

Let your heart take courage

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together as we stand. Lord God, as we gather together this morning, we proclaim that you are our light and our salvation.

And we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit will be very active in our minds and in our hearts right now. That you would grant us this morning that we would see you so clearly, that we would be able to understand and receive why it is that we need not be afraid.

Father, by your Spirit, will you come and throw down our anxieties and our fears and replace them with a pure vision of your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, please keep that green sheet in front of you. You can look up Psalm 27 in the Bible if you would like on page 486.

Or you can just look at it on the green sheet. The green sheet is, I'm pretty sure, the ESV. And so I'll refer to that, actually. It's a real pleasure for me this morning to be able to preach from Psalm 27.

[1 : 28] I think a lot of us who have walked with Jesus for a little while have certain passages of Scripture that we find ourselves just coming back to a lot. I don't know if that's the case with you.

It certainly is with me. And I think Psalm 27, for me, would be right at the top in terms of Psalms and passages of Scripture that I just can't get away from.

I just keep coming back to Psalm 27. And that has been the case for me since I first read it when I was in high school. I was just beginning to learn how to follow Jesus, and I came across Psalm 27, and it just grabbed me.

And part of the reason it grabbed me and it has kept hold of me is that Psalm 27 presents just this magnificent vision of confidence in God.

It presents a magnificent vision of confidence in God in spite of terrible circumstances. And that confidence in God was something that was very attractive to me when I was in high school.

[2 : 37] It's very attractive to me now. Now, the reason for that is that all my life, I have struggled, sometimes to a greater extent, sometimes to a lesser extent, I have struggled with anxiety and fear.

I come by it honestly. I come from a long line of stress cases. You know, cut me and I can bleed anxiety.

And that's true even when things are going well in my life. I mean, you know, the circumstances of my life can be doing great, but I can, you know, find something to fear. I have great creativity in that regard.

And when I was in high school and when I first read Psalm 27, I saw this David whose circumstances of life were far more dire than I had ever dreamed of experiencing.

And yet he had far more confidence than I had ever dreamed of experiencing. And that was very attractive to me. And so I began reading Psalm 27 fairly regularly. And I found that as I rehearsed Psalm 27, it was as if the Lord used this psalm to affect the kind of blood transfusion.

[3 : 53] It was as if on the one side, God used the psalm to drain anxiety and fear out of my veins. And as if on the other side, he used it to pump confidence and courage, not in myself, but in God, into me.

Now, that transfusion is still happening. But it's my prayer that it would happen in all of us. That as we look at this psalm, the Lord will use it to break the power of our fears and to fill us with the same kind of confidence that he gave David.

Does that sound good? Let's get in there. I want to ask two questions from this psalm. First of all, where does David's remarkable confidence come from? Where does it come from?

And secondly, how do we learn to pray like this? Where does it come from? How do we do it? OK, first of all, where does it come from? Look at verse two. I want you to start by looking at the situation that David is in.

Verse two, David writes, Now, pause there for a moment.

[5 : 11] You need to see and think about the situation that David is describing. We're not sure here if David is talking about a situation he is currently experiencing when he's writing the psalm or whether he's talking in a somewhat more hypothetical way.

But it's clear that David is painting a dire scenario. And it's a dire scenario that whether or not he's experiencing it at the moment of writing or not, these are experiences that he went through.

He paints a picture of his enemies hunting him down like an animal. And his enemies hunt him down by besieging the city that he's in.

And it seems to be that it's not just that his enemies are trying to conquer the city. His enemies are trying to find him. They want to eat up his flesh.

They want to get him. And they are making war against him very personally and very particularly. And David experienced that very same thing several times.

[6 : 24] Saul tried to track him down. Later on, his own son tried to track him down. Things are terribly dire. David knew what it was to be for his mortal life to be in danger right at the point of a spear.

Okay, that's the scenario. Look at verse 4. One thing I have asked of the Lord. This one thing is what I want. Okay, now stop there.

What do you expect David to ask for in this kind of situation? Let me put it differently.

What would you pray for? What's the one thing you would pray for if you were being hunted down by an army? I know what I would pray for.

And it's not what David prays for. Look at verse 7. The one thing David wants as he's besieged. Wait for it. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

[7 : 28] To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. Come on, David. Some of the best insights of scripture come from when scripture makes a turn that you would never have anticipated.

This is so different from the way I typically pray. I don't know if that's the case with you. Let me tell you how I normally pray.

I call it fretting with God talk. What I do is I get anxious about something, which isn't hard.

And then I start to fret about it. And then I start to obsess about it. And then I start babbling. Just babble.

And I throw God language in to make me feel better. And what I do is I start pouring out, indulging my anxiety in a religious framework.

[8 : 35] So I say, God, God, can you see this thing I'm facing? Do you see it? Because I see it. Do you see how big that is?

I'm not certain you appreciate how awful the scenario is. Let me describe it to you. And then I do.

With great, you know, accuracy or so I think. And then I say, God, just make it better. Just make this thing go away. I don't care what else you do, but just make it feel better.

And the funny thing is, I find so often, the more I fret with God talk, the more stressed out I get. I don't know if you've ever experienced getting up from your prayer time, walking out more stressed out than you came in.

And there's a very good reason for why that happens. The reason that happens is, I haven't really been praying. Not really.

[9 : 44] I haven't really been talking to the God of the universe. I've been gazing at the problem. And it's almost as if I have been bowing down and worshipping at the altar of the thing that frightens me.

And because I've been worshipping the thing that frightens me, its hold on me grows more intense. And I get more and more imprisoned under the power of its anxiety and fear and doubt.

I haven't been worshipping the God of the universe. I have been treating him as if he is a genie. You know, a genie. Nobody cares about a genie. All they want are wishes.

You know, that's why everybody knows if a genie comes to you, ask for more wishes. That's the way I treat God. The thing is, God doesn't want to be our genie.

He wants to be our father. Look back at verse four. David does the exact opposite. He's not fretting with God talk. He's not treating God as if he's a genie.

[10 : 51] He's worshipping him. He is gazing upon the beauty of the Lord. One thing I have asked of the Lord. This is what I will 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. Mark that phrase. And inquire in his temple. Friends, here's the thing. Where does David's confidence come from?

It comes from his habitual gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. Not upon the problem. Upon the Lord.

Let me try to explain this. When you look at something beautiful. Usually you do two things. Usually you observe the object of beauty.

A piece of art. Or the mountains around Vancouver. Or something. You observe it. And then secondly, you admire it. Right? You allow yourself to take pleasure.

[11 : 55] In looking. At this thing that is beautiful. Now that's what David's doing with the Lord. It doesn't mean he's physically looking at God.

It means mentally and spiritually. And in his heart. He's living in constant awareness of God's presence. And he is mentally gazing upon the attributes of God.

He's thinking about God's power. His unmatched infinite power. And his unmatched infinite mercy. And as he thinks about God's power and God's mercy.

He allows his heart to admire God. To take pleasure in God. To worship God. This is the thing that made David tick. This is the thing that gave him confidence.

This is the thing that motivated his life. Now think about it. Imagine David here. He's made a practice of continually rehearsing who God is.

[12 : 55] And what God does. He's thinking about how powerful God is. How merciful God is. He's probably remembering how God rescued Israel out of Egypt.

He's thinking about how God has rescued him. From so many things. And as he's rehearsing who God is.

This well of confidence and joy. And serenity and security wells up within his heart. And it wells up within his heart because he realizes something.

He realizes that if he belongs to a God like that. Then nothing can really finally ultimately hurt him.

He realizes that verse 5 is right. Look at verse 5. For if this kind of a God. David's thinking. Will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble.

[13 : 57] This sort of God who is this powerful. And this merciful. And this beautiful. This sort of God will conceal me. Under the cover of his tent. This sort of God will lift me high upon a rock.

You see what's going on? And he goes on. And the more he gazes at the beauty of the Lord. The more he realizes. That not only is he profoundly secure.

In a deep and remarkable way. Right now. But he realizes that his future. Is determined. His destiny. Is determined. Not by the army that is encircling him.

But by the God who saves him. Look at verse 6. And now. He's talking about the future. Now my head shall be lifted up. Up above my enemies all around me.

And I will offer in his tent. Sacrifices with shouts of joy. I will sing and make melody to the Lord. You see David's fears. Aren't going to rule him.

[14 : 59] He knows his future is one of joy. And thanksgiving. And gratitude. And praise. And worship. And it even goes deeper.

David realizes. When he's looking at the Lord. That even if the worst case scenario happens. Even if the wheels all come off. Verse 10.

Even if my mother and my father forsake me. Surely they would be the last to forsake me. But even if everyone forsakes me. And down to my father and my mother. Verse 10.

The Lord will take me in. You see David realizes. Beholding the beauty of the Lord. That even if all.

Even if the worst case scenario happens. He will gain the Lord. And the Lord. Is enough. See friends.

[16 : 00] If David's right. If the Lord really is this wonderful. And this beautiful. If he really is infinitely powerful. And infinitely kind. If we belong to him.

Then it really is true. That we need not fear. Even if we army encamp against us. And so the key question. For you and I. And for the overcoming.

Of our anxieties. And our fears. Is this question. How well can you see the beauty of the Lord? The more of God's beauty you see.

The more of your anxieties will be triumphed. Now David. Beheld. The beauty of the Lord. Most clearly in the temple.

Or in the tabernacle actually. That's why in verse 4. The thing he wants to do more than anything. Is just get to the tabernacle. Get to the temple. Because that was where. God's beauty. Was most clearly demonstrated.

[17 : 02] David. The wonderful thing is. We. This side of Jesus. We have a better vantage point. Than David did. We can see the beauty of the Lord.

Far more clearly. Than David could have. When we behold the face of Jesus Christ. And what we find. When we look at the face of Jesus Christ.

Is. That the Lord is even more beautiful. Than David ever imagined. What we find. Is that. The Lord is more powerful. Than David imagined.

Because we know now. That Jesus conquered death itself. It takes great power to do that. And we know. When we look at Jesus. That. The Lord is more merciful.

Than David ever imagined. Because we know. That Jesus died for us. When we were his enemies. And so you and I. Have an advantage. When we look at Jesus. We see.

[17 : 57] That his beauty. Is far more glorious. Than David ever imagined. And therefore. We are far more secure. We can be far more confident. Than David ever dreamed.

I mean. Doesn't that explain. That first reading. We had from Romans. Did you catch that? Do you catch the. The confidence.

That Paul. Has when he rides. Listen to it. What shall we say. To these things. He's talking about. Suffering and so forth. If God is for us. Writes Paul.

Who can be against us? How do I know that? Because he. Who did not. Spare his own son. But gave him up for us. How will he not. Also with him. Graciously. Grant us all things.

Who shall separate us. From the love of Christ. Shall tribulation. Or distress. Or persecution. Or famine. Or nakedness. Or danger. Or sword. No. In all these things.

[18 : 55] We are more than conquerors. Through him who loved us. For I'm sure that neither death. Nor life. Nor angels. Nor rulers. Nor things present. Nor things to come.

Nor powers. Nor height. Nor depth. Nor anything else. In all creation. Will be able to separate us. From the love of Christ. That is in. God. Look at the beauty of Jesus.

And he will conquer your fears. And he will grant you confidence. Okay. That's where confidence comes from. Beholding the beauty of the Lord.

Now. How do we do it? How do we do it? How do we pray like this? The most simple thing to say. Is that it is the opposite. Of fretting with God talk.

Let me give you three things. From this passage. Three things to practice. In your prayer life. We need to seek. We need to ask. We need to trust.

[19 : 57] We need to seek the Lord's face. We need to ask him for mercy. And we need to trust him. For his goodness. First of all. We need to seek the face of the Lord. Look at verse 8. Verse 8 says.

You have said. Seek my face. My heart says to you. Your face Lord. Do I seek. Sometimes people want to know.

What God's will is. For your life. I will tell you. What God's will is. For your life. God's highest priority for you. Is that you would know him.

Not just that you would get good things from him. He doesn't just want to be your genie. He wants to be your father. For your life. For your life. For your life. And because of that. God.

God's highest priority. Is that you would be a person. Who seeks his face. And if that is God's highest priority for you. It needs to be our highest priority in prayer. So our prayer needs to be.

[20 : 57] Our first priority needs to be something like this. Father. You've told me to seek your face. That's what I want to do. I want to seek your face. Father grant me to see Jesus.

More clearly. Than even I can see the problems I fear. Grant me to see his power and his mercy. And his grace and his love.

Grant me to end up loving Jesus. And knowing Jesus more. As I walk through this difficult time. Than I would have if I could have avoided the problems altogether.

The first thing we need to do in our prayer. Is to seek the face of the Lord. The second thing we need to do. Is ask him for mercy. If you read verse 7 and onward. You'll notice that David is very bold in asking for help.

It's important. You know David. It's not that David loses touch with reality. He knows that there are enemies who want to kill him. And he asks very specifically that that would not happen.

[22 : 06] It's important as we pray that we do not pray timidly. Timidly. And that we do not pray too generally. Usually if we pray timidly.

It's a sign that we don't really think God is powerful. And we don't really think he's merciful. If you pray timidly. It's because. It's probably because. You can't really see the beauty of the Lord.

Pray boldly. Pray as boldly. Ask as boldly for God's mercy. As he has been bold in granting mercy through Jesus. So we need to seek the face of the Lord.

We need to ask boldly. Third thing we need to do. Third thing we need to do. Is to trust him. And we need to trust him for his goodness. Even when we can't see it yet. This one's tough.

Look at verse 13. I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord. In the land of the living. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage.

[23 : 07] And wait for the Lord. You know when David ends this prayer. It's not all better yet. He's still waiting.

But the circumstances around him are still dire. And yet he is waiting and trusting. He says I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord. In the land of the living.

And he calls you and I to do the same thing. Part of the Christian life. Is walking through really hard times. And trusting in the Lord. Even when you can't imagine.

How he could possibly show his goodness. Through this time. And so part of our prayer life needs to be father. Father I am in the midst of terrible.

Terrible suffering. I don't see any way out. I don't see any way that this can resolve. But I know you. And I know you are more powerful.

[24 : 07] Than these two problems. I know that you have promised to walk with me. Through the darkest time. And therefore I say. Be my light and my salvation.

I am waiting for you. All my chips are in you. I am waiting for you alone. When you pray that prayer.

It will feel very weak. But it's not weak. Praying that prayer. Is the content. Of Christian courage. That's what courage is.

And it is the strongest. Sort of courage. That is imaginable. Because it rests. Not in you. But in the God. Who spoke reality. Into existence. Friends.

My guess is. That I am not alone here. My guess is. That I am not the only one. Who can tend to be a stress case. My guess is. I am not the only one.

[25 : 07] Who has tended to fret. With God talk. And if that's you. If you tend to struggle. With fear and anxiety. Friend. Run to this psalm.

Rehearse this psalm. Let this psalm. Become part of you. Because as you do. The Lord will impart. To you. The confidence. It witnesses to.

It will be like. A blood transfusion. It will go on. For the rest of your life. But as you work. On this psalm. The Lord will drain you. Of fear and anxiety. And he will pump you full.

Of his confidence. And courage. Not arrogance. But a confidence. And a courage. That comes from. Beholding the beauty. Of the Lord. And you will find in him.

That he is enough. Let's pray. Oh Lord.

[26 : 10] You are. Our light. And our salvation. Whom shall we fear? Oh Lord. You are the stronghold. Of our lives. Of whom shall we be afraid? By your spirit.

By your powerful spirit. That hovered. Hovered over the waters. At creation. Come. And throw down. Our fears. And grant us.

To behold. The beauty of the Lord. And to inquire. Looking at Jesus. For the rest of our lives. In his mighty name.

We pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let us pray. Almighty God and Father.

Help us this morning to be still. In your presence. And to gaze upon your beauty. You are good.

[27 : 24] You are love. You are wisdom. You are rest. You are peace. You are joy. And justice. You are gentleness.

You are our light and salvation. Our safety. And the stronghold. Of our lives. We praise you.

We worship you. Lord. In your mercy. Hear our prayer. We give thanks for this magnificent psalm.

And for Jim's reminder. That it is you. Lord God. And only you. Who can fill us with confidence. And hope. Forgive us.

Father God. In times of trouble. We often turn our gaze away. From you and your beauty. We pray fretfully.

[28 : 25] And then we run and hide. And seek shelter. Not in you. But in our work. Our relationships.

Our hobbies. We cover our anxiety and fears. With eating. Drinking. Shopping. In front of our televisions.

And at our computers. On this beautiful summer morning. We ask for your help. Deliver us.

We pray from our distractions. Help us. Seek your face. Fill each of us.

We pray. With the confidence. That grows out of seeing. The beauty of Jesus. For any.

[29 : 27] Here today. Who are too weary. To worship. Who may feel. That your face. Is hidden. From them. You ask you.

O Holy Spirit. To come. And be their strength. And comfort. Restore to them. We pray. The joy. Of their salvation.

We also pray. For members. Of our church family. In particular need. At this time. Remembering by name.

Luke. Bev. Rowena. David. Isabel. Jean.

Kathy. And. Pauline. And Stephen. Hale. And their family. And the. Berry family. In their times.

[30 : 28] Of grieving. And in a time. Of silence. We will bring. Before you. Lord God.

Boldly. And confidently. Any. Who are on. Our hearts. Today. Today. Our hearts. Eight.

Amen. Amen. Before you.

■■■. Thank you.

We ask that you will give them times of rest and restoration during this summer season.

[31 : 47] We thank you for bringing the Saladin family safely home from their holiday, and we pray for Dan, Catherine, Alexander, and Nicholas Gifford as they go on holiday this week.

We pray, too, for the work and witness of Christian camps and summer programs. We give thanks for all those involved in the recent St. John's Children's Summer Program.

And we pray for all the children who attended, that they will come to know you better and love you more as their light and salvation.

We pray for all the young people at St. John's and for the leadership of the youth group and Ecclesia. Please protect Dave Little and prepare him for his new leadership role in our church.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. As we end this time of prayer, Lord God, we pray for our city, for the poor, the unemployed, the addicted.

[32 : 58] We pray for our fellow Canadians, especially for those who have lost homes, farms, and businesses in the recent prairie floods, and for all who continue to suffer because of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Place, we pray, in all these places, Christians whose lives reflect your great love for this world you died to save.

We pray all these prayers in your powerful and beautiful name. Amen.