the sacrifices, nor for the music and good singing that were there, but *to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple*. He desired to attend in God's courts,

(1.) That he might have the pleasure of meditating upon God. He knew something of the beauty of the Lord, the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the divine being and perfections; his holiness is his beauty (^{<382>}Psalm 110:3), his goodness is his beauty, ^{<383>}Zechariah 9:17. The harmony of all his attributes is the beauty of his nature. With an eye of faith and holy love we with pleasure behold this beauty, and observe more and more in it that is amiable, that is admirable. When with fixedness of thought, and a holy flame of devout affections, we contemplate God's glorious excellencies, and entertain ourselves with the tokens of his peculiar favour to us, this is that view of the beauty of the Lord which David here covets, and it is to be had in his ordinances, for there he manifests himself.

(2.) That he might have the satisfaction of being instructed in his duty; for concerning this he would *enquire in God's temple*. Lord, *what wilt thou have me to do?* For the sake of these two things he desired that one thing, to *dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life*; for blessed are those that do so; they will be still praising him (~~<1804>~~ Psalm 84:4), both in speaking to him and in hearing from him. Mary's sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word Christ calls the *one thing needful*, and *the good part*.

4. What advantage he promised himself by it. Could he but have a place in God's house,

(1.) There he should be quiet and easy: there troubles would not find him, for he should be hid in secret; there troubles would not reach him, for he should be set on high, v. 5. Joash, one of David's seed, was hidden in the house of the Lord six years, and there not only preserved from the sword, but reserved to the crown, ~~<2118>~~ 2 Kings 11:3. The temple was thought a safe place for Nehemiah to abscond in, ~~<1400>~~ Nehemiah 6:10. The safety of believers however is not in the walls of the temple, but in the God of the temple and their comfort in communion with him.

(2.) There he should be pleasant and cheerful: there he would offer sacrifices of joy, v. 6. For God's work is its own wages. There *he would sing, yea, he would sing praises to the Lord*. Note, Whatever is the matter of our joy ought to be the matter of our praise; and, when we attend upon God in holy ordinances, we ought to be much in joy and praise. It is for the glory of our God that we should sing in his ways; and, whenever God lifts us up above our enemies, we ought to exalt him in our praises. *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph*, ~~<4024>~~ 2 Corinthians 2:14.

~~<1217>~~ PSALM 27:7-14

CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE GOODNESS

David in these verses expresses,

I. His desire towards God, in many petitions. If he cannot now go up to the house of the Lord, yet, wherever he is, he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer.

1. He humbly bespeaks, because he firmly believes he shall have, a gracious audience: “*Hear, O Lord, when I cry, not only with my heart, but, as one in earnest, with my voice too.*” He bespeaks also an answer of peace, which he expects, not from his own merit, but God's goodness: *Have mercy upon me, and answer me, v. 7.* If we pray and believe, God will graciously hear and answer.

2. He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to this duty, v. 8. It is presumption for us to come into the presence of the King of kings uncalled, nor can we draw near with any assurance unless he *hold forth to us the golden sceptre*. David therefore going to pray fastens, in his thoughts, upon the call God had given him to the throne of his grace, and reverently touches, as it were, the top of the golden sceptre which was thereby held out to him. *My heart said unto thee* (so it begins in the original) or *of thee, Seek you my face*; he first revolved that, and preached that over again to himself (and that is the best preaching: it is hearing twice what God speaks once) — *Thou saidst* (so it may be supplied), *Seek you my face*; and then he returns what he had so meditated upon, in this pious resolution, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*. Observe here,

(1.) The true nature of religious worship; it is seeking the face of God. This it is in God's precept: *Seek you my face*; he would have us seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good; and this it is in the saint's purpose and desire: “*Thy face, Lord, will I seek, and nothing less will I take up with.*” The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other living things (^{<4956>}Psalm 145:16), but it is only the shining of his face that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, ^{<4906>}Psalm 4:6, 7.

(2.) The kind of invitation of a gracious God to this duty: *Thou saidst, Seek you my face*; it is not only permission, but a precept; and his commanding us to seek implies a promise of finding; for he is too kind to say, *Seek you me in vain*. God calls us to seek his face in our conversion to him and in our converse with him. He calls us, by the whispers of his Spirit to and with our spirits, to seek his face; he calls us by his word, by the stated returns of opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our court to lying vanities God is, in love to us, calling us in him to seek our own mercies.

(3.) The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation. The call is immediately returned: *My heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek*.

The call was general; “*Seek you my face;*” but, like David, we must apply it to ourselves, “*I will seek it.*” The word does us no good when we transfer it to others, and do not ourselves accept the exhortation. The call was, *Seek you my face;* the answer is express, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek;* like that (²⁴⁸²Jeremiah 3:22), *Behold, we come unto thee.* A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in the day of his power.

3. He is very particular in his requests.

(1.) For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that (v. 9): “*Thy face, Lord, will I seek,* in obedience to thy command; therefore *hide not thy face from me;* let me never want the reviving sense of the favour; love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; *put not thy servant away in anger.*” He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs that, however God might correct him, he would not cast him away from his presence; for what is hell but that?

(2.) For the continuance of his presence with him: “*Thou hast been my help* formerly, and *thou are the God of my salvation;* and therefore whither shall I go but to thee? *O leave me not, neither forsake me;* withdraw not the operations of thy power from me, for then I am helpless; withdraw not the tokens of thy good-will to me, for then I am comfortless.”

(3.) For the benefit of divine guidance (v. 11): “*Teach me thy way, O Lord!* give me to understand the meaning of thy providences towards me and make them plain to me; and give me to know my duty in every doubtful case, that I may not mistake it, but may walk rightly, and that I may not do it with hesitation, but may walk surely.” It is not policy, but plainness (that is, downright honesty) that will direct us into and keep us in the way of our duty. He begs to be guided *in a plain path, because of his enemies,* or (as the margin reads it) his *observers.* His enemies watched for his halting, that they may find occasion against him. Saul eyed David, ⁽²⁴⁸³⁾1 Samuel 18:9. This quickened him to pray, “*Lord, lead me in a plain path,* that they may have nothing ill, or nothing that looks ill, to lay to my charge.”

(4.) For the benefit of a divine protection (v. 12): “*Deliver me not over to the will of my enemies.* Lord, let them not gain their point, for it aims at my life, and no less, and in such a way as that I have no fence against them, but thy power over their consciences; for *false witnesses have risen*

up against me, that aim further than to take away my reputation or estate, for they *breathe out cruelty*; it is the blood, the precious blood, they thirst after.” Herein David was a type of Christ; for false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty; but though he was delivered into their wicked hands, he was not delivered over to their will, for they could not prevent his exaltation.

II. He expresses his dependence upon God,

1. That he would help and succour him when all other helps and succours failed him (v. 10): “*When my father and my mother forsake me*, the nearest and dearest friends I have in the world, from whom I may expect most relief and with most reason, when they die, or are at a distance from me, or are disabled to help me in time of need, or are unkind to me or unmindful of me, and will not help me, when I am as helpless as ever poor orphan was that was left fatherless and motherless, then I know *the Lord will take me up*, as a poor wandering sheep is taken up, and saved from perishing.” His time to help those that trust in him is when all other helpers fail, when it is most for his honour and their comfort. With him *the fatherless find mercy*. This promise has often been fulfilled in the letter of it. Forsaken orphans have been taken under the special care of the divine Providence, which has raised up relief and friends for them in a way that one would not have expected. God is a surer and better friend than our earthly parents are or can be.

2. That in due time he should see the displays of his goodness, v. 13. He believed he should *see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living*; and, if he had not done so, he would *have fainted* under his afflictions. Even the best saints are subject to faint when their troubles become grievous and tedious, their spirits are overwhelmed, and their flesh and heart fail. But then faith is a sovereign cordial; it keeps them from desponding under their burden and from despairing of relief, keeps them hoping, and praying, and waiting, and keeps up in them good thoughts of God, and the comfortable enjoyment of themselves. But what was it the belief of which kept David from fainting? — *that he should see the goodness of the Lord*, which now seemed at a distance. Those that walk by faith in the goodness of the Lord shall in due time walk in the sight of that goodness. This he hopes to see in the land of the living, that is,

(1.) In this world, that he should outlive his troubles and not perish under them. It is his comfort, not so much that he shall see the land of the living as that he shall see the goodness of God in it; for that is the comfort of all creature-comforts to a gracious soul.

(2.) In the land of Canaan, and in Jerusalem where the lively oracles were. In comparison with the heathen, that were dead in sin, the land of Israel might fitly be called *the land of the living*; there God was known, and there David hoped to see his goodness; see ~~165~~ 2 Samuel 15:25, 26. Or,

(3.), In heaven. It is that alone that may truly be called *the land of the living*, where there is no more death. This earth is the land of the dying. There is nothing like the believing hope of eternal life, the foresights of that glory, and foretastes of those pleasures, to keep us from fainting under all the calamities of this present time.

3. That in the mean time he should be strengthened to bear up under his burdens (v. 14); whether he says it to himself, or to his friends, it comes all to one; this is that which encourages him: *He shall strengthen thy heart*, shall sustain thy spirit, and then the spirit shall sustain the infirmity. In that strength,

(1.) Keep close to God and to your duty. *Wait on the Lord* by faith, and prayer, and a humble resignation to his will; *wait, I say, on the Lord*; whatever you do, grow not remiss in your attendance upon God.

(2.) Keep up your spirits in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties: *Be of good courage*; let your hearts be fixed, trusting in God, and your minds stayed upon him, and then let none of these things move you. Those that wait upon the Lord have reason to be of good courage.