

## ECF 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018 Psalm 27 We Don't Need To Be Afraid

100 years ago today, World War 1 finally came to an end. On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918, a ceasefire came into effect which formally ended a conflict that brought death and suffering to millions.

It is impossible to be certain about the exact cost of this war, but it is estimated that something like 9 million soldiers were killed and another 20 million injured. In addition, between 7 and 13 million civilians died as a direct result of the war.

It was so catastrophic that some people called it "The war to end all wars." But of course, tragically, that clearly was not the case. The world was at war again barely 2 decades later.

And conflict and violence continues in this world today. There is ongoing deadly conflict in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the Yemen and Somalia there is ongoing deadly conflict. And the threat of terrorism impacts all of our lives.

And even here at home, although we're not the most dangerous place to live, still there were 76 people murdered last year, and crime statistics state that on average 1 in every 18 people will be a victim of crime in any year. 100 years on from the war to end all wars, we still live in a dangerous world.

And yet in Psalm 27, David claims that we don't need to be afraid.

"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?

<sup>2</sup>When evil men advance against me  
to devour my flesh,  
when my enemies and my foes attack me,  
they will stumble and fall.

<sup>3</sup>Though an army besiege me,  
my heart will not fear;

though war break out against me,  
even then will I be confident.

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>Hear my voice when I call, O Lord;  
be merciful to me and answer me.

<sup>8</sup>My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"  
Your face, Lord, I will seek.

<sup>9</sup>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 Saviour.

<sup>10</sup>Though my father and mother forsake me,  
the Lord will receive me.

<sup>11</sup>Teach me your way, O Lord;  
lead me in a straight path  
because of my oppressors.

<sup>12</sup>Do not hand me over to the desire of my foes,

for false witnesses rise up against me,  
breathing out violence.

<sup>13</sup> I am still confident of this:

I will see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living.

<sup>14</sup> Wait for the Lord;

be strong and take heart  
and wait for the Lord.”

### 1. No Need to Fear

This psalm starts with an amazing declaration of confidence. David said things like:

“Whom shall I fear?... Of Whom shall I be afraid!” Psalm 27:1

“My heart will not fear... I will be confident.” Psalm 27:3

David believed that he did not need to be afraid. Fear, terror, dread or panic did not need to dominate his thoughts and his emotions. He did not need to live in constant worry or anxiety. But why? Why could he say that he did not need to be afraid?

#### a) Even in Danger

Well, this was not because he lived a sheltered and secure life where he was completely insulated from all threats. Neither was it because he naively thought that everything was great in his life, when it wasn't.

David was all too aware of the life-threatening dangers around him. He believed that he didn't need to fear, even:

“When evil men advance against me

to devour my flesh,

when my enemies and my foes attack me...

Though an army besiege me...

though war break out against me.” Psalm 27:2-3

And this isn't hyperbole here. David wasn't exaggerating for poetic impact. He wasn't making a mountain out of a molehill. Throughout his life David actually was surrounded by evil men who used violence and deception to try to attack and kill him.

So this psalm of amazing confidence is not written for people living in a perfect world of peace and tranquility. Instead, this psalm is written for people who are living in a world with very real dangers and threats.

And that is good news for us, because Jesus didn't promise us an easy life. Instead he said, “In this world you will have trouble.” John 16:33 So this psalm is relevant for us today, no matter how hard our lives are.

#### b) Even in Weakness

So why could David be so confident in the face of these very real dangers? Well, it wasn't because he thought he was strong and able to handle anything that anyone threw at him. This is not a psalm of self-confidence.

David was not claiming to have the strength to overcome his enemies. He didn't talk about his skill with a sling or sword. He didn't boast about his military experiences or past victories. He didn't stress the strength of his city walls or the size of his army.

In fact, as we'll see, this is a psalm where David expressed his weakness, his need for help. It is a psalm where he prayed things like: “Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Saviour.” Psalm 27:9

And that is good news for us too, because if we're honest none of us have the strength in of ourselves that we need. No matter how strong or capable or experienced we are, no matter what self-defence courses we've been on, or alarm systems we've installed, or health checks we go for, or insurances we've paid for, or seat belts that we wear, we cannot keep ourselves safe from every danger.

Jesus asked: “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” Matthew 6:27 And James stated: “You do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” James 4:14

But the good news is that our weaknesses and limitations don't mean that we need to live in constant fear and terror,

because the secret of fearlessness is not in our strength or our ability to control everything in our world. We do not need to fear, even although we cannot keep ourselves safe.

So the question is this: If David was so aware of the dangers that surrounded him, and the weaknesses that was in him, why could he so confidently declare that he did not need to be afraid?

## 2. Depend on the Lord's Protection

Well, first of all, the answer is that David depended on the Lord's protection. In v1, David used three metaphors to describe the Lord:

### a) Our Light

Firstly: ["The Lord is my light."](#) Psalm 27:1 Fear is often associated with the dark, because we can't see what's up ahead or what is around the corner, and because in the dark people do terrible things.

In 1977, New York City was plunged into darkness after lightning strikes caused a massive power cut. As a result, over 1,600 shops were looted, and riots broke out that resulted in 3,700 arrests and 550 police officers being injured.

But Jesus is the one who dispels the darkness of fear, uncertainty and evil, and he brings us into the light of his love and his life. He said, ["I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."](#) John 8:12

### b) Our Salvation

Secondly, David said, ["The Lord is... my salvation."](#) Psalm 27:1 We often face situations where we cannot protect ourselves. Our enemies are all around us, especially our enemy the Devil. He is too strong for us. But the Lord is the one who can deliver us, no matter what the dangers.

When David was faced with the giant Philistine Goliath, he confidently said: ["The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."](#) 1 Samuel 17:37

And we too can trust in the deliverance of the Lord in our lives. The apostles declared about Jesus: ["Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."](#) Acts 4:12

Jesus is the only Saviour that we need. Because of his sacrificial death and glorious resurrection, he can save us from the penalty of sin, the power of sin and ultimately from the presence of sin when he brings us to be with him for ever.

### c) Our Refuge

And he can keep us safe. Thirdly, David said, ["The Lord is the stronghold of my life."](#) Psalm 27:1. David didn't depend on the walls of Jerusalem to keep him safe. Instead he took refuge in the Lord and the protection he alone can give.

And Jesus promised his followers: ["I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand."](#) John 10:28 Jesus is the one who holds us safely in his hands.

So this is who David knew the Lord to be. But crucially, this was not just a statement of theology. Rather this was a statement of faith. He was not just describing who the Lord is – but who the Lord is to him! The Lord was his light, his salvation and his stronghold.

David was not afraid because he had put his faith, his trust in the Lord. He was depending on him. And he was sure that he could keep him safe.

And if we have put our trust in Jesus, then we can rest in the knowledge that he is our light, our salvation and our stronghold. As Hebrews 13:6 says, ["So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?""](#)

## 3. Seek the Lord's Presence

But secondly, David did not need to be afraid because he longed for the Lord's presence. ["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."](#) Psalm 27:4

This was David's deepest desire. This was his consuming passion. What he wanted above all else, was to dwell in the house of the Lord.

#### a) Because We Need The Lord

This wasn't because he loved the splendour of the building. In fact, it was just a tent throughout his life. Neither was it because he loved the ritual and ceremony of the sacrificial system.

Instead, it was in part because he knew that he needed the Lord. "For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling." Psalm 27:5 He longed for the Lord's presence, because he knew that in the presence of God, he would be safe.

#### b) Because We Love The Lord

But more than that, this was because he loved the Lord. He wanted "to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple." Psalm 27:4 He was so amazed by the glory, the majesty, the wonder and power of the Lord, that above everything else, David just wanted to experience more of him in his life.

And so he longed for the Lord's presence, because he knew that the Lord would fill his heart with joy: "At his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord." Psalm 27:6

#### c) Because The Lord Will Not Leave Us

And this is why David didn't need to be afraid. If his greatest desire was for power or fame or wealth or pleasure or health or good looks, then David could never be free of fear, because in the end those things will always fade.

But David didn't need to be afraid, because what he longed for most of all was the Lord's presence, and he could be sure that the Lord would never leave him. He could say, "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." Psalm 27:10

This was also the reason for Paul's fearlessness in his life. He wrote: "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Philippians 3:8 His greatest treasure was knowing Christ, not just because he needed him, but because he loved him. So he wasn't afraid to lose everything else.

And because of this, Paul could face arrest, imprisonment and even the prospect of death with amazing courage. He wrote from a prison cell, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21

He knew that whatever happened to him, he couldn't lose what really mattered. If he was released, he would continue to serve Christ with everything he had. And if he was killed, he would go to be with Christ, which was better by far.

And if what we long for most of all is the Lord's presence, if what we treasure most of all is Christ, then we have nothing to fear – because if we've trusted in Jesus, then nothing and no-one can ever separate us from his love. He has promised: "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

## 4. Turn to the Lord In Prayer

So David didn't need to be afraid because he was depending on the Lord's protection and seeking the Lord's presence. But this didn't mean that David just sailed through life without an anxious thought. He was a human being just like us, and so he had times when fears and worries invaded his heart and mind.

But even then, he wasn't paralysed by those fears, because he brought them to the Lord in prayer. "Hear my voice when I call, O Lord; be merciful to me and answer me." Psalm 27:7

Again we can see David's humility here. He did not demand an answer from God because he thought that he had earned it. Instead, he pleaded for God's mercy, because he needed help, even although he knew that he didn't deserve it.

#### a) Pray for Direction

And so he humbly asked for direction.

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

#### b) Pray for Protection

And secondly, he asked for the Lord's protection:

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

Our faith in the Lord doesn't mean that we will never experience fear or anxiety. But our faith in the Lord means that when anxious times do come, when fears threaten to overwhelm us, when we don't know what to do, what to say or where to go, when we feel under attack and in danger – then we can turn to the Lord in prayer.

Philippians 4:6-7 says: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

#### 5. Wait For The Lord in Hope

And it seems like David experienced this peace when he prayed. After his prayer came another declaration of faith:

“I am still confident of this:  
I will see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living.” Psalm 27:13

Despite the problems and challenges around him, David He was sure that he could depend on the Lord to continue to bless his life.

But David did not presume to know how and when the Lord was going to work in his life. Instead he concluded this psalm with a call to wait:

“Wait for the Lord;  
be strong and take heart  
and wait for the Lord.” Psalm 27:14

God doesn't always work when and how we want. His ways are higher and better than ours. But we can rest and wait for the Lord in hope, confident that “In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

#### Conclusion

We live in a dangerous and violent world. Threat and hazards are all around us. But fear and terror do not need to dominate our thoughts and emotions. We do not need to live in constant worry or anxiety.

If we

- Depend on the Lord's protection
- Seek the Lord's presence
- Turn to the Lord in prayer
- And wait for the Lord in hope

then we can say with David: “The lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?” Psalm 27:1

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