

Confidence Psalms

Psalm 27

August 25, 2019

Please read Psalm 27 before reading further in this transcript.

Do you ever feel like this world is conspiring against you? David did. In fact, that's why he wrote Psalm 27. He was not only processing the reality of his difficult circumstances, but he was also articulating the framework, by which he would address those circumstances. David writes down a few key principles for how to handle difficult circumstances and difficult people in this world. Today, we'll try to learn from David, as he records this portion of God's Word. We'll take a look at both fear and confidence. These are two opposite states of mind. If you google antonyms for fear, you'll find that it lists confidence.¹ So the opposite of fear is confidence. But, interestingly enough, if you Google antonyms for confidence, instead of finding fear, you find something else. The antonyms listed for confidence are distrust and uncertainty. This actually makes sense though, because our fears are often directly linked to our lack of trust. In other words, confidence is all about trust; believing that you can rely on someone. Being certain of the hope that you have in them. David's confidence was deeply embedded in a firm trust in God. That made all the difference for him; for how he lived, for how he faced his fears, and for how he faced the daily pressures of a world that seemed to be conspiring against him. Confidence was the key. That's why we list Psalm 27 among the "Confidence Psalms." If you are wrestling with fear and uncertainty, then Psalm 27 is "just what the doctor ordered." You may also want to consider reading some other Confidence Psalms, like Psalms 46 and 138.² For today, let's concentrate on Psalm 27. In Psalm 27, David gives us a few key examples of how to face life's difficulties. The 1st thing that we need to do when facing difficulties is to...

1) Declare our confidence in the LORD.

a. In verses 1-3, **David declares his confidence in the LORD by saying it out loud.**

In the face of his fears, David begins with a strong, clear declaration of his faith. In Psalm 27:1 he says, "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?" The best way to handle our fears is to keep our focus on God. To be single-minded. Rather than allowing our fears to distract us from God, we allow God to distract us from our fears. We flip it around. As one author puts it, "a preoccupation with God... and his will... is the essence... of discipleship."³

David wasn't afraid. He could say it out loud, with confidence, because of the fact that he was in close communion with the LORD. The LORD was his light and his salvation; the stronghold of his life. He KNEW this to be true and it bolstered his confidence. And yet, as humans, we are afraid of all kinds of things. It is helpful to examine our fears because they serve a very important function: they reveal where our confidence truly lies.⁴ It can be difficult to admit, but it's important to note, how our fears point out, what we truly believe and what we genuinely love. They show what we are putting our trust in. David models for us where our trust needs to be: our confidence, needs to be, in the LORD. That's why, in verses 2-3, he can list off the wickedness of his enemies and the war breaking out against him, and yet, not feel fear in his heart. David ends verse 3 by saying, "...even then I will be confident."

b. In verses 4-6, **David also declares His confidence in the LORD by seeking His presence.**

In his "day of trouble," while his enemies surrounded him, He presses in toward God. Rather than seeking after help in other places or coping in other ways, David draws near to his LORD. This begs the question for each of us: In times of trouble, what is our "go to" coping mechanism? WHERE do we turn; WHO do we turn to?

¹ And calmness.

² Also consider Psalms 42-43.

³ Derek Kidner, Psalms 1-72, IVP, Downer's Grove, IL, 2008, p. 138

⁴ See Timothy and Kathy Keller, *The Songs of Jesus*, Viking, New York, NY, 2015, p. 50.

In verses 4-5, David uses four different words to describe the place where God is:⁵ His House, His Temple, His Dwelling, His Sacred Tent. All of these have a little different nuance. Bible scholars will sometimes examine specific words like these to determine what time in history a particular Psalm may have been written. For example, the reference to God's Sacred Tent makes us think of the Tabernacle, where God's people worshipped BEFORE Solomon built God's temple. However, verse 4 mentions the temple. So maybe this Psalm was written AFTER the temple was completed. If so, that would mean that this "Psalm of David" may not have been written BY David but rather in honor OF David. However, King David longed for the day the temple would be built, so he may have been anticipating that day. So, it's quite likely that David did write Psalm 27. Frankly, it's hard to be certain either way.

This kind of scholarly debate can miss the main point: WHEREVER God is, that's where the Psalm writer wants to be!⁶ To be IN God's presence: in His house, in His temple, in His dwelling, or in His sacred tent.⁷ That's why David wanted to be there, because GOD was there. It's why He seeks after this as the "one thing" that he asks from the LORD in verse 4.⁸

Now, a good case could be made at this point for the importance of consistent church attendance... So, let me make that point: every Christ-follower should attend church consistently. If you are thinking, "Well Pastor Jerry, what does consistently mean?" Well, by definition, consistently would be weekly. So that would be the ultimate goal to try for. If that seems like a lot, look at what David says. Interestingly enough, in verse 4, David says he wants to dwell in LORD's house, "ALL the days" of his life. Not just weekly on the sabbath, but every day of the week. However, we shouldn't take this too literally. David wasn't saying that he just wanted to hang out in God's house 24/7 and never spend any time in the world around him.⁹ In fact, "It would be a serious misreading of [David's] prayer to conclude that he wanted to exchange public life for the life of a...monk. ... what [David] wanted was to enjoy daily and forever what the Temple stood for – the presence of God."¹⁰ In other words, we find our confidence, not by permanently hiding out in the church, but by daily abiding in God's presence.

There is a powerful little phrase in verse 4; David talks about wanting to "to gaze on the beauty of the LORD." I almost missed this but a book by Tim and Kathy Keller helped me see an important truth here. "'Gazing' is not a one-time glimpse but a steady, sustained focus."¹¹ That's worth thinking about. When you draw near to God, is it just for a "quick peek?" Or, is it for an extended gaze, for a good loooong while?

When my wife, Debbie, and I spent a day in Paris, it was really amazing to look around the Louvre. Some of the paintings were just massive. It honestly took 5-10 minutes just to look at all the details on a single canvas! Some were as much as 25 feet high and 30 feet wide! Some of the sculptures were so incredibly life-like, you couldn't help but walk around them a few times and marvel at their artistry. At times, I wanted to watch them for a few minutes just to see if there was any movement. They looked soooo life-like. Here's the point: when we find something truly beautiful, we don't just take a snapshot and move on. We linger. We stay for a while. We need to learn to do this in God's presence. We need to slow down, stand still, and gaze at His beauty. "David finds God beautiful, not just useful for [answering prayers],"¹² but beautiful.



⁵ Psalm 26:8 echoes these thoughts, "LORD, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells."

⁶ *The Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1010.

⁷ The Jewish people connected the earthly tabernacle and the temple with something far greater than the mere fabric or building blocks. Whether it was the tabernacle or the temple, God's earthly residence was directly connected to His heavenly throne. The throne from which God rules over the entire world. *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 866.

⁸ Dwell "Not as a priest but as God's welcome guest." *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 870.

⁹ However, Revelation 21:22-23 speaks of our future reality, "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp." The Tabernacle and the earthly temple were temporary symbols for being in God's presence. Verse 23 connects well with Psalm 27:1, the LORD is indeed our light!

¹⁰ Ben Patterson, *God's Prayer Book*, Tyndale, Carol Stream, IL, 2008, p. 92.

¹¹ Timothy and Kathy Keller, *The Songs of Jesus*, Viking, New York, NY, 2015, p. 49

¹² Timothy and Kathy Keller, *The Songs of Jesus*, Viking, New York, NY, 2015, p. 49

Let's move on to verses 7-12. When facing difficulties, we also need to...

2) Voice our prayer.

In verses 7-12, David switches to the 2nd person. He is no longer making declarative statements about his faith and confidence in God. Now He is calling out to God in prayer. In fact, after having just expressed that he is seeking God's presence, He then enters His presence; He goes to God through prayer. He specifically connects his desire with his action in Psalm 27:8, "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." I like the way that the New Living Translation says this from another angle: "My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.' And my heart responds, 'LORD, I am coming.'" Prayer is an open invitation from God to come near to Him, to talk with Him, and to listen to Him. Seeking God's face is an incredibly personal decision.¹³ It shows a desire for close communion, for deeper intimacy with God.¹⁴

This deeper intimacy is actually quite blatant in verse 10, but it doesn't quite come across in the English translation.¹⁵ Psalm 27:10 says, "Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me." That phrase **"the LORD will receive me,"** is powerful when contrasted next to the idea of my father and mother forsaking me. Some of us can relate to this personally. It is also powerful because it is the LORD, that is Yahweh (note how all 4 letters are capitalized signifying God's special, personal covenant name). He is the One who is receiving him! However, there is even more to it. The verb "receive" is a particular kind of expression in the Hebrew. It's a picture "of a father lifting up his child with the intent of providing for [their] needs."¹⁶ In other words, as David prays and brings his requests before God, He pictures himself coming to his Heavenly Father, who picks him up with the intent of meeting his need. It's a very personal way of understanding prayer.

Verse 11 makes something else clear though, "Teach me your way, LORD; lead me in a straight path..." David makes us aware, that coming to God in prayer, means not only asking for what we need, but also intending to live God's way and to walk in obedience to His rule.¹⁷ Again, this ties in with an understanding that God is our Heavenly Father; He is to be loved but He is also to be obeyed. In Psalm 27, David doesn't just want to be delivered from his troubles; he also sincerely wants to know God better and to learn to live according to His ways.¹⁸ There is a direct application here, for us today. When you pray, don't just ask God to get you out of your current crisis. Seek His face. Learn His ways. Obey His truth.

The final thing that we need to do, when facing difficulties, is to...

3) Hang on to our confidence!

In verses 13-14, David summarizes his opening faith declaration and his words of prayer, first with a closing statement and then with a closing exhortation. His closing statement is in Psalm 27:13, "I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." I won't just proclaim my confidence in the LORD today, I will hang on to this confidence. I will stay the course. I will trust in the unchanging goodness and faithfulness of God today, and tomorrow, and the next day. For as many days as it takes. And, "I will see the goodness of the LORD" in THIS lifetime. That's what he means by "the land of the living." David isn't just trusting God to reconcile things at the end of time, in the final judgment. What David is saying here is that God will come through. One way or another, according to His perfect plan and His perfect timing, I will see His goodness in my lifetime. It's a bold statement. It's his closing declaration of confident trust.

¹³ Scripture records only two people who saw God "face to face:" Jacob (Genesis 32:30) and Moses (Exodus 33:11, Deuteronomy 34:10). When Moses asks to see God's glory in Exodus 33:18, God explains in verse 20 that "no one may see me and live." But note Numbers 14:14; Deuteronomy 5:4; Judges 6:2; and Psalm 11:7. Also consider John 1:18, 6:46; and 1 John 4:12.

¹⁴ It can also be a dangerous pursuit because God is incredibly holy and terribly powerful.

¹⁵ However, look up this verse in the *ESV*, *NKJV*, and *NASB*. Note the diversity of translations.

¹⁶ Willem A. VanGemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*, Vol. 5, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008, p. 285.

¹⁷ Note the connection between learning obedience and asking for God's help in Psalm 24:3-6; 25:8-10; and 26:8-11.

¹⁸ The Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1010.

This leads right into his closing exhortation in Psalm 27:14, “Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”¹⁹ As a guy who has been through a lot of hardships in his life, but who has also experienced the LORD’s faithfulness and trustworthiness, David now gives his readers some godly advice: Hang in there! Hang on to your confidence in the LORD! Your faith is well-placed. God will come through for you; just you wait and see!²⁰ It feels like there should be an exclamation point at the end of v. 14! “Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD!”

As a closing prayer, consider the words from the classic hymn, “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.” If you feel comfortable, read it or sing it out as a declaration of your confidence in the LORD. Say it OUT LOUD. And, not just in the church sanctuary, but everywhere you go throughout the upcoming week, seek God’s presence. Voice your prayers to Him. Brother or Sister in Christ, hang on to your confidence in the LORD!

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms!
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms!

Leaning, leaning, Safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.

O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms!
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms!

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms!
I have peace complete with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms!

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¹⁹ See 1 Corinthians 16:13. Also, Psalm 31:24 says, “Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD.” Psalm 27 and 31 are thematically linked. *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 882.

²⁰ Psalm 26:3 says, “for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.”