

God's Beauty Conquers Fear

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 April 2026

Preacher: Dave Bott

[0 : 00] As Luke just said, our reading this morning is from Psalm 27. Psalm 27.

Psalm 27.

Psalm 27.

Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord. Hear the word of the Lord. Amen. Good morning, everyone.

Amen. If you're visiting this morning, my name is David. I'm one of the pastors here. My name is David every other day in the week as well.

[2 : 29] Not just when you're visiting, but will you pray with me as we come to God's word? Amen. Father, we're all going to be coming here this morning with different things on our minds and in our hearts coming from the week we've had and the fears for the week we think we're going to have.

I pray that you'd give us a stillness to just meditate on your word and I pray that you would help us to take these rich words of this psalm into your presence in prayer.

So teach us how to pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, this psalm has a really special place in my life. There was a time I was terrified.

I really was terrified. And I'm going to try and hold it together, okay? My mind was totally in a panic. I was absolutely powerless. There was nothing I could do.

And my mind, like, my mind could not sit for one moment to focus on all the beautiful, precious promises that we have in Scripture.

[3 : 47] Like, I'm meant to be a pastor. I knew all the promises. I just, I couldn't get a hold of myself. Now, Emma, being more godly than me, wanted to open up to a psalm.

And we did what good reformed evangelicals who have been to Bible college do. And we just flipped. This will do. Wait for the Lord.

Sorry. I tried to hold it together.

It didn't work. There can be an assumption that someone fully trusting in God won't be afraid. I think that's a false assumption.

I think we hear it when we talk about, like, an older saint who was on their deathbed, and they're afraid. And we talk about it as if they're dying less well than someone who's able to sing in that moment.

[4 : 57] Of course they're afraid. I think we see it when we look at someone we admire in the faith, and they're doing these amazing things, and it looks like they're doing them with ease.

But if you knew what was going on on the inside. What if faith isn't the absence of fear, but it's what we do with our fear that expresses faith?

Now, Andrew Carr in our Bible study got me onto a quote by C.S. Lewis that he has on his fridge. Courage is not simply one of the virtues, one of the Christian virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.

It is easy for us in this room to believe honesty is good. It's easy when it benefits you. But what about when your boss tells you, just be a good team player.

Fudge the numbers just a little bit. Just, are you loyal to this company? Fear is going to kick in. It takes courage to really believe in honesty in the face of the consequences, the potential consequences.

[6 : 20] It is easy to believe in brotherly love when it's mutually beneficial. But when you've been hurt once by their words, fear is going to kick in.

Are they going to reject you even more? Are they going to injure you even more? It takes courage to really believe in brotherly love in the face of fear.

So whether you're totally overwhelmed like that moment I was or anything, anytime you're called, you're at a testing point.

We've been given this psalm to express our faith. Because faith isn't the absence of fear, it's what we do with it.

Bring it to the Lord in prayer. What we're going to see in this psalm is that we're taught to seek the beauty of God in the darkness.

[7 : 19] Not once you're out of the darkness, but when you're in the darkness, seek the beauty of God. Fight. Fight until you see God's face and know his will.

And you can draw strength by waiting. And then we're going to finish by asking, how do we see the Lord's face? How do we see his beauty today? So that's where we're headed. If you want to have Psalm 27 open.

Now, you may or may not like the imagery of poetry, but I suspect we've all had times when we've felt overwhelmed by our circumstances. And a really compassionate brother or sister says, trust the Lord.

He is sovereign. Now, that propositional truth, there's times where it's just like, wonderful truth. Of course, I believe it.

But they just don't hit you. Have you ever had that experience? It's not meeting you where you're at. There's something about prayer of those same truths that actually bring us into the presence of God.

[8 : 26] These images here, they stir our emotions. They meet us in our emotions. They don't just give us propositional truth.

They meet me, meet you in our emotions. They give us words to ignite our imagination and to give us something for our memory to hold on to.

It is a wonderful gift of God that he's given us these words to express to him in prayer. Now, we don't know the precise situation in David's life.

And I think that gives us freedom to apply a lot of this psalm to a whole bunch of circumstances when we're afraid. This psalm is intensely personal.

Some psalms, it's let us. But here, it's individual. I, my. When the darkness of cancer or depression or you lost your job or someone dear to you is disconnecting from you, Yahweh is my light.

[9 : 51] He's mine. It's intensely personal. Light is both a picture of hope and life and guidance. I have no idea what to do.

When we're feeling powerless and hopeless, the Lord, you, Lord, are my salvation. My bank account is not the stronghold of my life.

My family isn't even the stronghold of my life. I have a fortified castle. Who can assail, who can get past the walls of the Lord himself?

Who shall I be afraid of? Now, make no mistake. I think David is very afraid. He's very afraid. That's why he's praying. He begins and ends this psalm.

Speaking to his fear. Or speaking his fear to the Lord. Whom shall I fear? How about evildoers who are like a tiger who want to rip my flesh apart?

[10 : 55] Verse 2. He's afraid. Whom shall I fear? How about an army? I haven't had an army encamped around me lately.

How about everyone abandoning me? Even the closest earthly commitments of mum and dad. David is not a stoic.

He's just suppressing and downplaying his emotions. She'll be right. She'll be right, mate. Yeah. I'm not afraid of death. Get.

Get. Oh, come on. Yes, you are. All right. Anyway. Sorry. It's a bit of a hobby horse. He's not a stoic.

But he's not being ruled by his emotions either. He's not paralyzed. He's not frantically trying to regain control of the situation. He's praying his fears. In the safety of the Lord, he can look at his fears head on and call them for what they are.

[12 : 06] He's speaking truth into them. Our God delights when his people express confidence in him for our lives.

If we look to any other saviour, it's turning to idols. I think if, and this is a critique on me, okay, when we don't pray, we're probably turning to idols.

Why is prayer the last thing I think to do? Oh, what peace we often forfeit.

Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. So David's not a stoic. He's not ruled by his emotion. He's praying his fears. And in verse 4 and 5, we see what triumphs over his fear. One thing have I asked of the Lord. That will I seek after. That all the cancer disappears.

[13:15] It's not wrong to pray that. Don't hear me wrong. That I'll be publicly vindicated. I'm the victim here. That's my one prayer. My one prayer is that I keep my job.

That I keep whatever it is. David's prayer, his ultimate goal, is not changing circumstances. Don't forget the situation he's in.

He's in extreme circumstances. One thing I ask, the thing I want most in the world. I want the cancer gone, but this I want more. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life and into eternity.

To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. And to inquire of his will to know him more in his temple. I don't think David is literally asking, can I become a Levite?

Can I become a priest to be literally in the temple? He wants to experience God's presence. There's a man named Alan Gardner.

[14:27] He was in the British Royal Navy and he was a missionary in the 1800s. He went to Africa and then he went to Chile. And then he went on another trip to the southern tip of South America.

He went with six others and they had enough provisions for six months. So this is 1800s. And they needed to, they took everything with them. You can't just get another plane the next week.

Although Luke wouldn't come on the plane anyway. But, sorry, Luke, I don't know why I said that. All the men eventually died of starvation one by one.

And Gardner kept a journal. And the last thing he wrote was Psalm 34:10. The young lions suffer want and hunger.

But those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. And then he wrote, I am overwhelmed with the sense of the goodness of God.

[15:35] His starvation is eating his flesh. He's failed in his missionary goal. He's lost his family back home.

He's not just coping. He's gazing at the beauty of the Lord. What is that? I want that. Religious people obey God to get things from God.

Gardner, David, anyone who's seen the beauty of God, they serve God to get God. Do you know God just as useful?

Useful to get that one thing you want. Whatever that one thing is, that's your real God. Or do you know him as beautiful?

He is the one thing. The beauty of God, it's not just another attribute to his power and his justice and his mercy.

[16:44] It's all his attributes are attractive and satisfying. They're pleasurable. If you just know doctrine in your head and you don't have pleasure, you haven't seen him for who he is.

Because he's beautiful. Now, I wish in this life we could stay in that constant enjoyment. That's going to be heaven when we're in that constant state of just enjoyment and bliss.

But have you ever tasted, taste and see that the Lord is good? Not just know that he's good. Have you tasted it? Beauty is to take pleasure.

When you look out on the ocean, you're not going, ocean, give me something to do something. You're gazing and you can't look away because you're just taking pleasure in it.

When you open God's word, if you're treating the Bible as useful to get through the week, you're going to find a lot of it pretty irrelevant. And I'm like, what is that about?

[18:01] But if you're looking going, God, and you're praying, God, show me your beauty. It is an ocean. It is an ocean to see the character and goodness of the Lord.

And beauty puts all the darkness into perspective. It's what triumphs over fear.

When in the true story of Sam and Frodo on the way to Mount Doom, poor attempt at a joke, in The Lord of the Rings, they're overwhelmed by fear and danger and Sam is losing hope and he can't sleep.

And then J.R. Tolkien writes this, peeping behind the cloud, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart as he looked up out of the forsaken land and hope returned to him.

The thought pierced him that in the end, the shadow was only a small and passing thing. There was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach.

[19 : 20] And then he fell into a deep untroubled sleep. That's what's going on here for David. One thing, if you find the Lord beautiful, it puts your fears into perspective.

shadow is a small and passing thing. There is light and high beauty forever beyond its reach. And then you can say with David, he will lift me upon a rock.

I'll be okay. I am inside the threshold of his home. He's not going to let any evil come in.

Now, he's not promising that all the darkness is taken away. But we can know we have that one thing we most want, is to find God satisfying.

Verse 6, the enemies are still around David, but my head is lifted up. He knows God will get the victory in the end. All because he's staring at the beauty of God.

[20 : 27] He's able to lift his head. He's able to sing. Seek his face as the one thing. Whatever darkness is going on, seek his face.

Beauty will mean you can sing even in the darkness. So this psalm teaches us to seek the beauty of God.

And the second thing I think we're taught to pray is to fight. Now, I'm using that word because David doesn't fight his external enemies.

He's not plotting and scheming. How can I get control again? In verses 7 to 12, I think he's fighting internally.

He's wrestling with his own mind and heart. I found it, I was struggling this whole week to understand verses 7 to 12 because verses 1 to 6 are just, aren't they, they're wonderful declarations of confidence.

[21 : 34] And then verses 7 to 12 is, don't turn me away in anger. The Lord will, the Lord will cover me in his house. And then he's saying, don't abandon me.

It is my foes who will stumble and fall. And then he's saying, don't give me up to my enemies. We may not lack the certainty, we may not like the uncertainty David is expressing here, but isn't that exactly where we live?

God can feel distant, can he not? It's like our prayers barely reach him. Our troubles get worse, not better.

Hear, oh Lord, when I cry, where are you? I'm not saying I deserve an answer, be gracious to me.

You say in your word to all your people, seek my face, and I can't see you in the darkness.

I think that's the thrust of these verses. He's wrestling with God. I'm trying. I'm reading your word.

I'm here at church, and I feel nothing. The troubles are more real to me than you are.

[22 : 51] Are you abandoning me? It feels like everyone else is. To seek the face of the Lord, it's an emotional experience.

Now, those who love their rationality in this room are not going to like me saying that, but if you're wary of your emotions, it's just what it means.

To seek the face of the Lord isn't asking for a vision when you go to sleep. It's for what you know in your mind to sense it on your heart.

It's like you've talked to someone over video chat. You know them. You know what they look like, but you meet them in person, go, great to finally meet you because you're just getting more, more of them.

There's something about the face of someone. It's just, it's not necessarily new knowledge, but it's just more. It's not only to know that God is loving with your head, it's to sense his love on your heart.

[24 : 00] It fills you sometimes with a joy unspeakable and you don't go into your relationships and into the world needy anymore because you're content.

It's gripped you. I think David is fighting in these verses. It feels like you're abandoning me. But with every cry, he comes back to truth.

You have been my help in the past. You have been faithful. Oh God of my salvation. He's wrestling until he gets to the end of verse 10.

He finally feels the love of God on his heart. Even if all other human love reaches its limit, even if my father and mother abandon me, you, Lord, will take me in.

It is one thing to know Jesus will never abandon you. It's another thing to feel it. I will never leave you nor forsake you. In verses 11 and 12, he does want vindication over his enemies.

[25 : 19] He wants all the trouble to be put right, but his main fight is for what he does. Teach me. Teach me.

How do I please you in this situation? Teach me your way, oh Lord. I think the main fight when we're going through hard times and troubled times isn't what's happening on the outside, it's what's happening inside in my heart and mind.

And I think this psalm is given to us to fight, to wrestle with God like Jacob until we feel him. Until you sense the depths of the Lord's steadfast love, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Yes, you could lose your job. Yes, you could lose everything, but I will take you in. It's going to be okay. We're fighting until we're asking the right questions.

What is going to please you in this situation? So this psalm helps us to seek the beauty of God as our one thing and it helps us to fight in prayer until we sense God's face and we're seeking his will.

[26 : 36] and then he finishes by drawing strength by waiting. I think he's speaking to his own fear. No doubt he's counselling others to do the same.

Wait for the Lord. Be strong, let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord. Now, I don't think waiting means inaction, although if you're anything like me, you need to close your mouth more often.

It can mean inaction. We're going, do I do this, this, this, this? Sometimes it's just, just stop. I think most of all, waiting is a condition, it's a, it's a settled heart.

I know I'm loved. I have confidence the Lord is a stronghold of my life. He's in control.

And David draws courage from that. I can move into this situation precisely because it doesn't depend on me. I'm going to wait on you. I think waiting on the Lord is a settled heart.

[27 : 40] I think waiting on the Lord is a settled heart. because once you're settled, you will act wisely then.

It's in fear and panic that we say and hurt each other and do really stupid things. Or maybe it's just me. So we seek the beauty of God as our one thing.

We fight until we sense God's face and we wait on the Lord. So I just want to finish. How do we seek the Lord's face today?

Where do you see the beauty of God? Everyone, believer or not, is captured by the beauty of creation.

The heavens do declare the glory of God. We live in a beautiful part of the world. There's so much water to look at. It's quite a privilege.

[28 : 44] The whole earth is full of his glory. You probably heard the interview of the commander on Artemis 2, Reid Wiseman. He said, when the sun eclipsed behind the moon, I turned to Victor and I said, I don't think humanity has evolved to the point of being able to comprehend what we were looking at right now because it was otherworldly.

It was amazing. I'm not really a religious person but there was just no other avenue for me to explain anything or to experience anything. So I asked for the chaplain of the Navy ship to just come and visit us for a minute and when that man walked in, I never met him before in my life but I saw the cross on his collar and I just broke down in tears.

It's very hard to fully grasp what we just went through. It's a wonderful testament. The creation declares the glory, the beauty of God but fortunately you don't have to become an astronaut.

It's in the temple David sees the beauty of God. In his house, in his tent, we read again and again, it's the blood, the blood in the temple over the mercy seat that God would pay for sin to make us one with him so that he will never abandon us.

Anzac Day yesterday, we all intuitively know no greater love as anyone than to lay down his life for his friends. We know that is beauty.

[30 : 21] It's in the temple. Now we have something much better than the temple today. Charles Spurgeon famously said, Jesus Christ was up on the cross nailing, bleeding, dying, looking down on the people, betraying him, forsaking him and denying him and in the greatest act of love in the history of the universe, he stayed.

If he didn't abandon you then, he never will. Whatever darkness is happening, the shadow of death is hitting you and your family or injustice, your inner sense of failure and shame, anything that makes you feel like I'm abandoned, we can just gaze on the beauty that he stayed on the cross, that he will take you in precisely because he abandoned his son.

And Jesus' head is raised up over all his enemies and all our enemies.

He's conquered the devil and sin and the world and even our death. So where do we see it? We see it in his substitutionary death.

That's how we gaze on his beauty. And it's by faith now. It's going to turn to sight one day when we see him face to face. That's what we're doing here today.

[32 : 12] We're trying to help each other gaze on the Lord Jesus afresh. That's why we sing. That's why we study the Bible together.

It's why you need a brother or sister who actually knows you knows your doubts and your fears and can speak Jesus and the cross into your heart.

It's what we're doing. We're just constantly, I want to gaze on you all the days of my life. John Newton who wrote Amazing Grace also wrote this, this hymn.

I asked the Lord that I might grow in faith and love and every grace, might more of his salvation know and seek more earnestly his face.

But with his own hand he seemed intent to aggravate my woe, crossed all the fair designs I schemed, humbled my heart and laid me low.

[33 : 23] Lord, why is this? I trembling cried. Will thou pursue thy worm to death? These inward trials I employ from self and pride to set you free and break the schemes of earthly joy that you may find your all in me.

fear is an opportunity to seek his face.

David only had the temple. We get the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. So can I just encourage us, take these words, take them as you pray and think of Jesus.

Jesus is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? one thing I ask, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord. That's the one thing.

I'm going to fight until I feel your beauty again, to know that I'm loved by you. Even if this goes horribly wrong tomorrow, I know you'll take me in because of the Lord Jesus and I'm going to wait.

[34 : 43] I'm going to act as if it's all in my control. I'm going to wait for you Lord. Will you pray with me?

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's Father, we can sit under your word.

We can study your word. We can come to you in prayer. But unless you, by your spirit, just press these truths into our heart, we won't feel them.

We won't see your face as we really desperately want to. So I simply ask that for whatever's going on in each of our lives, you would help us to seek your face and feel you.

So that we won't be acting as needy people and acting out of fear, but acting content in your love, confident that you are the stronghold of our life.

[36 : 01] That if you gave your only son, you'll give us everything else as well. Teach us to pray like this. In Jesus' name. Amen.