

Psalm 27

Thank you for joining me once again for a Thought for the Week from Killead & Loanends Presbyterian Churches.

One of the new things I have had to get to grips with over the past few weeks is taking regular medication. Last week I had to go to the pharmacy for a repeat prescription. Of course, that's something that's different these days - I had to queue and wait for my turn to go up to the partition and state my request and then wait until the prescription was ready. As I watched others collecting their prescriptions and looked in through the window, I began to think how amazing it is that there are so many medicines available to us today. Add to that there are all the over-the-counter products vitamins and supplements which we can purchase. And, of course, the pharmacy shelves are also stacked high with all sort of cosmetic and beauty products. All of these are there for one purpose - to make us feel better.

We thank God for all the drugs and pharmaceuticals available to us in this modern age which make life better for us and at this time we are more than ever grateful for them. But you know, it isn't just medicines, vitamins or even cosmetics that we need. We need something more - a word of encouragement from our Creator. So today I want us to turn to Psalm 27. One commentator has said that it is impossible to read through this psalm without feeling better when you have finished. There is something about it that is like a tranquiliser - it calms our fears. It's like a pain reliever that lessens the pains of life and it's like a mood enhancer that uplifts our souls. So, let's look at this wonderful psalm as medicine for our souls. They may be David's words, but they can also be our own personal words.

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?

² When the wicked advance against me to devour^[a] me,
it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.

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

⁴ One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

⁵ For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

⁶ Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice
with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.

⁷ Hear my voice when I call, LORD; be merciful to me and answer me.

⁸ My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek.

⁹ 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, God my Saviour.

¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.

¹¹ Teach me your way, LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

¹² Do not hand me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations.

¹³ I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

¹⁴ Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

In verse 1-3 David speaks as a man who faces every day with confidence, enthusiasm and optimism. That's something we all need in these uncertain days. David's confidence is not in himself or in his possessions or in other people it is in God. He believes that there is a God, not just that he exists, but that he knows him personally - he says he is "my light," "my salvation," and "the stronghold of my life." During the few days that I spent in hospital a few weeks ago, one of things I appreciated was the personal touch of all the medical staff. When the doctor who was to perform the angiogram spoke to me before the procedure I was reassured when he began by saying his name was Peader before he took great care to explain exactly what would happen. If we know God personally then we can have confidence that he is in control and that we really have nothing to fear even when things look the most bleak. We could all substitute our own experiences for those which David outlines in verse 2 and 3.

Then in verses 4-6 David explains further how his confidence can be boosted even further by being close to the Lord. He says he would like to move house and live with God. In the nomadic culture of the ancient Near East when a visitor entered a host's tent, the host was personally responsible for their protection and provision. The flimsy tent became a fortress. During this period of lockdown many of us are having to spend a lot more time with family than normal. While that may have its disadvantages, it can be a time when we can get to know them better. Spending time with God through prayer and bible reading can deepen our relationship with him and so boost our confidence that he is always there for us.

Then in verses 7-12 there is a sudden change in the tone of the psalm as David addressed the Lord directly. As he thinks about his relationship with God he is reminded how unworthy he is and so he confesses his sin and seeks reassurance from the fact that God is loving, merciful and forgiving. We too can know God's forgiveness and in this we have an advantage over David in that we know how God has dealt with our sin through the death of his Son, the Lord Jesus and that he will never reject anyone who is truly sorry for their sin and turns to Jesus.

Finally, in verses 13 & 14 David gives a personal testimony of his confidence in God. Like many of us, David had many problems, but he didn't give up on God. We have two options in life when we face problems - we can despair or we can depend, we can worry or we can worship, we can give up or we can look up, we can carry it ourselves or we can cast our cares on the Lord.

So, let's resolve to follow David's example in this psalm and as he says, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

Amen.