

Psalm 27:1-3

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-27/psalm-271-3/>

Placing one's trust utterly in the Lord for all of life's experiences results in a deeper understanding about life, the good as well as the suffering.

A critical decision had been made, a decision defining the nature and direction of the life King David would endeavor to lead. Here in verse 1 he initiates a poetic conversation about that decision by establishing three indisputable characteristics regarding his relationship with *the Lord*, Yahweh.

(See the [Commentary on Psalm 91:2](#) for further discussion about Yahweh, God's personal and revealed name.)

Of the Lord, David writes:

The Lord is my light and my salvation ... The Lord is the defense of my life (vs 1).

Layering each of these characteristics upon the next as a master mason would layer critical foundation stones to ensure the strength and stability of the structure they will support, David says Yahweh is to him *light*, *salvation*, and *life-defense*.

The Lord is my light is both deeply personal and intended to reveal that which, without illumination, would remain hidden in shadow. This poetic construct is remarkable because of its use of the most intimate reference to God, Yahweh. David then audaciously asserts personal intimacy with Yahweh by employing the first person possessive pronoun, *my*, to complete the depiction of his relationship with God. There is no room for equivocation: David feels as close to God as a child can be to a loving parent.

Light and *salvation* can be understood as equivalent terms used in a poetic strategy of repetition; or as contextually expanded terms that, while closely related, actually lean toward differing perspectives. In the first instance, we think of the ultimate redemption Yahweh intends for those who hold to Him in faith. Both *light* (Hebrew "or") and *salvation* (Hebrew "yasha") have been employed in Scripture to describe this ultimate gift from God to His children (Isaiah 9:2; Colossians 1:12-14; 1 Peter 2:9). If not with respect to the ultimate destiny of the faithful in view of eternity, the Bible also looks to these two words to portray more immediate relief from difficult circumstances in this life (Psalm 18:8; Micah 7:8).

The Gospel of John promises that it is through faith in and following Jesus Christ that one is able to experience this redeeming *light* and the sure *salvation* that are from God (John 1:4, 12-13; 3:15-16; 8:12). John also warns against turning away from the *light* and *salvation* made available to us in Jesus Christ:

“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment,

that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”

(John 3:18-20)

The second, more metaphorically inclined approach to interpreting *light* and *salvation* does not exclude ideas of ultimate redemption and eternity. It does, however, invite the reader to consider the benefits that accrue from involving Yahweh in the whole of one's present life. In so doing, the trusting soul experiences the impact of David's declaration, *The Lord is the defense of my life*.

Placing one's trust utterly in the Lord for all of life's experiences results in the *light* (illumination, insight, grasp) of a deeper understanding about life, the good as well as the suffering. This increased depth of discernment produces in a person a greater ability to comprehend current circumstances—regardless whether they present good or ill—and to more beneficially engage or confront that which is encountered (Psalm 119:105, 130; John 8:12).

Salvation (rescue, relief, deliverance) accompanies *light* as a specifically hopeful term, assuring the believer that God is able to sculpt redemption from and inject grace into even the most dire of life's situations (Psalm 18:35-36; 2 Corinthians 4:8-9; Philippians 2:12-13). So, *light* and *salvation* work in tandem, establishing the Lord's divine strength as an impenetrable *defense* (Hebrew “mauz”) or barrier against all that threatens the believer's best life-destiny in God's eternal care (Psalm 91:1-4, 16; John 10:28).

David asks, *Whom shall I fear? ... Whom shall I dread?* Each of the two stanzas in verse one end with a question. This dynamic duo of rhetorical interrogatives disclose more of an answer than they pursue any actual line of inquiry. Working together in poetic repetition to underscore a recurring theme, the questions almost seem humorously wry given the affirmations they each follow.

Reminiscent of the soothing calm one encounters in Psalm 23:4, “I fear no evil,” this psalm offers the term *fear* (Hebrew, “yare”)—to be frightened of, to cower before, to be terrified of—solely to negate its power over the psalmist or anyone who shares like faith with the poet.

Fear is a verb that speaks of experience in one's immediate present and requires a subject, the *Whom*, to complete its meaning. *Dread* (Hebrew, “pachad”), while it also reflects the phobic qualities of *fear*, contours the occurrence within both a continuous and a future expectation. The first is happening in the “now,” the second is an anticipation brought on by previous experience and future expectation. In either case, however, the psalmist is clearly answering: “Nobody and no thing is greater than my Lord.”

The Apostle Paul captured the essence of this confident declaration, while further clarifying the completion of God's protective and redemptive grace through Jesus Christ:

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give

us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written,

“FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;
WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.”

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(Romans 8:31-39)

Verses 2 and 3 amplify by context and experience the stout confidence David has in the Lord: *When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh* is a vivid, even startling report of the threat the psalmist-king had encountered in life by the time this psalm was composed. *Evildoers* (Hebrew, “*raa*”) are the wicked who purposefully endeavor to cause harm, physically or otherwise.

David has no misconception regarding the adversarial intent of the *evildoers*; *to devour my flesh* being the descriptive phrase used to portray the extent to which the evildoers' all-consuming maliciousness would stretch. Their mischief is deadly and intends to stop David by any means from accomplishing that which the Lord has purposed for his life.

The wicked are, in fact, *adversaries* and *enemies* set against David and his intentions to honor the Lord in all that his life is about. These foes, David recounts, were unsuccessful in their mission to thwart and hurt the psalmist: *they stumbled and fell*—they failed. David has already credited his escape from enemies and adversaries to the working and protection of the Lord (verse 1).

Perhaps it is the case in most matters of life that history is not a guarantor of future outcomes. Even so, David remains supremely confident in more than mere history when it comes to the Lord's ability to protect and carry His own. David has seen what the Lord has done in the past and knows that the Lord will continue to do whatever it takes to ensure His redemptive eternal will comes to pass in the future (Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 34:19, 46:1).

David's confidence rests in his understanding of, in his faith in, the Lord's character and superiority above the entirety of the created order—even over those things that have gone awry following the introduction of sin into creation during its first days (Isaiah 46:9).

The odds against David do not matter: *Though a host encamp against me...Though war arise against me...*(vs 3). Despite seemingly overwhelming numbers set against him, regardless of any bellicose chaos rained down upon him, David will not be intimidated nor waiver in determination and faith. The poet-king stands firm and resolute: *My heart will not fear...In spite of this I shall be confident.*

The *Whom* upon whom David relies has not, does not, and will not fail (Isaiah 46:10; Ezekiel 12:28; 2 Timothy 4:18). It is notable here that David is making a determination, a decision, not to fear. He makes an intentional statement to his own heart that *I shall be confident* that His God has all things in His hands, and whatever He works will be for his good.

This has a Messianic foreshadowing to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, He prayed for His own desire to be met, if it was within His Father's plan, saying:

"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."
(Luke 22:42)

In this passage from Luke, Jesus uses two different Greek words translated "willing" and "will." In the phrase "Father, if you are willing" Jesus uses "boulomai" which indicates an intent, a decision based on a plan. In the phrase "not My will" Jesus uses "thelema" which is a wish or desire. Jesus is saying that His desire is not to suffer, but as with King David, through His prayer, Jesus is setting His mind to trust that His Heavenly Father's ways are for the best, and therefore will have confidence. To say *I shall be confident* is to say "Your will be done."

Biblical Text

A Psalm of David.

¹ The Lord is my light and my salvation;

Whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the defense of my life;

Whom shall I dread?

² When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,

My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.

³ Though a host encamp against me,

My heart will not fear;

Though war arise against me,

In spite of this I shall be confident.