

## **“The Wait was Worth It”**

### **Psalm 27**

December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020

*Have you seen the band shell here in Aledo’s Central Park after dark?* Often, there is a light in the band shell that transitions through the colors of the rainbow – I have, on more than one occasion, stood and watched the colors change.

All of my life, I have enjoyed the lights of Christmas. I especially like multi-colored lights on trees with a few of those lights blinking; Jan prefers white lights with none of them blinking. As far as I’m concerned, the more lights the better the tree, wreath, banister, chimney mantle, door or window frame. *And, what about those bubble lights after they’re heated up enough for the water to percolate?* So cool!

I love these trees, too. Remember our first Christmas in this building? These trees were each decorated with like 500 LED lights; it was so neat, but the likelihood of your eyes burning in their sockets was pretty high!

Whether it’s artificial lighting, as we’ve been discussing, or natural light, I much prefer the light to darkness.

On the farm where I grew up, we had a single vapor light on a pole halfway between the barns and house. The light came on automatically at dusk, and stayed lit until it detected daylight and turned off. We parked our cars in those barns; the distance from the barns to the house was about 100 yards. At night it could be pretty scary to park the car in one of those barns and then beat feet to the house. I’d have preferred 5 or 6 more vapor lights!

Light is a topic in the passage of Scripture we examine today. Given this is the Sunday before Christmas 2020, and when I was last in the pulpit two Sundays ago we concluded our study of **Romans Chapter 13**, we reached a point where we could focus the today’s message, and the one for this Thursday evening (Christmas Eve) on Christmas themes.

Most wouldn’t consider **Psalm 27** a Christmas passage, but there are some things it addresses that compel us to think of Christmas. Last Sunday’s call to worship consisted of the first five verses of this 27<sup>th</sup> Psalm.

#### **Psalm 27:**

“The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? <sup>2</sup>When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. <sup>3</sup>Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I *will be* confident. <sup>4</sup>One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.

<sup>5</sup>For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. <sup>6</sup>And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies

all around me; therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

<sup>7</sup> Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. <sup>8</sup> *When You said, "Seek My face,"* my heart said to You, "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 help; Do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. <sup>10</sup> When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me.

<sup>11</sup> Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. <sup>12</sup> Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence. <sup>13</sup> *I would have lost heart,* unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

<sup>14</sup> Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!"

*How could a believer in Jesus Christ not love the psalms?* Many of you whom I have prayed with or met with over the last several months have heard me read from this psalm – it's one of my favorites, especially verses 1-5 and 14. **Psalm 27** is one of the best-known and most comforting psalms in the Psalter.

**Psalm 27** is clearly focused upon God. In fact, the Lord God is mentioned 14 times in these 14 verses! Everything said in this psalm about God should be encouraging to us, and that encouragement is seen throughout its 14 verses. The first 6 verses seem to belong together and make up the first point, and verses 7-13 go together and make up the second point. Verse 14 is an apt closing encouragement.

The first six verses picture the **Christian's confidence as rooted in God**. As such, the believer in Jesus Christ is able to enjoy the calm assurance emanating from His sonship to God. Notice how God is described in these verses:

- **He is light (v. 1)**. This is the only Old Testament text in which God is actually called *light*. In **Psalm 18:28**, David says that God lights his lamp, therefore "the Lord (his) God will enlighten his darkness." Because God is *our* light, we need not fear because of darkness. Light also speaks of spiritual understanding, as opposed to the darkness of ignorance. *Because God is our light, whom could we possibly fear?* God and the believer in Jesus Christ is a majority!

*Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the bad news, the hopelessness of secular answers to spiritual problems?* I do sometimes. I've learned that when I am weak and weary, that I am actually strong. That's because my strength does not come from my powers, but through Jesus. Paul was afflicted by a thorn in his flesh (**2 Corinthians 12**). Paul pleaded with the Lord 3 times to remove it. *Do you remember what Jesus said in response?* "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

- **God is also described in verse 1 as salvation (v.1)**. The Hebrew word for "salvation" means "deliverance." Given this psalm was written by David, it likely concerns deliverance from his enemies. Spiritually speaking, God delivers us from sin through the death of His only Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. Because God is our salvation, our victory over sin is sure. *Because God is our salvation, I ask again, whom could we fear?*

- He is **strength** (stronghold) (v. 1). We need not fear because of our weakness. Moses and Israel were celebrating the Lord's majestic power in saving Israel at the waters of the Red Sea. Moses recorded in writing his song of deliverance as we read in **Exodus 15:2**, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation." David notes in **Psalms 62:7**, "In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge (stronghold), is in God." Both of these references tie together the salvation and strength David speaks of in the first verse of Psalm 27.

- God is described in this psalm as **beautiful** (v. 4). Old Testament saints realized that the place where they gathered together for worship (the tent, tabernacle, then temple) ought to reflect the beauty of God. They took great pains to make the worship space a reflection of God's beauty, which would also direct the attention of worshippers to God's beauty. As time passed, great cathedrals with very high ceilings, steeples, and massive stained glass windows were built, all designed to teach of God's beauty and majesty. Similarly, we intentionally designed this church building, especially this sanctuary, to be a place directing us to the beautiful God who is, and Who makes beautiful things!

But, what makes God's sanctuary beautiful is the gathering of kindred souls within it who have been redeemed from their sins and who strive to live in unity and harmony with each other. **Psalm 133:1** reads, "How good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity." *The Message* paraphrases it like this, "How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along!"

Unfortunately, this hasn't always been the case, especially this year for nearly every congregation including this one. It is not a beautiful thing when people who differ in terms of their politics, in terms of race, in terms of healthcare, and in terms of their preferences tear into one another because they won't bring themselves to reach across the pew and see things like those with whom they differ. It is not a beautiful thing to hear people insist that they don't care what others say, they're going to insist on doing it their way, because it is the right way if it is their way.

**Ecclesiastes 3:11** teaches us, "He (God) has made everything beautiful in its time." How I pray that we busy ourselves reaching out to those who differ - in love, not in legality; in service, not slandering, in deference, not demanding.

- He is our **hiding place** (v. 5) – "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me;" when God protects us, He takes us into His care. This same David who penned this **27<sup>th</sup> Psalm**, also wrote the **32<sup>nd</sup> Psalm**, where David writes of God, "You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance." The prophet Isaiah refers to the king who will reign in righteousness and princes who will rule with justice. In verse 2, we read, "A man will be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest (storm)...as the shadow of a great rock in

a weary land” (**Isaiah 32:2**).

Of the 168 hours in a given week, the time that ought to be a refuge for God’s people should be the hour or two we come together the first day of the week – Sunday, the Lord’s Day, where the Lord’s people are found in the Lord’s house about the Lord’s work of uniting in Christ.

With verses 7-13, the emphasis changes. No longer appearing confident, the psalmist David now comes across as concerned about himself. He seems to be concerned in his weakness. “It’s one thing to behold the Lord in the sanctuary and quite something else to see the enemy approaching on the battlefield” (Wiersbe, 108). Notice the indicators of a concerned, weakened state – we’ll look only at 3 of them.

- Verse 9 – “Do not **hide your face** from me.” Once God has revealed Himself to us through the Person and works of His only Son, Jesus, He will not hide from us. But, to David, there were times when it seemed as if God had hidden Himself from David. Though everything may be pointing in that direction, God will never abandon His children. Such is the promise of God’s Word in **Psalm 22:24**, “For (God) has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He (God) hidden His face from Him (Jesus); but when He (Jesus) cried to Him (God), He (God) heard.”
- Verse 9 – “Do not **leave me nor forsake me**.” We’re familiar with the opening verse of **Psalm 22** – “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” Those words, first written by David, became the words of Jesus as He hung on the cross at Calvary. Just before He died, Jesus cried out to God, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*” meaning, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me?” (**Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34**). God the Father did not leave God the Son, but if His turning His gaze away from the Son is what is being taught in Jesus’ applying **Psalm 22:1** to Himself, it must be because He became sin in our place. Jesus bore our hell in order that we might share His heaven. The late Dr. James Boice writes something helpful when he notes, “To be forsaken means to have the light of God’s countenance and the sense of His presence eclipsed, which is what happened to Jesus as He bore the wrath of God against us” (Boice, 194).

Verse 10 of this **27th Psalm** is applied to parents. “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me.” It is unfortunate in this fallen world that parents reject their children; children reject parents; husbands reject wives and wives, husbands. We are rejected by friends and family, the closest of human relations. Even so, God will never reject you –

*Do you feel as if God has left your building? Do you think there is no one who can help you through your current distress?* Draw near to God, and He will care for you. He often does this through a church family. If you’ve got numerous problems that seem out of your capacity to handle, but you also have not committed yourself to the membership of a church, you are cutting yourself off from legitimate help. And, if you are not part of a

church body, then start using your gifts (spiritual endowments from God) for the good of others, and you.

- The final indicator of concerned/weakness we'll explore today is found in Verse 13 – “**I would have lost heart**, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.” That term “to lose heart” is found in one other place in the Scriptures, and it's **2 Samuel 4:1**, where Saul's son Ishbosheth received news that his general Abner had died. Ishobosheth “lost heart, and all Israel was troubled.” To “lose heart” is to become discouraged. How easily that overtakes someone, especially in time of great stress, frustration, and loss.

Moving from verse 13 and a near “lost heart,” we move to verse 14 and an expression of courage from a strengthened heart. To “wait on the Lord” is to have faith in Him. In the last 6 weeks, we've lost 5 dear people from our fellowship, all of which were encouraging people to be around. Their positive outlook and their smiles and kind words were so very important.

As I prepared for Evelyn Sproston's funeral services that took place yesterday, I looked through the manila folder I have for John and Evelyn.

Among the other items in the folder was a card she had written to me in July 2014. It was meaningful to me then, but even more so now that the Lord has called her home. *(Read the card)*

How things like that help keep me from losing heart for the present. But, I wonder, *who will pick up Evelyn's mantle as an encourager of others?* There's so much going on that wars with encouragement

I hope you'll join me in memorizing verse 14 – so we can have it handy to remind ourselves, and those around us, that we are encouragers of others.

That first Christmas in Bethlehem, the wait was over. God's long-expected Jesus had come. Though it seemed to take forever, the wait was worth it! Our Redeemer had come! We now await His visible and physical return to earth from glory.