

My Light and My Salvation

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[0 : 0 0] foo. We're going to read in Psalm 27, Psalm 27 and verse 1. These famous words, 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? Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your greater glory our supreme concern, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Amen. Have you ever been afraid? Terrified? We are creatures of fear. What afraid of others? What afraid of ourselves? What afraid of being lonely? What afraid of being crowded? What afraid of the inside? I'm not afraid of the outside. What afraid of the light? I'm not afraid of the dark.

What afraid of the past? I'm not afraid of the future. Not one of us goes through one single day without, at some point, feeling just a modicum of fear. Does God know our fear? Does God care that we're afraid? What can we as Christians do with our fear? How can we manage it in such a way that it ceases to cripples us? It serves to strengthen us instead? These are the kind of questions we're dealing with in Psalm 27. Now, this song was written by a man who knew how it felt to be afraid.

David was a great king, and so we might ask, what do you have to be afraid, O king? But from the greatest to the least, all of us are creatures of fear. Kings, commoners, and everyone in between. Guided by the Holy Spirit, King David wrote this song to show us how he dealt with his fear. This psalm is the antidote to fear in the life of the Christian. We're going to take verse 1 as the summary verse. 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? Because everything else in this psalm is an expansion of these words, driving deep their central importance into our hearts. So let's consider the two aspects of verse 1, the troubles of faith and the triumphs of faith. No one else here may know it of us, but we are creatures of fear. But God has good news for us. He has the antidote to fear, fear. And it's all here in Psalm 27, and as we'll see, it's at the cross.

[3 : 1 6] The troubles of faith, first of all. The troubles of faith. Fear is a dominant theme in this verse. It's mentioned twice. Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid? Now, immediately this strikes us as strange that a faithful believer should experience fear. After all, does Scripture not say, perfect love casts out fear? Indeed, it does. But which one of us loves God perfectly or perfectly knows the love of God for ourselves? Fear is one of the commonest experiences for the Christian, and feeling guilty about it only adds another layer of guilt and complexity that we don't need.

The most frequent command of God in the Bible is, do not fear. Shepherds in their fields, sovereigns in their palaces, saints in their holy places. God commands them all, saying, do not be afraid. Now, God did not create us to experience fear. It was only with the entrance of sin. So, our fear is a consequence of living in a broken and sinful world. King David lived in that world. We live in that world. And so, just as it was for a sinful Adam, fear is part of our experiences, human beings, and faithful followers of our Lord. But David asks the question, 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? There are many things of which David could have been afraid, some of which are mentioned further on in Psalm 27. But here in verse 1, there are three, each of which is an opposite.

God is his light, which for David means darkness is something of which he is afraid. God is his salvation, which for David means that death is something of which he is afraid.

And God is David's stronghold, which means that danger is something of which David's afraid. Each fear, as we'll see, is overcome by David's knowledge and experience of God. Nevertheless, these three fears, darkness, death, and danger, are formidable enemies, not just for David, but for us.

First of all, darkness. There's our first trouble of which we may be afraid. Darkness. Just as our confidence is in God, who is the light, so we fear the darkness. Now, this is not a reference to physical darkness, although in the world of David's day, darkness concealed the murderous activities of thieves and other criminals. It's a reference to mental and emotional and spiritual darkness, the kind of darkness which we can't see but terrifies us nonetheless.

[6 : 36] So it's the darkness, for example, of meaninglessness. Meaninglessness. What's the meaning of my life? What's it worth? Am I no more than a walking virus? A biochemical machine, the only function of which is to reproduce? Behind the facade of our busy society lies the emptiness of meaninglessness.

The great scientists may tell me what I am, but they cannot tell me why I am, who I am, and what in the vastness of this universe the meaning of my life is. As the writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us, without God, everything is meaningless. It's a chasing after the wind.

It's also the darkness of shame. Shame is far worse than guilt. Guilt is remorse we experience over the things we have done. Shame is the remorse we experience over the people we are.

We might, at a pinch, be able to get rid of guilt, but shame, that's another matter. It is self-consuming. It is utterly merciless. We may wish to separate the sin from the sinner, but we cannot separate the sinner from the sin. We're ashamed that we're the kind of people who do the kind of things Gordon spoke about earlier. There's a reason that we call it the darkness of shame, because that's what shame is, darkness. And then it's also the darkness of confusion.

The darkness of confusion. Which way should we turn in life, to the right or to the left? Should we go back? Should we go forward? Who is making up the rules? And please don't leave it to the individual, for the net result will be that everyone will do what is right in their own eyes.

[8 : 34] It can be personal confusion. It can be moral confusion. In the total darkness, when you kind of see your hand in front of your face, how do you know what decisions to take and how to take them?

A life of this kind of darkness, moral, emotional, spiritual, is a life of fear. You know, if only we realized how dark our lives are without God. We tremble with fear every day.

Darkness, that's the first thing of which we may be afraid. Death is second. Death is second. Just as our confidence is in the God who's our salvation, so we fear death. Death being the opposite of salvation. Now, the death to which we refer here is not physical death, although that most certainly is part of it, despite what anybody says to the contrary. Most of us are afraid of death.

Mortality is our last great enemy, and before it, king or commoner, we all stand helpless. But the real death to which we point here is spiritual. An entire life lived without God, or with no reference to or relationship to the God who created us, knows us, and loves us.

A life deprived of the beauty of God and the freedom that only God can give us. The apostle Paul tells us that before we came to know Christ, we were dead in our transgressions and sins. Now, as human beings, we all know what spiritual death looks like, and so we look for spiritual life in every kind of weird experience and religion. The existence of so many religions bear testimony to the human search for connection with God. Even those who deny that they follow any religion create religions of their own based about their own innate goodness and the dignity of mankind.

[10 : 46] We may call it atheism, we may call it humanism, but in essence, it's just another religious group searching for deeper spiritual life. But there's more because everyone, as Gordon reminds us, reminded us, has been born with a sense of final accountability, that they'll be held ultimately to account for their actions. Everyone knows that the end is not really the end.

But with no reference to or relationship with the living and true God, there can only be dread as the day approaches when we will all have to give account for the things we have done in life.

A life of this kind of death leads only to fear. And again, if only we realized how dead we are without God, we tremble with fear every day.

The third thing of which we may be afraid, the third trouble of faith, is danger. Danger. Just as our confidence is in God, who's our stronghold, so we fear danger. Danger being the opposite of stronghold or refuge. Scattered around the coasts of northern Scotland are ancient tower-like structures. I'm not going to ask my American friends to pronounce this because they won't have a chance.

They're called brochs. Brochs. Now, nobody knows for sure why the Picts built brochs, but the most popular suggestion is that they were protective structures.

[12 : 27] So the people would work in the fields, but when an enemy was sighted, enemy ship was sighted, they run into the broch and they shielded behind its thick walls. Outside the broch there was danger, but inside there was safety.

Outside God, who is our stronghold, there is only danger. In this psalm, David outlines some of these dangers he faced.

In verse 2, evildoers and enemies. In verse 3, enemies encamped against him. In verse 6, enemies surrounding him on every side. In verse 12, adversities and false witnesses.

David was a man under pressure, in constant danger. And in this he was most like his famous descendant, Jesus Christ. The Jesus who endured more opposition against him than any man before or since.

The Jesus who was nailed to a cross by his enemies. What dangers do we face today as individuals? They may have many names.

[13 : 39] No need to oneself. Cancer diagnosis. Unemployment. Mental health challenges. Relationship trouble.

So many dangers. And without God, no broch to run into. Nowhere to turn for help.

These are the troubles that confront our faith. And without God, they terrify us. Let's not kid ourselves that any of us are immune from such fears. For none of us is God's love yet made perfect.

It's part of living in a fallen world and being creatures of fear. Do any of us identify with the fear of these three things? Darkness. Death.

Danger. Second, the triumph of faith. I'm not a preacher of bad news. I'm a preacher of good news. And this verse is all good news.

[14 : 42] The triumph of faith. For all that Psalm 27 details the dark and deadly and dangerous situations we may face in this life, this is not a psalm of lament.

This is not a sad song. This is a song of faith. The confidence of King David in God to save him from all his fears. Whatever it is David faces.

Whoever it is that makes him afraid. His God is stronger. His God is greater. His God loves him more than they hate him. The psalm begins with the word Lord in small capital letters.

Now we know that when the word Lord is written in small capital letters, it corresponds to the personal name of God, Yahweh. We also know that in its Old Testament context, the name Yahweh is to be understood as meaning, the steadfast love of God.

The steadfast love of God that will not let me go. The steadfast love of God that will not let me go.

[15 : 51] The Lord to whom we take our terrors and our fears is the Lord whose steadfast love will not let us go. The Lord from whose love we can't be separated by anything.

You know, if the Hebrews wanted to emphasize a word, they often placed it right at the beginning of a sentence. And the word David wants to emphasize in verse 1 is, Lord, the steadfast love that will not let me go.

Where he began to deal with his fear was with the Lord. So this then provides the backdrop for all he's going to say, both in verse 1 and in the rest of the psalm, we must take our fears to the Lord.

We can only deal with our fears with his help. We may be creatures of fear, but the Lord is greater than our terrors. King and commoner, we all get afraid.

How do we cope with our fear? How do we manage it? For the Christian, the first step is to view it in light of our relationship with the Lord, whose steadfast love will not let us go.

[17 : 07] Who God is overwhelms our fears. For notice, David does not say, the Lord gives me light.

The Lord gives me salvation. The Lord gives me refuge. But the Lord is my light. And the Lord is my salvation. And the Lord is my refuge.

The ultimate refuge for the Christian is the character of God. Who he is in personal relationship with us. The Lord and our relationship with him, this is where our fears are defeated and our faith triumphs.

In this verse, very briefly, David says the following three things about the Lord whose steadfast love will not let us go and to whom we take all our fears. He's my light, salvation, and refuge.

He's my light, first of all. Now, light's a prominent theme throughout the whole Bible. Light was the first thing God created. Appearances of God in the Bible are said to be accompanied by blinding lights.

[18 : 19] Of Jesus it was said, in him was life, and that life was the light of all men. Jesus said, I am the light of the world. The apostle Paul talks later about our receiving the gospel as being the result of God shining his light into our hearts.

And then the apostle John says of God, God is light in him there is no darkness at all. Light is the enemy of the darkness. Light dispels the darkness.

The creatures of darkness which terrify us cannot live in the light of God's glory. Our confusion can be dispelled by his guidance.

Our shame can be dispelled by his gospel transformation of us. Our meaninglessness can be dispelled by the new purpose he gives us and the new worth he attaches to us through the cross of his Son.

He is our light. No darkness, no enemy shall attack us in the darkness. Remember the beautiful words of that psalm, no pestilence that stalks in darkness shall waste us.

[19 : 34] No confusion, no situation shall so confuse us that in God we shall not see a way forward. The closer we walk to God as he is the light, the more we begin to shine.

Just like on bonfire night, we light sparklers from one another. So when God lights us by his Spirit, we too become creatures not of the darkness but of the light.

How wonderful that our darkest fears may be overcome by the brightness of God's character and the closeness of our relationship with him.

Study then to know how God gives us meaning in life. Study then to know how God guides our steps. Study then to know how God removes our shame.

for he is the light. He's our salvation second. He's our salvation.

[20 : 33] The whole Bible while recording the unfaithfulness of the human race is superseded by the story of God's salvation of a sinful humanity. Salvation peppers the pages of history and of the Bible.

Genesis or Revelation the dominant theme is salvation or rescue or deliverance. It could be salvation from famine in the days of Joseph. It could be salvation from Egypt in the days of Moses.

It could be salvation from sin in the days of Jesus. But it's salvation beginning to end. Salvation is the opposite of death. God is life and in him is life all outside him is death.

Physical death, spiritual death, emotional death, social death. We fear such death. But as we live in relationship with him through faith in Christ his beauty begins to fill our lives satisfies all the longings of our hearts.

He gives life and life in all its fullness. Genesis begins with the creation of life. Revelation ends with the consummation of life and it's all of God.

[21 : 56] Life swallows up death even as light swallows up the darkness. Jesus said of himself, I'm the resurrection and the life.

I'm the bread of life. I'm the way, the truth, and the life. life. This is no surprise given that the Hebrew word for salvation is the word from which we get the proper names Joshua and Jesus.

The closer we walk with the Lord, the greater his salvation appears to us and the more alive we become in him. Physically, we may be wasting away, but his life is at work in us.

We are never more alive as human beings than when we're walking close with him. Let's study then to know how God saves us through the cross of his Son, how the resurrection of Jesus brings life and overwhelms our feet of death.

Third, the Lord's the stronghold. My stronghold. It's such a powerful word, stronghold. Another translation of this word is refuge.

[23 : 07] God's our stronghold. God's our refuge. The Lord who is greater than our fears is the Lord who is our brooch. We run to him when the dangers we're facing are just getting too great for us to deal with or cope with.

All these enemies David's facing, all these armies surrounding him on every side, what they could not see and what David perhaps could not see was that God had erected invisible but impenetrable walls all around him so that even though danger was near, the Lord was even nearer.

We often feel the presence of dangers but if we were alive to it we'd see that God is our brooch, our refuge, our stronghold into whom we can run in difficult days.

Our prayers not just, Lord, protect me but Lord, make these invisible and impenetrable walls which you've surrounded me with visible to me.

Let me see them. By faith, we see the hand of God and we say, if God be for us, who can be against us? The thing is, we often only ever see in hindsight how God protected us from all our enemies, the darkness and the death and the danger.

[24 : 33] It's only when we look back we see how in our most vulnerable times God was our brooch. Many years ago a Christian lady from America came to live in my home village of Golsby in the very north of Scotland.

She stayed six months and then she left again. During her stay she came to the church and then on her last night there she told us her story. She had been the victim of abuse and that's why she had up sticks and flown across the pond and come to live in a wee small village in the highlands.

She'd come to heal and to rebuild her life again. I'll never forget her words that last night when she talked about the church there. Through tears she said, this church has been my refuge.

This church has been my refuge. It was where she felt safe from the abuse and the place that she'd begun to experience God's healing.

You know, what was true for her all those years ago is true for us. God is our refuge and in Him there's healing, wholeness and safety.

[26 : 00] But then you say, okay, this is all very nice. How do I know that God is my light and my salvation and my stronghold?

How can I have the confidence David had when he said, I shall not fear of whom shall I be afraid? It is one thing having an antidote to an illness sitting on the shelf.

It's an altogether other thing to drink it and benefit from it. how can our faith triumph over fear? Our confidence does not come from ourselves.

It comes from looking to a wooden cross on which the Son of God loved us and gave Himself for us. On that cross, Jesus died to endure the darkness of our confusion and our shame and our meaninglessness.

He bore the pain of our death both physical and spiritual and social. He experienced the infinite dangers of our enemies and Satan's hatred.

[27 : 06] these words in Psalm 27 verse 1 are the words of our Lord as He looked out over the world for which He was dying from the cross.

That's how we know that God's our light and our salvation and our stronghold because Jesus died on the cross. That's how we can have confidence and say after Him the words of our Lord, the words of Jesus Himself.

Whom shall I fear? of whom shall I be afraid? Our Lord spoke these words. Our Captain and our friend Jesus triumphed over all our fears on the cross and by faith His victory becomes ours.

The cross before us we may march into battle against our fears and because of what Jesus has done we can say I shall not fear. The Lord our God in the face of our Savior Jesus Christ crucified and risen for us He's our salvation and He is our stronghold and He is our light.

He and His cross are our antidote against fear. Now I know that costs have been rising. None of us likes to pay double for things.

[28 : 30] Given that Jesus has been victorious over all our fears on the cross when we let fear dominate us and control us we're double paying.

You see He's already paid so that we don't have to. So when we're afraid where do we turn? Turn to the cross and the gospel where God's glory shines forth the brightest even as His Son endures the torments of hell for us.

Here's the antidote to our fear the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and so my final appeal to us all myself included is this look to the cross and by faith make Jesus Christ your light and your salvation and your stronghold.

Yes even now we may bow our heads and we may say Lord Jesus I am terrified will you be my brooch?

Well I'm hören but I can't if I'm at cope which lends may very well or f bizi will lord or lends tell you who I can't but happen to him but I can't