

A Biblical Strategy for Living Psalm 27

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Psalm 27 v. 2-3 Describes the “**trials**” in the life of the psalmist; ... he speaks of how “*evil men sought to advance against him*” and “*devour his flesh,*” He speaks of how he can depend on the Lord to be with him **even though “an army besiege him”** -v. 3.]. This psalm, **Psalm 27**, is generally attributed to **David**. Many commentators say it is not possible to determine at what point in David’s life this psalm was written, and what were the circumstances [trials] to which he refers in the psalm.

However, the great 19th Century Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, suggests this psalm may have been written by David **when he was betrayed by the mass murderer, Doeg**. ... In that situation David was fleeing from **Saul**, who wanted to kill David [The account of how the Lord had rejected Saul as the King of Israel and told Samuel to go and anoint David as Israel’s next King is found in **I Samuel 16**. ... the narrative goes on to reveal how Saul eventually grew to hate David. David was forced to flee from Saul and remain in hiding. We are told that Saul actually pursued David and sought to find him in order to kill him.].

Doeg, a herdsman who worked for King Saul, [he was in the village of Nob one day, and ...] overheard a conversation between David and Ahemalech, the priest of Nob, ... in which Ahemaleck sided with David and gave him provisions and advice about how to hide from Saul. **Doeg told Saul about this conversation** and Saul sought to have someone kill Ahemaleck for siding with David against himself. No one else would take this job [of going to kill Ahemaleck], but Doeg himself did. The account tells us how Doeg went to Nob and slew Ahemaleck and 85 other priests, as well as all the men, women, children, and all the animals in the village of Nob.

As in most of the psalms, David writes about the trials and trouble in his life, but [here in Psalm 27] he writes to share his “**strategy**” [**when facing such trials**]... and ... to share his praise to God for standing with him and delivering him from the many enemies and trials he faced in his lifetime. ...

“The Christian” is not promised an easy time in this world. In fact, the exact opposite is the case. The Christian can expect unusual trials **because** we are followers of Christ. ... The enemies and the trials we Christians face in our lives may not be as vivid and imposing as those David faced [i.e. a “mass murderer” like Doeg], but they are, nevertheless, just as real!

John 15:18-20 – Jesus said: “*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master’ ... If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.*”

Lloyd-Jones said: “Because we are Christians, **the devil and all his forces** will be particularly concerned to try us and to test us; to bring us down, if not into sin, at any rate into a condition of defeat and unhappiness, filled with a sense of insecurity and a spirit of fear.”

In the New Testament, we are constantly reminded of the **enemies** the Christian faces, in this world and also in the spiritual realm.

Eph. 6:12 - *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*¹³ *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

II Cor. 10:3-5 - *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.*⁴ *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*⁵ *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

II Thess. 1:6-10 - *God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you*⁷ *and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.*⁸ *He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*⁹ *They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might*¹⁰ *on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

Rom. 8:35-39 - *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*³⁶ *As it is written:*

*“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,*³⁹ *neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

And, in the psalms, David shares his experience amidst the trials and hardships in this world and in the life. He opens his heart and shares his feelings, his weaknesses and his source of comfort and strength. ... **In Psalm 27** he also shares his “**strategy**” as to **how** to live in a world that is full of dangers and constant trials.

Lloyd-Jones offers this [three section] outline of Psalm 27:

I. **Verses 1-6** – the psalmist expresses his confidence, his assurance ...

II. **Verses 7-12** – he describes how he prays and makes petitions to God out of the midst of the struggle and conflict and agony ...

III. **Verses 13-14** – he arrives at **his final conclusion**, his decision regarding how to live and how to face life in a world so full of trials and difficulties.

A. “So ...,” says Lloyd-Jones: “... what we have here in this psalm is what we may well call a ‘**strategy**’ for living, how to face the battle and the conflict of life. ... **you must always start with ‘strategy,’ not with tactics**, because if you do not you will soon find yourself defeated. ... so you must **start with a grand strategy of life**, and that is stated to perfection in this psalm. **Here it is:** We must always **start in heaven, with God**. Then, having done that, **we come to earth and face the problems of life and living** as we find them **in the light of what we have already seen in heaven with God**. ... That, then, is the great principle, and we all get into trouble because we forget this essential strategy. ... **Never ‘start’ with your problems.**”

Never! Never start with earth; never start with men. **Always start in heaven; always start with God.** That is really the one great message of this psalm ...”

Col. 3:2 – “*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*” AND, Psalm 103:19 – “*The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*”

The psalmist summarizes it in **verse 4 [of Psa. 27]**: ... He is a **single-minded** man! [**“Focused!”**]

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

Jeremiah the prophet says it in this way [in **Jer. 17:5-8**] “... This is what the LORD says:

“Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. “But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

I. Verses 1-6 – the psalmist expresses his confidence, his assurance ... Psa. 27:1-3 ...

*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? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then **I will be confident.***

Then, **verses 5-6** continue this thought ... *For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock. Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.*

A. **This is a tremendous, “overwhelming” confidence ... [... The great truth for the Christian is** that it is possible for him to face life, even at its very worst, without fear, without uncertainty; without shrinking or trembling at the unknown future. It is a confidence that can face the future, no matter what, and be confident, assured, persuaded, sure **that God is in control**, looking after us, and ultimately working for our good in all things – Rom. 8:28.]

Psa. 147:4 – “*He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.*”

Matt. 10:29-30 – ⁹*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ³⁰And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*”

Psa. 43:1-5 – “*Fear not for I have redeemed you; ... I have summoned you by name; you are mine. ... When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, ... “*

1. **It is the assurance that nothing can defeat me.** [This is a confidence that is typical of the people of God throughout the bible.]

a. The example of the apostle Paul in Romans 8 –

(1) He lists his trials troubles and tribulations, and; then, (2) expresses his confidence that God will faithfully deliver him from them all ...

vv. 35-37 – “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through him who loved us.*”

Romans 8:38-39 – “*For I am **convinced** ... [persuaded, confident, certain] ... that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

b. Phil. 1:6 - **being confident** of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

B. But, we must ask: “**What is the source of this confidence?**”

Psa. 27:13 KJV – “*I had fainted, **unless I had believed** to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*”

NOTE: The words “***I had fainted ...***” are not in the Hebrew, but are supplied by early translators’ [D.M.L-J] This is a good addition, because the translator is writing under the deep stress of emotion.

But notice that **the source of his confidence is “... the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”** The psalmist is **remembering** the terrible predicament he was in, the forces that were against him, and his deep consciousness of his own weakness. And his reflection [meditation] on how God delivered him out of that circumstance causes him to blurt out praise to the Lord!

He is saying, “***unless I had believed*** – i.e. **unless I had believed** in God’s steadfast and faithful love toward me, and his watch-care over me ... I would have been completely undone, filled with despair; ... I would have fainted under this circumstance!” [i.e. the circumstances would have overcome me!]

C. The clear implication is that “self-reliance” and “self-sufficiency” is **not a Christian trait!**

1. The “**confidence**” the psalmist has discovered [in Psalm 27] is not a confidence in himself!

a. There are many people who are full of confidence that is based upon themselves, “self-confidence.”

The famous words written in a poem by **W.E. Henley**, “**Invictus**” ...

*“It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.”*

The world is full of such people, who ‘keep a stiff upper lip’ and try to pretend their philosophy of courage is the solution to all of life’s troubles. Ultimately, such people become complete failures who are obviously defeated by the different temptations and trials in this life.

2. **Lloyd-Jones** – “So the first thing we must always learn in this world, the great characteristic of us as Christian people, is that we are no longer **self**-confident. We know the truth about ourselves. ... We know what we are up against” ... [Eph, 6:12] :...” and we realize our own utter weakness and helplessness: “*I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*”

D. On what does he base this confidence?

1. v. 1 “*The Lord is my light.*” [v. 1a]

“Light” is the opposite of darkness, [spiritually] the opposite of despair. As Lloyd-Jones says: “**The Gospel** itself, in a sense is introduced to us in that way: “*The people that sat in darkness saw great light.*” (Matt. 4:16)

“What happens to us all as a **result** of troubles and tribulations in life is that **we are in darkness**. We do not understand, and so we say, “**Why** should these things be happening? **Why** should I have to endure all this? ... We do not see what we can do about it. We seek solutions, ... The whole world is in darkness” ... and as a result there is confusion, despair, hopelessness and disappointment.

But, the psalmist says, “*the Lord is my light.*” And, this is the only true light that is in the world today! **Jesus** came into the world and **said**: “*I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*” (Jn. 8:12 & Jn. 14:6).

As Lloyd-Jones says: “... those who believe in this revelation given by the Lord are not surprised that the world is as it is. **We do not believe in something foolish like evolution and hold that the world is getting better and better**, because we can see that it is getting worse and worse. ... We do not expect anything different. We have light on the situation. We are no longer defeated because we see another way, another kind of life, the way out. ‘*The Lord is my light.*’”

So, the Lord is “our deliverance. He is an emancipator, and he delivers us from” ... the confusion and hopelessness of this world! *We are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear son (Col. 1:13)*. We, as Christians, are taken out of the world, in understanding and in spirit, and are put into this position of peace and rest and safety.” [Isa. 46:3-4 & 43:1-5; Phil. 4:6-7]

2. “*The Lord is the strength of my life.*” [v. 1b] –

Of course, the psalmist is referring to God’s unlimited, superior and matchless power. **He knows something the world does not know**. He knows there is a great army of enemies against him in this world [earthly human forces that are evil and destructive; and also, spiritual forces of darkness – Eph. 6:12]. He says [Psa. 27: v. 3] “*though an army should besiege me ...*,” and, “*though war break out against me*”

The psalmist is fully aware of all this and of his own weakness and vulnerability. But he has a great power behind him. He has one who understands and cares, ... and is unlimited in His power and strength – to help, to protect, to provide.

So, this is the source of the psalmist’s confidence: “**God is light, and in him is no darkness at all**” [I Jn. 1:5]. God is omniscient and omnipotent, He knows all about us and He has the power to surround us and protect us, and He has the will to do so! In Matthew 28:11, Jesus said: “**Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**”

In I Peter 5:8, Peter puts it this way: “*Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith.*” ... And **how** can we do this? There is only one way to do it, says Peter: “**casting all your care upon him**” (v.7), and **why** should we do so? “Because he cares for you.” ...

He knows all about you and he cares for your welfare' [D.M.L.J.]. In Matthew 10:30, Jesus said: "*The very hairs of your head are all numbered.*" Nothing can happen to you apart from his knowing and his working [Psa. 139].

In verse 10, the psalmist says: "*When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.*" Thank God for mothers and fathers! But they are fallible, they are only human, and even they will at times, let us down. They are sinners, and they may even forsake us. But **Deut. 33:27** says: "***The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.***" There is one who will never leave us and never forsake us" [**Heb. 13:5**].

3. And so we ask the question: "**How can I get this confidence?**"

a. The first great thing we must do is: Believe in the Lord! "*I had fainted had I not believed*" (v. 13 KJV). This is the essential and unavoidable starting point, and we will have nothing without it. **Hebrews 11:6** says: "*He that cometh to God **must believe** that he is, and that he is a rewarder those who diligently seek him.*" ... And there is nothing 'without' belief in God. ... Those "fools" who say there is no God," and those who ignore Him and rely upon themselves are morally and spiritually bankrupt in this matter!

b. And it must be emphasized that belief is only the starting point. The psalmist goes on to say (v. 4) ... "*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will 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, and to inquire in his temple.*" ... "***This one thing*** ..." refers to total **concentration** [focus] on the Lord! **It is the opposite of what James calls "doublemindedness"** [James 1:8]. It refers to the man/woman who **makes God the supreme focus of their life!** ...

The apostle Paul refers to this truth in **Phil. 3:13-15** ...

"... ***this one thing I do***, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be [mature], be thus minded: ..."

This refers to an all-consuming desire to put God at the center of our lives, in all things; ... in all our trials and tribulations! i.e. even when we are severely tempted, ... we learn to cry out to God in the midst of it all, ... to ask for grace from him to successfully pass through each trial. It means to seek his guidance and direction in all or ways [**Prov. 3:5-6**].

Lloyd-Jones says it this way: "What he really means is this: 'That I might belong to the household of God; that I am ever in communion with God, in fellowship with God, in touch with him.' In effect, the psalmist is saying, 'What I want above everything else in this world is always to be in an intimate relationship with God, so that whatever happens, I am with him and he is with me.' This is the one thing he wants. This is the first thing in his life and the secret of his whole position."

So the psalmist's supreme desire is to know God, to worship and adore him. In Psalm 27, the psalmist says: "*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life ...*" And **why** is this? "**To behold the beauty of the Lord.**" And he repeats this in the thirteenth verse: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord."

Lloyd-Jones says: "To 'Gaze upon the beauty of the Lord'... **means to see the desirableness of God, to see his goodness, to consider and to meditate upon and to contemplate his excellencies.** This is what this man wants above everything else." [i.e. "... the consideration of His attributes.]

Then, the psalmist turns to the consideration of God’s goodness to us in His daily dealings with us.” “... *the goodness of the Lord*” in the land of the living[cf. Rom. 8:28]

And then he moves to “**praise**” for God: [v. 6] “*I will sing, yea, I will sing praises to the Lord.*”

And so, the psalmist reveals the secret of how to pray effectively! As Lloyd-Jones says: “You should never **start** with yourself and your petitions. You must start with God and gaze upon His glory – the glory of His person and His works – and then praise Him.

And, we also find this same pattern in the New Testament. In **II Cor. 3:18**, the apostle Paul says: “*We all, with open face, ... beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord ...*”; and in **Col. 3:2**, Paul says, “... *set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*”

II. Only after all of this does the psalmist come to **his PETITIONS** ...

Psalm 27: 7 – “⁷ *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.*”

Psalm 27:9 – “⁹ *Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.*”

Psalm 27:12 - “¹² *Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.*”

In Philippians 4:6, the apostle Paul says: “*Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests [i.e. “petitions”] be made known unto God.*”

Summary to this point: Lloyd-Jones – “You **start** with adoration, wonder, and amazement. You gaze upon Him and all His glorious attributes – what He has been, what He has done for us, and all the wonders of His work. You **trace them out**, you praise Him, and **then** knowing Him, you bring your petitions to Him, whatever they may be. ... **Then** [finally] the psalmist says, having done all that, wait for His answer. [Psalm 27:14] ... “Wait on the Lord.” He has heard you; He will do what you have asked, and **He will do it in His own way.**” ... Which may be [totally different. But, ...] far superior to any answer you may have desired.

III. Finally, the psalmist comes to his inevitable **conclusion**:

Lloyd-Jones states it this way: “You know, **if I hadn’t believed** to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, **if I didn’t know** that the Lord is ready and waiting to bless His people in this world as well as in that world that is to come [i.e. the doctrine of His steadfast love], I [would have] *fainted.*”

“**And so** He says: **Wait upon the Lord** [always include **Him in your thinking, your decision making** ...] *and be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart. Wait I say on the Lord.*”

In conclusion, then, ... “Start like that and keep like that. **Make it the central point in your life** to gaze upon God.” [Constantly review in your mind those incidents where you saw “the finger-prints” of God in your life, ... taking care of you, ... watching over you; and, reflect and meditate upon **His attributes** – His vastness, His Solitariness, His omniscience, omnipotence, and His omnipresence; ... together with His matchless love toward you.]

Praise Him. Worship Him, adore Him, and **put yourself and your life completely in His hands.** “And if you do this, you will find that **He will be your light, your salvation, your strength and power, your never-failing refuge.**”

