

Text: Psalm 27:1-14

Title: “Facing Your Fears”

Let's open our Bibles to the psalm we read from earlier ... Psalm 27. As you're turning I want to celebrate all that God has done through VBS this past week. We had an average attendance of over 800 in VBS, including volunteers. That's over 50 above the average attendance last year. We had 38 make professions of faith, with ten others wanting to know more. Pray as we follow up with these new believers to help them get on the path of following Jesus.

Psalm 27:1 contains a repeated question ... whom shall I fear ... of whom shall I be afraid? That gripping question sets the tone for this song composed by David. Fear, along with its cousin worry, is some of the most powerful forces in our lives. We've all felt that cloud of dread settle over us as we take an important test at school, have a frightening doctor's appointment, or get called into the boss's office.

ILLUSTRATION – One day a few years ago I was in a mall when I heard a woman scream, “My little boy. I can't find my little boy.” I turned to see this mother with sheer terror on her face. She was distracted with one of her other children and when she looked up her other child was missing. Well all's well that ends well. Mall security found the little boy who had wandered off. If you're a parent you know that dreadful feeling.

Now scholars are not certain as to what might have caused David to have fear on his mind in this psalm. Some think it was when David was being chased by King Saul. Remember that the Lord rejected King Saul and anointed David to become the next king. But before that actually happened Saul, in a jealous rage, chased David all over Israel to try to kill him. Other scholars think that the attacks came later in David's life. After David became king his own son Absalom led a rebellion to dethrone and ultimately to kill his father. David is outnumbered, humiliated, and in very real danger, so he runs for his life.

Whatever the case David likely wrote this psalm, this song, while he was holed up somewhere, surrounded by threatening enemies. He's in a fearful situation but he's not crippled or paralyzed by fear because he knows that God is greater than any threat that comes against him. Isn't it amazing that out of this threatening situation comes this God-glorifying song? Out of the test comes the testimony. Out of the mess comes a message.

The purpose of this psalm is to show us how to pray, how to praise, and how to stay strong in the face of fearful threats.

1. FACE YOUR FEARS WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

Psalm 27:1 - 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?

When you're in a dark predicament, the Lord is your light. When you're in a harmful situation, the Lord is your salvation (your safety). When you're in threatening circumstances the Lord is the stronghold (your fortress) in which you take shelter. God is greater than anything or anyone that threatens you. Notice this is personal. David says the Lord is *my* light, *my* salvation, *my* stronghold.

Now when we read this psalm through the lens of the Gospel we understand that while we face many threats in life, our greatest threat is our sin and the spiritual death that results from it. The NT shows us that Christ is the light of the world. He is the Savior who brings salvation. He is our stronghold in life. As believers we have been saved from the most intimidating threat ... the threat of having to face a holy God with lives filled with sin. Jesus takes care of that when we trust in Him. The sentence against our sin has been satisfied; the execution we deserved has been canceled. And knowing that God has eliminated that greatest of threat gives us confidence in the face of everything else that threatens us.

ILLUSTRATION – I have a friend who almost died a few years ago, but he was dramatically healed. Now he's a different man. He tells me that he doesn't sweat the small stuff anymore. When you've been spared from the ultimate danger, you don't see other threatening circumstances in the same way. And if we truly knew and understood how desperately lost we were in our sin, and how in danger of eternal judgment we were apart from Him, and if we truly understood the heights of God's love that rescued us through the death and resurrection of Christ, then we would never be crippled by the fear again.

You see, what David knows about God gives him confidence in the face of the enemies that threaten him.

Psalm 27:2 - When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.

His enemies are like wild animals that want to devour him. But they will be the ones who stumble and fall, not David.

Psalm 27:3 - Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.

I notice in vv.2-3 the words “attack me,” “besiege me,” “against me,” and I think of Paul’s words in...

Romans 8:31b-32 - If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Face your fears with confidence in God. Next...

2. FACE YOUR FEARS WITH CONCENTRATION ON GOD.

Here is the secret to David’s confidence. There was one thing he had lashed his life to ... one thing he concentrated on.

Psalm 27:4 - One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: 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 seek him in his temple.

If you asked David what was the “one thing” in his life ... the singular focus and concentration of his life, this is it. He doesn’t ask to be happy or healthy or wealthy. He doesn’t even ask for the threats to be removed. He asks to seek and to see God.

This dwelling in the house of the Lord ... this gazing upon the beauty of the Lord ... this seeking of God in his temple simply means that David concentrates on all that is true about God. The house of the Lord or temple was not the Temple in Jerusalem. That was built later by David’s son, Solomon. This would have been either the literal tent in which was kept the Ark of the Covenant ... or it was simply a figurative way of describing the heavenly place where God dwells. David said, “That’s where I want to be.”

Psalm 27:5-6 - For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his

tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.

His enemies could not get the best of David. His focus is on seeking the Lord, worshipping the Lord, connecting with the Lord. And because of that he possessed a peace that could not be touched by the attacks of his enemies.

ILLUSTRATION – Jonathan Edwards was one of the most important spiritual leaders in America in the 1700s. He was a great thinker, theologian and pastor in Massachusetts. But as prominent and important as he was one day his church fired him over a controversy about the Lord's Supper. One of Jonathan Edwards' biographers said this of his attitude through that painful ordeal: "That faithful witness received the shock unshaken. I never saw the least symptoms of displeasure in his countenance the whole week, but he appeared like a man of God, *whose happiness was out of the reach of his enemies*, and whose treasure was not only a future but a present good, overbalancing all imaginable ills of life, even to the astonishment of many, who could not be at rest without his (firing)."

How do we concentrate on the Lord like David describes here? It starts with our time alone with God every day in His Word and in prayer. Our communion with God in that quiet time wells up in personal worship. Then we bring that worship with us to church where we blend it with the worship of other believers. When we seek the Lord in this way Philippians 4:7 says, "the peace of God that transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Face your fears with confidence in God and with your concentration on God. Also...

3. FACE YOUR FEARS BY CRYING OUT TO GOD.

In spite of the confidence David possesses, his tone changes here. He's confident in the Lord, but things around still threaten him. He must keep praying.

Psalm 27:7 - Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me.

David prayed about his problems. Do you? When that feeling of dread comes over you do you pray or do you allow yourself to be swallowed up by the fear and dread. David prayed aloud with his voice. There's something about getting our prayer out of our mind and on to our lips.

Psalm 27:8 - My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek.

The ESV has v.8 slightly different ... "You have said, 'Seek my face.'" This was actually an invitation, even a command, for David to seek the face of God. And David obeys, "Your face, Lord, I will seek." Most of our praying is not focused on the face of God but on His hand. We seek what He might give us or do for us. To seek the face of the Lord is to be focused on who He is ... to base our prayers on His character and His name. It is to seek the smile of His favor upon our lives ... His grace.

Psalm 27:9-10 - Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.

David is just being gut honest here: "Lord, don't ignore me. I need your favor and your acceptance. I can't bear the thought of being rejected by you." But he's still confident. God's love is more certain than our most trusted relationships. When we seek His face, the Lord will not hide Himself from us.

Now here's an important part of our crying out to God when we feel threatened:

Psalm 27:11 - Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

Even when he is surrounded by threatening circumstances David wants to grow; "teach me ... lead me."

ILLUSTRATION – Over the weekend I got a text from a pastor friend who is going through a really tough time in his church. He said, "I find myself praying that cliché prayer, 'Lord, change them or change me ... or both.'" David says, "Lord, teach me what you want me to learn even while I am walking through a minefield." It's in desperate situations that our faith is tested and strengthened.

Psalm 27:12 - Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence.

David says, "Lord, I don't want the desire of my enemies to prevail in my life. I want Your will to be done." What a powerful way to cry out to God in the face of

your fears. So when you find your confidence in God and your concentration is on God and when you are crying out to God then you will...

4. FACE YOUR FEARS WITH COURAGE FROM GOD.

Psalm 27:13 - I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

“I still trust, I still believe, I am still certain, that I will see God’s goodness in all of this.” And out of the confidence and courage David has found in the Lord he calls us to courage in the face of fear. Hear David!

Psalm 27:14 - Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

In the words of the great theologian John Wayne, “Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway.”

Child of God, follower of Jesus, your threatening circumstances are not a dark cave where you will be trapped forever. Our threatening circumstances are a tunnel. Yes, tunnels can be dark for a while, but at the other end there’s the Lord who is our light and our salvation and our stronghold . The God who brings you into it will bring you through it.

Wait for the Lord. Don’t run ahead of Him. Give God time to work. Keep worshipping while you’re waiting. Be strong and take heart. Again, wait for the Lord.

Isaiah 41:10 - So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.