

Psalm 27 – Be of Good Courage in the LORD! (1 of 2)

The life of a believer is fraught with trials and difficulties. They are also called persecutions. Every child of God must be honest with himself. If he has done wrong, he must not say that he is being persecuted for Christ. If he is doing the will of God according to the Bible, like defending the perfect Bible, and he is being persecuted because of it, then Psalm 27 is for his encouragement. The author of this psalm is King David. He came under severe persecution as seen by the use of phrases such as "even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh" (cf. v 2). There was nowhere David wanted to turn to except to the LORD, for he admitted that the nearness and comfort of the LORD exceeded even that of parents. He said "when my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up" (cf. v 10).

This psalm will encourage the hearts of all believers who look to the LORD in times of trouble, especially those who suffer for the sake of Christ.

I. The Source of Courage (vv 1-3) – Courage is not the absence of fear. It is to be strong and continue to do what is right and biblical in the face of fear. To have courage depends on the source of one's courage. If the source of courage stems from within the person and is not anchored on a solid foundation, then the moment he encounters a problem heavier than he can carry or larger than he can manage, he would succumb and fear would overwhelm him. Take the case of a man who faced death by strangulation and being burned at the stake. All he had to do to get out of this "situation" was to recant his faith in Jesus Christ and he would be a free man. But he refused to give up his faith in Jesus Christ. He was strangled and burned at the stake. His name is William Tyndale. Tyndale was not alone in this, for there were many like him who paid with their lives for their faith in Christ. The source of their courage is Jesus Christ Himself. This source of courage is revealed only in times of persecution. This was the case for David.

He declared from the onset of Psalm 27 that the LORD was his light and salvation. The emphasis is the personal relationship David had with his LORD. The LORD was not just the light and the salvation but He was David's personal light and salvation. Light is used in opposition to darkness. When a believer is in a quandary because of the desertion of family and friends or loneliness in the midst of a life threatening situation, he is figuratively in darkness because he does not know what to do. Should he turn left or right or go forward or take a step backward? These are options that he knows about but is helpless to decide. He is lost! The LORD is his light to help him make the right decision. This light, of course, is found in the Word of God. In David's case, the Bible was not completed yet but he had enough from the Word of God and from God's direct revelation to him to know what to do. The LORD was David's light to guide him in the most difficult and dark moments. This is true for all believers. Through the study and obedience of God's Word, this light continues to shine

brightly today. Believers need not walk in darkness when the light is in front of them. They can just stretch out their hand of faith and walk in the light.

The LORD was also David's personal Saviour. David said that the LORD would deliver him as He was his salvation. The deliverance of the LORD is not always by shutting up the mouths of lions or that flames will not touch believers when they are thrown into the fiery furnace like Daniel's three friends in Daniel 3. The deliverance of the believer is according to God's plan. When the believer's life of service on earth is not finished yet, as in the case of David when he penned this psalm, then the LORD will deliver him spiritually and physically. As long as the believer's service is not done, he will remain on earth and no one can take his life. However, when his work is done, the LORD will take him home to heaven any way He sees fit! The "salvation" as used by David here is spiritual and physical. David must not lose faith in Christ. He must continue to look up and trust in the LORD regardless of the dire circumstances he was in. All that his eyes saw and whatever man said may have brought hopelessness, but his trust in the LORD's salvation kept him in the path of righteousness and to not sin against God. This is what salvation means. It does not matter whether the LORD will deliver the body or not, as long as the believer knows that the LORD definitely can.

David could conclude that he had nothing to fear. There is no one more powerful or greater than his LORD. Since his LORD was his personal light and salvation, all things would work out for good to those who trust in Him continuously. He would not allow man's intimidation or the evil one to stop him from obeying God's Word in his life which is basically Satan's agenda, and that of his minions who do his bidding. They want God's children to stumble and fall into sin so that the name of Christ would be tarnished in their lives. David did not let that happen because he knew and acknowledged that the LORD was his light and salvation.

David used synonymous parallelism to emphasize this truth. This personal knowledge David had of his LORD resulted in strength. The LORD was his strength. On his own, David was weak like a newborn baby. But with the LORD, David was stronger than Samson!

Verse 2 (synthetic parallelism) – When David's enemies came up against him, he said that they stumbled and fell. He called these enemies "wicked". The word "wicked" has the idea of one who spoils something by breaking it into pieces. It is like a child who takes his toy and deliberately throws it onto the ground and destroys it. David's enemies wanted to do that to him. He was a man on a mission for God and chosen. Through his lineage the Messiah would be born. To kill David before his service on earth was done was to fight against God. It was Satan's attempt to prevent the completion of God's plan of salvation for mankind. God would not and did not allow this to happen. These wicked men were also described as David's enemies and foes. The word "enemy" refers to one who forces his opponent into a tight space to corner or squeeze him into sinning or submitting to his evil will. The term "foes" refers to David's adversaries. An example of such an enemy and foe is King Saul. He wanted to box in David and his men so as to kill them. When King Saul wanted to stop David

from becoming king, when God had already said that David would be the next king, he stood in the way of David's path to kingship.

David's enemies did not succeed. Instead, they stumbled and fell. They and King Saul who wanted to kill David died in battle. Saul's many attempts to capture and kill David to prevent him from becoming king also failed because David became king after his death. Absalom who also tried to kill King David stumbled and fell as well. Absalom was killed in battle and the kingdom was returned to David. These enemies and foes of David wanted David dead. This is the meaning of the phrase "to eat up his flesh." In today's context, the enemies of obedient believers cannot literally kill (in law abiding countries) but they will use all means possible to destroy them. They write papers to attack the doctrines, but they do not succeed because their un-biblical arguments are thwarted by rebuttals that are Bible based. Then they would use the law of the land with false allegations to bring the law down on God's servants like those who did it to Paul and Christ. If that fails, then they would try to destroy believers' integrity with falsehood to attack their good names. Finally, they would resort to financial attack like lawsuits in order to bankrupt them. These methods of insidious and dastardly evil attack are very common in today's society (where deaths are forbidden). But just as David's enemies stumbled and fell, these attackers will also receive their just due from the LORD most high!

Verse 3 (synonymous parallelism) – David added that even when an host, i.e. an army, encamped against or surrounded him to destroy him, his heart would not fear. When they come together to make war against David, he will not be afraid because of his confidence in his LORD. This was an overwhelming attack by David's enemies and foes; and yet David could experience peace in his heart and was not afraid. The LORD was his light and salvation. No one could hurt him without his LORD's permission. Therefore, no matter what happened, David's LORD is always in sovereign control. The enemies surrounded him to kill him but they would not be able to do so if his LORD did not allow it. This deep knowledge of God's all powerful ability can only be realized and strengthened when the believer keeps on studying God's Word to know his LORD better and deeper. There is no other way for trust in the LORD to be realized without knowing Him. The less one knows the LORD, the less he is able to trust in the LORD. The more intimately he knows his LORD, the more and easier he trusts Him. This was David's experience.

David trusted his LORD when he was a young boy looking after his father's flock. He shared his testimony with King Saul when he wanted to fight against Goliath. This is what he said to King Saul in **1 Samuel 17:34-37** (KJV), "And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: **35** And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered *it* out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught *him* by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. **36** Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing

he hath defied the armies of the living God. **37** David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee." [Emphasis added] When David faced his enemies in later years, his trust in the LORD stood him in good state because the trials in the face of his enemies and foes were many times worse than the lion or the bear!

II. The Desire of the Courageous (vv 4-5) – To sustain his relationship with the LORD, David said that there was one thing that he desired. The word "desire" means "to inquire or ask." Then he followed up his asking with the verb "to seek after", i.e. to seek until he finds. He would not let up in his asking and seeking of his LORD. This determination would not allow anyone or anything to sidetrack him from knowing his LORD better. He spent time alone with Him in prayer. He read, studied, memorized and obeyed His Word. David did this because of his love for the LORD and his devotion to Him. Only when one is in love can this desire and searching persevere on. David had experienced the wonderful provision and protection of the LORD before. His time spent with his LORD was precious and priceless. When this kind of experience with the LORD is pure and clean and vibrantly alive, nothing on this earth can take that away. David would not stop seeking until he found it. What was it that David was seeking after so diligently?

Using synthetic parallelism, the object of his desire and searching was to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of his life. The only house of the LORD then was the Tabernacle. There was no Temple yet. The Tabernacle always meant the dwelling place of the LORD where the LORD has placed His home on earth. It represented the presence of the LORD. Therefore, when David said that he wanted to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of his life, he meant that he wanted to be in the presence of the LORD all the time even while he was on earth! This is possible only to believers. They are encouraged to have this desire. This means to spend time in prayer, worship, Christian fellowship and studying God's Word. Of course, David could not enter the premises of the Tabernacle for it was reserved only for the Aaronic priesthood. David wanted a spiritual closeness with the LORD on earth in the midst of the trials he faced. The wicked could not take this desire from him.

The outcome of being in the house of the LORD was to behold the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in His temple. The "temple" used here refers to the Tabernacle.¹ [Please see the footnote where the same word was used to describe the Tabernacle.] The beauty of the LORD refers to the glory of the LORD. This is not a sentimental idea of the LORD. This beauty of the LORD refers to His character and can only be known through God's holy and perfect Word. Learning to be still and know that the LORD is God Almighty is one way! Trusting in

¹ **1 Samuel 1:9 (KJV)** "So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD." **1 Samuel 3:3 (KJV)** "And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;"

Him in the darkest moment and experiencing His deliverance is another way. These were what David experienced in his life and so must every believer! To enquire in His temple means to pray before the LORD. The Bible commands all believers to pray without ceasing. To pray means to ask God for counsel before any decision is made or any deed is done. This is the kind of dependence that the LORD wanted David, and all believers as well, to have. This is tested and revealed in the face of persecution.

Verse 5 (synthetic parallelism) – In the time of trouble David shared that the LORD would hide him in His pavilion, i.e. cliff. This is a secret hiding place that is not accessible to the enemy! It is a place of absolute safety. The LORD would definitely hide David and His children and keep them safe. They have nothing to be afraid of. This was David's confidence. This does not at all mean that every time the believer is persecuted he will not be physically hurt or will not endure suffering. David experienced all the physical sufferings when he lived the life of a fugitive as King Saul hunted him like an animal. This was also the case for the apostle Paul when he had to endure stoning and imprisonment, to name a few. The phrase "hide me in his pavilion" means that the LORD would keep David's faith and would not allow him to be tempted beyond what he was able to bear. This is also true for every child of God throughout the ages. Physical and emotional sufferings are part of every believer's life. But the suffering he endures is always within the strength of his faith to endure. This means that the real test is not physical but spiritual. The challenge is in his faith. The believer has to learn experientially to trust God in good and adverse times. It is easy to trust God when all is well and "the sun is shining". But will he still trust the LORD in the face of great adversity?

The place of safety was also called "the secret of his tabernacle." The two most sacred places in Israel and in the whole earth were the holy place and most holy place. Only God's priests were allowed to enter in. Therefore, it was the safest place on earth. The presence of the LORD would not allow the enemy of God's children to come near them. The LORD would set David upon a rock and he would be untouchable, spiritually speaking. Whatever hurt the enemies intended to inflict upon David's faith would not succeed. They might be able to hurt the body but never the soul. As long as God's servant remains faithful to the LORD, he has nothing to be afraid of. This desire to be in the presence of the LORD all the time will keep God's servant in good stead.

III. The Praise of the Courageous – (v 6) – Using synthetic parallelism, David described his praise of the LORD. David would come up on top. The plotting and planning of his enemies and foes to destroy him would come to naught. David would be victorious and rise above all of them. When God's will was done in his life, the enemies would realize that they could never win because they were fighting against God. This is what every believer must believe. He must not fall into sin no matter what and he must continue to trust in the LORD. The enemies will succeed when God's people sin against God. The believer must realize that his battle is always spiritual and never carnal. That is why the loss of material things and

power and position on earth does not mean that the believer has lost (if he does not sin against God). The moment he sins against God, even if he "wins" in the eyes of man, in God's eyes he has lost. The believer must do all things according to the Bible in all the battles that he faces.

The result was that David offered sacrifices of joy in the Tabernacle of the LORD. David would sing praises unto the LORD. This is to be understood figuratively in that David was not supposed to enter into the Holy place at all, which he never did. It would be a sin if he did that. David would rejoice in his LORD by praising Him. He did so by telling people how good and great God is by his life of holiness and the testimony of his lips. The believer's praise on the Lord's Day is indicative of his trust in the LORD. The praises he sings everywhere he goes and his life of holiness would show that his walk with the LORD is close and God-honouring. David experienced this during his sojourn on earth and he wanted all believers to have his experiences as well. Do you?

[To be continued]