

Thriving in Tough Times, Psalm 27

God made us for wonder with a sense of transcendence. Theologians use *transcendence* to describe how great God is compared to us. He is high and holy. Coupled with this is *immanence*. *Immanence* underscores God's delight to draw near to us with His tenderness and care. Read Psalm 27 rapidly. Focus on the two bold topics, (1) the great expressions of how God sees and cares for us (2) in the midst of spiritual trials.

For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy;
“I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to
revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite (Isaiah 57:15).

Transcendent other-ness with immanent closeness. ***Resting in His presence while wrestling with life-storms.*** Read Psalm 27 through now before proceeding.

God did not inspire the Psalms to be lived out in the safety of the harbor, but on the high seas in the storms of life. Oftentimes when life comes crashing over us, we need to realign our spiritual compass to “*true north.*”

Psalm 27 models for us how to maintain this spiritual orientation of living from His presence even when people and circumstances assault us. Each of the four cycles begins with God's presence (1, 4, 8, 13-14). This Psalm then leads us to practice His presence as we live in a real world with dark forces of evil that tempt us on the battlefield to change allegiance.

First, God's presence provides light and security, driving out fear and establishing confidence (1-3). I still remember the impact this verse had when I was in an ongoing situation where the “*fear of pleasing people*” assaulted me. The Lord is my light, salvation, and stronghold, so whom shall I fear or be afraid of? This is easy for me to recite while bobbing in the harbor. But on the high seas? I battled to bring this powerful weapon to bear on real-life pain.

When my focus shifts from God's provision to my enemy, my emotions are assaulted. “*Advance against.*” “*Devour*” “*Stumble and fall.*” “*Besiege.*” “*War break out against me*” described my experience...until I persisted on rehearsing Reality.

Second, God's presence provides safety, security and victory in days when trouble threatens to overwhelm (4-6). Our society puts a bad rap on addictive behavior. Rightfully so...***usually.*** The dictionary defines addiction as the “*state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or something habit-forming.*”

One addiction though, and ***only one***, ushers us into God's freedom. This “*one thing*” (v. 4) unshackles our lives from all lesser fear and smaller focus, like “*the day of trouble*” and “*the enemies who surround me.*” Live to an Audience of One.

We not only ask but diligently seek. Paul further describes how to live in this “*one thing*” with the compound action of forgetting what's behind and stretching with all our energy to our high calling (Philippians 3:12-14). The “*house of the Lord*” and “*temple*” in Psalms represent God's presence to the Jews. Today though, ***we*** are His temple. The end result is “*to gaze on the beauty of the Lord...all the days of my life.*” Take a few minutes to soak in these phrases and allow the Spirit of God to ravish your heart with the privilege.

Third, God's presence is David's true Family in times of uncertainty and painful abandonment (7-12). David cries out to the Lord in his deep need. “*Answer me, Lord.*” David has only one place to turn. *Do we know this?* I like the NASB here.

When **You** said, "Seek My face," **my heart** said to You, "I shall seek Your face, Lord"
(Psalm 27:8, NASB)

Have you ever been forsaken by your closest support group? Has a friend ever turned on you? David is there, with "*false witnesses...spouting malicious accusations*" (10+12). David *laments* in verse 9, an expression of his honest inner fears because the attack is so furious. Lament is the raw expression of our authentic feelings. Lament is **not** an accurate an accurate guide. Begin with honesty as we battle through to confidently proclaim truth. "*The Lord will receive me.*" The Lord's face (His presence) is all that sustained David as he *confidently* rests in the Lord.

*Fourth, **God's presence** provides confidence, strength and patience in all of life as we **wait** patiently for the Lord* (i.e. rest, 13-14). David's landing spot is to rest confidently in God's presence, waiting patiently for His timing, even though the storms of life still rage outside. *Where do you go in the midst of your storms?*

This is another great, big-picture to reflect on. I have an inventory of these that I return to often when I struggle. They have become "*deep spiritual wells*" of refreshment for me to recalibrate my spiritual compass.