

What does God have to say to us?

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning and welcome to our service here at Buclough Free Church. It's great to have you with us, whether you're a regular part of the congregation or whether you're tuning in for the first time.

Today we are looking together at Psalm 27, one of David's psalms, which is an appropriate way to commence a new year, to have a firm foundation, to have a single-minded vision, and to be reminded of that relationship that we have with our God and with our Savior Jesus.

So as our call to worship, let me read a few verses from another psalm. This is Psalm 43, and I'll read verses 3 to 5. Send forth your light and your truth. Let them guide me.

Let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Let us now worship God. We're going to hear sung, and we can join our voices together in the hymn, All Creatures of Our God and King. All Creatures of Our God and King, Lift up your voice and with us sing.

[1 : 55] O praise Him, Alleluia. Thou burning sun with golden beam, Thou silver moon with softer gleam, O praise Him, O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son, Praise the Father, praise the Son, Praise the Father, praise the Son, Let all things there create to bless, And worship Him in humbleness, O praise Him, Alleluia, Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son, And praise the Son, and praise the Son, And praise the Spirit, three in one.

O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

All the Redeemed, washed by His blood, Come and rejoice in His great love, O praise Him, Alleluia, Christ has defeated every sin, Cast all your burdens now on Him O praise Him, O praise Him Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia He shall return in power to reign

Heaven and earth will join to sing O praise Him, Alleluia Then who shall fall on bended knee O creatures of our God and King O praise Him, O praise Him Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia So as we've joined our voices in praise, let's now unite our hearts in prayer. Let us pray.

[5 : 17] Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. We thank you for your gospel. And we thank you for your Son. So we give you thanks this morning for who you are. That you are the one who brings light. That you are the one who brings truth. And that you are the one who saves. And the one who sustains.

So it's our prayer today that we would magnify your name in our praise. That we would come to you with eager expectation in our prayer. And that we would listen to your word. Your word as it's read and proclaimed. And that we would receive and trust and go forth in the knowledge. That you are God. That you are good. And that Jesus is Savior. And that He is Lord.

We pray that you would give us ears to hear. That you would give us eyes to see. That you would give us hearts that are warmed and minds that are filled with the truth of God. Lord, we commit ourselves to you afresh at the commencement of this new year. We need your grace. We need your strength. We need your wisdom. We need your comfort. We need your courage.

You are the God who has created all things. You are the one who sustains all by the power of your word. And you and you alone are the one who redeems.

You are the one who restores what has been lost. You are the one who fixes what has been broken. And you are the one who brings hope and light out of despair and darkness.

[6 : 48] So we come to you in that precious and that powerful name of Jesus. Asking that He would be our focus. That He would be our delight. That He would be the foundation of our lives. That He would be the foundation of our witness.

We pray that as a church we might know much encouragement in this year to come. We thank you for every evidence of your goodness that we experienced last year. And we ask, Lord, that you

would continue to work in our congregation, within our number, and that you would work within our families and among our circles of friends.

We pray, too, that this church would be a blessing to the south side of Edinburgh. That we would be a point of light and a place of hope and a beacon where the gospel can be sounded forth and shined forth.

That others might see and come to know that Jesus is your Son. That He is the Savior who has come to seek and to save that which is lost.

So, Lord, as we turn to your Word, open our hearts, open our minds, direct our steps, guide our lives, and may we know that from beginning to end, and everything in between, that all that we are and all that we have comes from your gracious and good hand.

[8 : 09] And we offer you our praise, we come to you in prayer, and we come to you in the name of Jesus, our Lord and our Savior. Amen. Our reading today is Psalm 27.

Psalm 27 of David. 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 evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear.

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

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.

[9 : 18] 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.

Hear my voice when I call, O Lord. Be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, seek his face. Your face, Lord, I will seek.

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. Teach me your way, O Lord. Lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes for false witnesses. Rise up against me, breathing out violence. I am still confident of this.

[10 : 19] I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and take heart. And wait for the Lord.

Amen. So as we commence this new year, 2021, there's no better way to start than to consider what God has to say to us.

Now as we turn to the Bible, of course, we have God telling us all that we need to know about him, all that we need to know about ourselves, and all that we need to know about salvation.

But what we have, particularly in the book of Psalms, is a way in which we can respond to God.

God gives us the language for prayer, for response, for praise, for thanksgiving, for repentance.

So as we read the book of Psalms, we can better understand or better realize how we can respond to all that God is and respond to all that God does.

[11 : 22] And as we turn to Psalm 27, we have David reflecting on his own experience and giving us insight into the character of God, the nature of God, the life of faith.

And I'd like just to notice a few things from Psalm 27, I think, that can help us at the start of this new and hopefully better year. First of all, David begins with a foundation.

There's a foundation to his life. He is building his life on something other than himself. And we all need a foundation. If you remember the story of Jesus, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, he tells a parable of two builders.

Both build a house, but only one builds a house on rock. The other builds a house on sand. Now, the difference between the two is that the one who builds his house on sand simply hears the word of God, but doesn't do what it says.

Whereas the one who has a foundation that's built on rock, hears the words of Jesus, and does what Jesus tells him to do. So here David is saying that the Lord is my light and my salvation.

[12 : 36] Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life. So he gives us this threefold foundation. Light, salvation, and strongholder, or fortress.

Meaning that there is a security and a stability that comes from outside of himself. And first and foremost, that's the message of the Bible.

That everything that we have and everything that we need comes not from within, but from outside. The gift of life is from God.

The way in which life is sustained is from God. Salvation is from God. wisdom, guidance, direction, perseverance, preservation.

All of these are things that we need, but these are not things that we ourselves can produce. So David gives credit where credit is due. And he said, the Lord is my light.

[13 : 38] So David is not reflecting upon his battles or upon his authority or upon his prestige or power. But his foundation is rooted in the Lord in whom he trusts.

And notice here that David is making a personal statement. My light, my salvation, my life. And he's rooting that personal statement in the personal God.

The personal name of God, the Lord, or Jehovah, or Yahweh, is emphasized here throughout the psalm. Lord in capital letters is the covenant name or the personal name of God.

You see, our God is not abstract. He's personal. Our God is not an idea or a concept. He's the one who makes and sustains and redeems.

He's personal. He acts in a personal way. And he reveals himself to us personally. So David has a foundation that is necessary because he goes on to say, that he has enemies and foes.

[14 : 42] And they are so intent on his destruction that they would almost eat him up alive. It's as if he's surrounded and maybe literally surrounded by an army.

So in this setting, David needs light. Otherwise, there's only darkness. David needs salvation. Otherwise, there's only defeat.

And David needs a stronghold, a place of security, because there is no secure place to be found. And the Lord is that light that shines in darkness.

The Lord is that salvation that gives us hope in the midst of despair. And the Lord is that strong place, that fort or refuge to which we can always go.

So David has a threefold foundation that he tells us and commends to us. And I want to ask you this morning, what is the foundation for your life?

[15 : 43] What is the foundation for all that you are and all that you do? Is your foundation the same foundation, the light, the salvation, the fortress that is found in God and in God alone, the personal God that you can describe personally?

Because this light is not just light, it's my light. It's David's light and it's your light as well. So we have a personal God that we receive personally. Then David goes on to say that as one who has a firm foundation in the midst of trouble and crisis, he goes on to say that he has a single desire.

Now we all have many different interests. We have many different identities. David was a king. He was also a general. He was a husband.

He was a father. So he has different identities and different roles, different responsibilities. Yet he's able to have a singularity of focus. One thing. I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek.

So in verse 4, how would you finish that sentence? What is the one thing you're asking? What is the one thing that you're seeking? Because David has no hesitation.

[17 : 03] David says, the thing that I want, the thing that I need, that which I desire above all else, is the presence of God, is the comfort of God, is the safety of God, is the security of God.

He wants to be near God because he knows that that is the only place of security. That is the only place of safety. Anywhere else is danger.

Anywhere else, he'll be surrounded by evil. He'll be surrounded by danger. But he wants to be near God and he wants to see the beauty of God, that he can gaze upon the beauty of God and to seek him in his temple.

For in the day of trouble, he will keep me safe. Again, the Psalms giving us these great statements of faith and commitment.

He will keep me safe. He will keep you safe. He will keep us safe. Our faith is rooted in the one who brings safety and security, who brings peace, and who brings comfort.

[18 : 09] The one that we can go to for rescue, to hide ourselves in him. And the one that one day will place us high.

He will exalt us. Not because of who we are, but he will exalt us to show others the God in whom we trust, the faith that we profess.

You see, Jesus makes it quite clear that his people are to be a humble people, and that those who humble themselves he will exalt. The opposite, of course, is also true.

Jesus makes it clear that those who exalt themselves will be humbled. So here you have David, the king general, the commander-in-chief of the army, and he is saying that he needs help.

He's saying that he needs a refuge. He's saying that he needs comfort. So he's not resting upon his victories. He's not resting upon his prestige, but he's relying solely and singularly on the power and the promise of his God and of his Savior.

[19 : 19] So with a foundation and a focus, David then moves on to prayer. And sometimes, if we're honest, we don't know what to pray.

We don't know how to pray. Jesus taught his disciples, when you pray, our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. So he gives the Lord's prayer in the Sermon on the Mount.

And the Psalms give us these great examples or models that we can use for ourselves. So yes, this is David's testimony, but it's a testimony that's shared by all of God's people in all places and at all times.

Because notice here that there's a personal response. God's a personal God. And we respond personally. Hear my voice when I call, O Lord, be merciful to me and answer me, my heart.

So you see, there's something about the human heart. I think it was Augustine who said, you know, our hearts are restless until they find rest in you. There's something missing in the human heart that only God can provide.

[20 : 28] There's something lacking that only he can fill. So David's heart encourages him to seek God's face, to hear and to respond.

So this life of faith is very much a dialogue. We hear and we respond. We read and we reply. My heart says if you seek his face, your face, Lord, I will seek.

Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger. So you see, the worst thing possible are not the enemies, not the foreign armies, not the foes that want to destroy him or even to eat him alive.

But David's greatest fear is that God would turn away, that God would be absent. You see, that goes back to his singular focus, that he wants to dwell with God.

He wants to gaze on God. Now, he can't be with God or dwell on the beauty of God if God isn't with him, if God isn't for him, if God is turning away from him.

[21 : 35] So his prayer is for God. Now, when we pray, there are many things that we naturally pray for, and that's right. But first and foremost, we need God.

We need God in our lives. We need God in our families. We need God in our church. We need God in Edinburgh. We need God in Scotland. We need him.

We don't just need to know about him. We don't just need information. But we need him. We need his presence. We need his blessing. We need his salvation.

We need him to do his work in us. And only when he does his work in us can then he begin to do his work through us.

So David has this language of prayer. And he says, even if those closest to me would forsake me, he's confident in God's faithfulness.

[22 : 32] Remember the personal name, the Lord? It takes us back to his covenant, to his commitment, that our God cannot lie. He always tells the truth. You know, that's why Jesus, when Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, not only does Jesus speak the truth, he often says, verily, verily, I say unto you, or amen, amen, I say to you.

So Jesus speaks the truth, but Jesus is the truth. God is a truth-telling God, but God is truth itself. And as such, he cannot lie, he cannot compromise his fidelity, he cannot undermine in any way the commitments that he makes.

So David is able to say, in the worst possible scenario, if I have no one but God, I'm okay. But in the best possible other scenario, where everyone is for him, everyone is with him, and God is absent, that's the worst possible scenario for David.

So is God today with you? Is he for you? The Bible tells us that if God is for us, who can be against us? And how do we know if God is for us?

Well, he sent his son on a mission to seek and to save. That mission was a costly mission for him, but the cost that he bore is a benefit that we receive.

[23 : 57] So if God is for us, then Jesus is our Savior. He's the one who died, more than that, who was raised to life. He's seated at God's right hand.

So if we have this knowledge of God's faithfulness, his fidelity, and his commitment, that can only be rooted in the person and the work of his son.

David, in so many different ways, in the Psalms, points forward to the one who is the greater king, the one who is to come. We read of him in Psalm 22 of the crucifixion.

We read of him in Psalm 23, the Good Shepherd. John chapter 10, I am the Good Shepherd, says Jesus. We read of him as a conquering king who returns to reign in Psalm 24.

And here we are reminded that our God is a God who saves. He not only saves his people from their enemies and their foes, he saves us from sin, he saves us from death, he saves us from punishment, and David is saying that in response, he not only asks for God's help, but he asks for God's direction.

[25 : 17] You see, David is a prayer, he's one who prays, but David is also a pilgrim. And each of us are the same. If we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to be prayers and we are to be pilgrims.

Prayers are those who speak to God and listen, pilgrims are those who are on a journey. And if you're on a journey, you need a road map. You need direction.

And David says, I need direction. Teach me your way, O Lord. Lead me in a straight path. David realizes that the path that God leads is the only path of safety.

Veering off to the right or to the left is danger. Why? Because enemies are constantly there. prayer. So, as we come to God in prayer, we speak to him.

We pour out our heart to him. We come to him for help, for grace, for forgiveness, for mercy. And we come to him for direction. So, you see, there's always this two-way dialogue.

[26 : 23] God speaks and we listen. We speak and God responds. And we follow the response that we get. God leads. God teaches.

We learn. We follow. David, again, in verse 12, is very much aware of the foes. He's aware of the false witnesses.

He's aware of those who are breathing out violence as if he can feel their breath on his neck.

They're that close. That's why he wants to be so close to God.

Because the enemies are all around. The dangers. the world, the flesh, the devil. We don't need to search far to see those who would do us harm.

Those who would do us in. But notice, as we come to the end, we begin with that confident and that firm foundation. We then have this message of hope for the future.

[27 : 22] Now, nobody can tell the future. We have hopes that 2021 will be better than 2020. We hope and we pray. the doctors are telling us, the experts are saying, we look forward to new vaccines, but not one of us can tell the future.

But notice what David is saying here in verses 13 and 14. And when we look at the Psalms, always pay careful attention to the beginning and the end. Because often that is where the emphasis is.

The emphasis in the beginning. My light, my salvation, the stronghold of my life. And then at the end, I am still confident of this. I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

So not only does David have a past experience of God, not only does he have a present relationship with God, but he has a confident hope for the future with God.

That the God he's trusted, that the God who's answered, that the God who's helped, will continue to do so. Will continue to be present. Will continue to guide, direct, guard, protect, and preserve.

[28 : 36] I am confident of this. Now, verse 13, it's a difficult one. The translators, ancient translators and modern translators, realize that, I guess, in poetry, we often leave words out or we contract words.

poets, so poets will use words like or, O-E-R, and er, E-R-E. They're easier to rhyme. And in Hebrew poetry, sometimes words are left off.

And this opening phrase in verse 13 is, again, it's hard to translate, but it could almost mean, you know, unless I believed or unless I trusted.

You know, it's almost as if David is saying, you know, unless I trusted in God, I would be completely lost. You know, he wants us to, he's considering what it would be like if he didn't have trust, if he didn't have faith, and he's positing this possibility to show us the security that we really do have in God.

I am still confident I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord, be strong, and take heart, and wait for the Lord.

[29 : 59] So God has been with us in the past, and we thank him for it. God is an ever-present help in time of trouble, Psalm 46. That's why we speak to him, that's why we listen to him.

But David wants us to know that our hope is not just for now. Our hope is not just for yesterday, but we have a hope for tomorrow, that we have a confident hope that unless it was God, unless God was with us, we would be lost.

Unless God was for us, we would be done for. Unless God was there, we would have no hope indeed. But we are in the meantime to be strong, to be courageous, to take heart, and to wait. Whenever there's a repetition, there's always a repetition for a reason. So in verse 14, which begins, wait for the Lord and ends, wait for the Lord, the repetition is to underline that faith is a present and a future reality.

We trust in God for what he has done. We trust God today for who he is and what he promises. But we have faith for tomorrow, that we can be confident that the God who has saved us, who has rescued us, who has set us free, that he will one day bring us to be with him forever and ever.

[31 : 26] As we come to this new year, I pray that we would respond to God in the language that David gives, with the confidence that David has, with that singularity of focus that David demonstrates, because our God is faithful, our God is powerful, our God is present, our God can save and sustain.

And no matter what this year holds, we know who holds this year. At the very beginning of the Gospel of John, John uses very similar language to David.

He talks about, through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The Lord is my light and my saving health. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. As he continues in his prologue, John says this, The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. David wanted to gaze on the beauty of the Lord, and the Apostle John is saying, we've seen the beauty of the Lord in Jesus Christ.

[32 : 47] And then, verse 15, John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

All that David says has been fulfilled now in the person, in the work of Jesus Christ. The light, the salvation, the stronghold, the security, the confidence, the comfort, and the hope that we can rest assured that Jesus has set us free, he has saved us, and he and he alone will sustain us until the very end.

Our desire is to be with him, to be near him, to hear him, to respond to him, to be guided by him, and to follow his direction. So may God bless you richly at this commencement of a new year.

We are now going to sing those words that we have just considered. We're going to sing a portion of this wonderful psalm, Psalm 27. The Lord's my Savior and my light, who will make me dismayed?

[34 : 21] The Lord's the stronghold of my life, why should I be afraid?

When evildoers threaten me to take my life away, my adversaries and my foes will stumble in that day.

Although an army hems me in, my heart will feel no dread.

Though war against me should arise, I will lift up my head.

One thing I plead before the Lord, and there shall see go in the Lord's name.

[35 : 37] I will lift up my eyes, that I may come within God's house and dwell there all my days, that on the beauty of the Lord I constantly may gaze, and in his house may seek to know direction in his ways.

For in his dwelling he will keep me safe in troubled days.

within his tent he'll shelter me and on a rock me raise.

So as we close our time together, for our benediction, let me read the final verses of Romans chapter 16, verses 25 to 27. Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,

but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him, to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ.

Amen. So may God bless you and may he make you a blessing.