

Who Can We Talk To

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[0 : 00] 27 is found in the prayer book on page 486. And to explain to you what I'm doing down here and not up there, I would like to tell you that that place up there makes me claustrophobic at times.

And so I'm trying to get out of it just for a while. Sort of like flying in an airplane. You get up there and you're not sure if you can get out without crashing.

Psalm 27 is on page 486. One of the questions which I still run into a whole lot is the question of how do I like Vancouver because I've only been here a year and five months now.

And I think I now know how I like Vancouver. Vancouver is a very deceptive lady. So utterly beautiful as to make you think if you live here that life is better than it really is.

And so that you're in danger of living in Vancouver and feeling that life is better than it is.

[1 : 34] And some of the problems with which life confronts you then come as a kind of dastardly interference in what appears to be the total loveliness of a perfect setting in which to live out your earthly year.

Vancouver is a very deceptive. And when in this time of year Vancouver's loveliness is greatly enhanced by flowers and flowering trees and shrubs of every kind and description the loveliness of it is completely breathtaking.

And the possibility of there being a serpent in the garden in this, in the midst of all this loveliness is is pretty hard for us to imagine.

And when we are unawares, confronted by or attacked by the serpent in the garden it's very bitter indeed.

And that's why I want you to turn to Psalm 27. It's because the thing that I would like most to do is that I would like most to be able to talk to somebody.

[3 : 02] But it's hard to find somebody to talk to because everybody has their own sort of private agenda. That is, they have the things they want to talk about and so they haven't got time to listen to you and what you want to talk about and you do them the compliment of not having time to listen to them either.

And so communication breaks down. And we live in a world in which people are trying desperately to talk to each other but everybody's private agenda prohibits that and we do ourselves enormous harm.

It would be good if that person could so stimulate your thinking as you talk to them that you could say really and exactly what is on your mind.

But you may have discovered that when you try to say exactly what is on your mind something else is on your heart making reservations about what is on your mind.

And so there's kind of two you's there one expressing perhaps fluently what is on your mind but in your heart and your stomach there's a denial of it.

[4 : 20] And so someone has got to be able to grasp both what your mind says and what your heart feels at the same time.

It would be good if there was somebody like that we could talk to. But because I am and you are so deeply ingrained in prejudices in the narrowness of your own personal experience of life and the failure to really be able to speak in such a way that it has around it the kind of resonance of truth and not just the repetition of words words, words that you've all heard before but breaking as it were like light into your world and that no matter how halting your words may be or how uncertain your heart or how limited your grasp or how totally inadequate the structure of your words yet you would be really saying something and each word you spoke opened to you a little wider the heart of the one you spoke to so that one would understand themselves a little better and would begin to

understand you in a way which drew him and you into a deeper and deeper love relationship your words would not arouse boredom and a kind of and they wouldn't embarrass or threaten people or make other people feel superior your words would not condemn people your words would be spoken into love and express love and the very way they were spoken would draw more and more love to you the speaker and it wouldn't be a matter of spellbinding them with fascination nor would these words be kind of ho-hum words but they would really express who you are they would say exactly who you are and you would see in the lives of the person that you're speaking to the light of understanding so that that person would begin to see who you are to comprehend who you are and to respond to who you are and that would be truth and it would be love and it would be all those things but as you know we don't live in that kind of a world we live in a world where many would say and many do nobody understands me and that may be a kind of form of self-pity but it's true that on so many levels people don't understand and it's very difficult to understand and you in all your pride and arrogance and sinfulness why do you expect that somebody should understand you and those very things limit the possibility of you understanding them as well and so the loneliness is compounded over and over again

because there's nobody to talk to at the level that we need to talk and life becomes very superficial because there's no place you can break through well that's a sort of background to what Psalm 27 is about it's a kind of breakthrough and David discovers in the midst of his life that there is someone he can talk to follow the text very closely the Lord is my life and my salvation whom shall I fear the Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid this is the kind of anvil of David's life on which his ultimate experience of life is hammered out like with a blacksmith hammer and all the experiences of his life both inward and outward are put on this anvil and hammered to see what reality they have and David says that the basis of my life there is this hard reality that the Lord is my life and my salvation whom shall I fear the Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid that's there that is the point of communication for David that's the thing that he by faith has grasped that's the anvil in the center of his life on which all his experiences are hammered out and tested then if you follow through you'll see the various things that he puts on the hammer which he puts on the anvil and hammers away at verse 2 is a picture of a pack of wolves following after him and howling for his blood that's the very picture that is given here when evildoers assail me verse 2 uttering slanders against me my adversaries and foes they shall stumble and fall they won't overtake me the reality that they're there

I can't escape the fact that they will not overtake me I can know David says and then in verse 3 he goes on to another picture and it's as though he was camped with his small group of outlaws if you want of revolutionaries and all the armies of Saul were moving in on him and he wakes and in the early light of dawn he sees that a force of enemies are surrounding his little camp about to close in for the kill and he says though a host encamp against me my heart shall not fear though war rise against me yet I will be confident and that's a verse for our times that we need to affirm and he goes on and talks in verse 4 then about the supreme desire of the Lord and one of the problems of Vancouver and this I want you to know is a compliment but in a way it's a problem too is that there are so many things to do so many legitimate things to desire that it's hard to live here and say what David says in verse 4 one thing have I asked of the Lord to put your life in the place where there is one thing above everything else that you desire one thing that you really want

David knew what it was and this he said I am going to seek after verse 4 and this is what it is that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life that I may behold the beauty of the Lord that I may inquire in his temple that's the thing he wanted above everything else a place to dwell a beauty which transcended everything around him which was the beauty of the Lord and an opportunity to ask questions the deep questions that we so rarely can formulate because we have despaired of there ever being any answers and so we soldier on through life being brave and careful not to ask those questions but David said one thing I desire is to be able to ask those questions in the place where I can find the answer one thing have I desired that is to behold the beauty of the Lord one thing have I desired to dwell in the house of the Lord to dwell to behold and to inquire those are the things for which my heart longs those are the things that really are the purpose and goal of my life to experience that and then he goes on and the action moves from what David desires in verse 5 to what God does he will hide me in the in his shelter in the day of trouble he will conceal me under the cover of his tent he will set me high upon a rock and now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies round about me and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy

[15 : 41] I will sing and make melody to the Lord and that's where the one thing that he desires leads him to it leads him to the ultimate experience of life and that is where he fills the whole of the space with the shouts of his joy and the acclamation of who God is and you see what you need is somebody to stand at the very top of little mountains and command all the rivers and all the sea and all the islands and all the mountains and all the sky to praise God because if those things become an end in themselves they become an idol blocking us from the awareness of the God who created him and David talks about the Lord's shelter the Lord's temple the Lord's tent all of these places where he is at home and where God in a sense brings him into his presence and in that presence

I will sacrifice with shouts of joy I will sing and make melody to the Lord and no matter what you have experienced in life as these three psalms remind you if you have never experienced the worship of the transcendent God who comes to us in the scriptures who confronts us in the person of Jesus Christ your life is unfulfilled and without meaning this is why it's the one thing that David desires above all others verse 7 begins meanwhile back at the ranch in other words having in a sense said all this he says but this is where

I have to live my life be gracious and answer me I don't feel your presence near me I don't feel the fulfillment of that for which I long day passes day and I don't experience all all I know is that you have said to me seek my face and the deepest longing of my heart he says in verse 8 is in fact to seek your face but it's hidden and you haven't called me to love and worship you if you are not prepared to show your love to me and reveal your beauty to me and to show yourself in the circumstances of my life you haven't commanded me to seek your face when it is your purpose not to reveal it when it is your purpose to hide yourself from me you see the deepest longing of God and the deepest longing of our heart come together here and David says how they come together God says seek my face and David from the bottom of his heart says thy face do I seek but don't hide thy face from me look at what happens next he goes on to say if I was by myself if this religion business was something which I generated in my heart if it was something which is a projection of who I am then I would expect that you would turn away from me in anger I would expect that you would cast me off I would expect that you would forsake me that would be my reasonable expectation that you would hide yourself from me that you would turn away from me in anger that you would cast me off that you would forsake me but that's not who you are and the only reason I know that that's not who you are is because you've told me who you are and that it's not your purpose to cast me off not your purpose to forsake me it's your purpose he says in verse 10 that if my father and my mother were to forsake me the ultimate in human resources the patient love and care and continuing concern of parents for their children even when that comes to an end you Lord have assured me that you will take me up at that point not forsake me cast me off or turn away from me in anger which you have the right to do but which I know you have chosen not to do so

[22 : 01] David goes on and he says in verse 11 teach me thy way oh Lord because he's in a difficult place he's having a hard time and he's surrounded by those who are waiting for him to stumble waiting for him to fall waiting for him to make a mistake and he doesn't know how to live his life David describes here what I often hear businessmen describe when they talk about the dog eat dog world in which they have to live their lives that's the world that David speaks of here when he says teach me thy way and lead me on a level path because unless you do I'm going to stumble and my enemies are waiting to pounce on me and I don't want you he says in verse 12 to give me up to the will of my adversaries and one person says that it's more graphic than that it's the appetite of his adversaries that are hungering for him like lions ready to eat him up as soon as he stumbles and he feels that he is surrounded by false witnesses and by violence false witnesses are those who deliberately tell you what is not true and we live in a world of many false witnesses false witnesses that are out to panic us with fear false witnesses that are out to deceive us for their own purposes false witnesses that want to lock us in the prison of despair and hopelessness false witnesses that say there is no answer there is no good there is no evil there is nothing and they have created a climate of violence in which people regularly do the most terrible violence to one another and we live in a very violent age in which violence overtakes us so easily and that's

David's world David's longing is to be in the place where he beholds the beauty of the Lord dwells in his temple inquires asks the deep questions but the reality of his life is this constant exposure to false witnesses to adversaries and to violence and in verses 13 and 14 he says and these are the words by which I'm going to live I will believe and I will wait that's all there isn't any grand solution presented there isn't any miraculous event that overtakes it David has found someone to talk to

David has found someone to express his highest longings and his deepest fears to David has found someone that he can open the whole of his heart to and say here I am and the answer comes to him this is how he expresses the place that he's brought to and the place that I long we should come to individually and as a congregation where we can have this kind of raw and naked faith I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living I will wait for the Lord be strong and my heart will take courage as I wait for the

Lord that's it to believe and to wait and those are the watchwords for us at this time I want just to read this psalm with you from the Bible but I want to read it responsibly as we read all the psalms and to understand the psalm I'm going to read some verses and then your response is always going to be verse one so that when I read verse two you will read verse one when I read verse three you read verse one when I read verse four you read verse one do you get the picture and then you'll see how I think David wants us to understand this psalm can we read it when evildoers assail me offering slanders against me my adversaries and foes they shall stumble and fall because though a host encamp against me my heart shall not fear though war rise against me yet

I will be confident because one thing have I asked of the Lord that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord to inquire in his temple for he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble he will conceal me under the cover of his tent he will set me high upon a rock because and now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies round about me and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy

[29 : 47] I will sing and make melody to the Lord because hear oh Lord what I cry aloud be gracious unto me and answer me thou thou thou thou hast said seek my face my heart says to thee thy face Lord do I seek hide not thy face from me turn not thy servant away in anger thou who has been my help cast me not not forsake me not oh God of my salvation for my father and my mother have forsaken me but the Lord will take me up because the Lord is my life and my salvation whom shall I fear the Lord is the stronghold of my life whom shall

I be afraid teach me thy way oh Lord and lead me on a level path because of my enemies give me not up to the will of my adversaries for false witnesses have risen against me and they breathe out violence but