

Psalm 27:7-12

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-27/psalm-277-12/>

An inextricable part of an enduring relationship with God is the human willingness to respond with obedience to God's gracious act of engagement.

Hear, O Lord (vs 7). To this point in the psalm, we have heard what amounts to testimonial from King David. In verses 7-12 the royal poet allows us to overhear his direct intercessions with the Lord Yahweh.

Beginning with verse 7, *I cry with my voice* underscores the deeply personal plea that is being made. This man of highest royal station, impressive power, and immense wealth opens himself utterly to be vulnerable before his God. The prayer is lifted above more casual qualities of commonplace conversation to the urgent tones of distress in time of dire need: *I cry*.

I cry is taken from the Hebrew primary root word “qara,” meaning “to call,” “to read,” or “to proclaim.” From this, readers can comprehend the elevated intensity and the profound depth of this search for the Lord's favor in difficult circumstances. The king of Israel, with priests and prophets to attend him, sets these lesser officiants aside and uses his own voice—*my voice*—and his own heart to entreat with God.

Though David may expect that Yahweh will be *gracious*, and though surely he hopes to have an *answer* from the Lord, the psalmist makes it clear that he knows he is in no position to demand such. Any response to mortal humanity from the Almighty Immortal God—whether in challenge, comfort, or rescue—is in itself an act of divine graciousness and love (Psalm 8:4; Job 7:17; 1 Peter 5:6-7).

In verse 8: *When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You, “Your face, O Lord, I shall seek.”* David demonstrates further his purposeful, active submission under God's rule: *When You said...my heart said*.

The Lord spoke and David responded positively to Yahweh's command: *Seek My face...Your face, O Lord, I shall seek*. An inextricable part of an enduring relationship with the Lord Yahweh is the human willingness to respond with obedience to God's gracious act of engagement.

The Bible commonly refers simply to seeking God, thus discovering the Lord's will and intentions for the seeker (Proverbs 8:17; Jeremiah 29:13; Hebrews 11:6). To “seek the face” of God is a colloquial biblical expression that adds significant degrees of intensity to describing the deliberate efforts made to ferret out the Lord's character, purpose, and intentions (2 Chronicles 17:4; Hosea 5:15).

There is set in this expression *Your face, O Lord, I shall seek*, a profounder, deeper intimacy of communication, such as when speaking with another “face to face” rather than through proxies

or other more detached means (as in Exodus 33:11a). Such “up close and personal” interactions allow participants to see visual cues, to sense the changes in immediate environmental conditions, to hear tonal shifts as the conversation progresses; all of which enhance the likelihood of fullest comprehension between parties. That is the level of relationship the Lord asked of David and to which the seeking king endeavored to respond.

Verse 9 and 10 are woven together as one thought building to a passionate plea: *Do not hide Your face from me* (vs 9).

A common Old Testament use of literary imagery, to “hide one’s face” is tantamount to withdrawing one’s presence; especially applicable when God chooses to become unavailable for succor, counsel, or companionship (Deuteronomy 31:17-18; Psalm 44:24; Hosea 5:6).

Even more unsettling, the phrase indicates a continued state of God’s withdrawal in which there is no hope of rescue (Psalm 89:46; Isaiah 59:2; Ezekiel 39:24; Micah 3:4). A more positive turn of the phrase is found—but not in this psalm—when God is said to hide His face from sin, in essence to overlook and forgive that sin (Psalm 51:9). Clearly, David wants to be fully seen, fully present before the Lord Yahweh.

David makes a request, *Do not turn Your servant away in anger* (vs 9). A slight shift of focus within verse 9 occurs in this request made by the psalmist-king. Whereas David acknowledges that God is able to be the prime subject of His own action—in hiding His presence—here Yahweh is seen to make the petitioner the prime subject of His action.

The king pleads that he not be sent away from the Lord. The *anger* (Hebrew, “aph”—the word paints a vivid picture of flaring nostrils) of God is against all unrighteousness (Romans 1:18; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:6). Steadfastly desiring to be the Lord’s dedicated *servant*, David is ready to ask forgiveness for the sin that has stirred the righteous *anger* of the Lord.

You have been my help (vs 9); David remembers that throughout his life—indeed, throughout Israel’s life—God has been there helping, guiding, correcting. It was only by the Lord’s help that Israel was born, was able to endure the unspeakable burden of slavery, and finally—despite all that worked to prevent it—emerge in history as a blessed and prospering nation (Psalm 124). Likewise, King David’s story was one of incredible odds surmounted. It is no small matter to acknowledge the help of the Almighty Creator God:

“Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary.”
(Psalm 107:1-2)

David, king and master over all Israel, realizes his own limits and vulnerabilities: *Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation!* God’s presence and blessings do not rely on David’s merits or accomplishments, but on the Lord Yahweh’s holy character and abiding love.

The word *abandon* (Hebrew, “natash”) suggests yielding, giving up on all attempts to connect with or to be present for the subject being so cast off. *Forsake* (Hebrew, “azab”) deepens separation’s doleful chasm by insinuating a premeditated decision to remove oneself from another despite whatever fate may await any so left behind.

There is in both of these words *abandon* and *forsake* an implicit message: “I will no longer care for you.” David does not want to envision life uncared for and unredeemed by the Lord Yahweh. The psalmist confesses that it is *God* Who is the sole source of his present earthly and future eternal *salvation* (Hebrew, “yesha”). In this context, the deliverance (*salvation*) seems primarily to be deliverance from losing faith in his God in the face of trials and difficulties. It stands, therefore, that this declaration of David is, of itself, an integral part of the solution to his concern. In this psalm, David articulates the perspective he ought to adopt, and in doing so, sets his mind in an appropriate place, a place of complete dependence.

Years later, the prophet Isaiah would embrace the same spirit of redeemed dependence and give glory to God:

“Behold, God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
For the Lord God is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.”
(Isaiah 12:2)

Those who confess Jesus as Lord and follow Him in the practice of their faith are assured by the New Testament that God, through the Holy Spirit, continues to abide with and help His people. As Jesus prepared the disciples to face the seemingly insurmountable challenges in the days to follow the Crucifixion, He promised, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever” (John 14:16). The “Helper” Jesus promised refers to the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit is, accordingly, always with us, leading us. We can, therefore, continually express the sentiment of this psalm, and properly set our perspective in a place of dependence.

For my father and my mother have forsaken me (10) is the plaintive and remarkable cry David raises in verse 10. The initial word, the conjunction *for* (Hebrew, “ki”), is applied as a sculpted construct that is better understood in contemporary prose terms as “when, if, or should.” There is implied in the verse a poetically described potential circumstance, not necessarily a given reality. However, some Jewish tradition holds that David was left out of Jesse’s presentation to Samuel of his sons because he was considered illegitimate ([see commentary on 1 Samuel 16:6-13](#)). So this parental condescension could be a long-standing wound carried by David. It would make sense that this would be the case, since David is a foreshadowing of Jesus, and Jesus was also considered to be of illegitimate birth (Matthew 1:18-19).

David draws upon the most intimate of human relationships—that of *father, mother, and child*—to make a cardinal point about God’s unwavering fidelity toward every person. Humankind may be fickle, prone even in its closest relationships to succumb to self-interest leading to betrayal even among otherwise loving kin. The poet-psalmist offers the heartbreaking image of utter

parental disdain and disinterest to highlight the Lord Yahweh's opposite and constant loving response to His children.

But the Lord will take me up (vs 10) is the joyful, uplifting counter balance to parental rejection. God will take David's side, not merely "side with" David. The Lord will *take...up* (protect, uphold, ensure, shape) the king's best interests and destiny.

Regardless of whether we act in righteousness, in ignorance, in error, in anger, or in complacent disregard of others, God will still act in the best interests of all His children, seeking unceasingly to draw them in Christ along the path to repentance, redemption, the fullest of lives and everlasting peace (Isaiah 44:22; John 5:17; John 10:10; Romans 8:28, 31-39; 2 Peter 3:9).

David's direct address in prayer to the Lord is brought to a conclusion in the next two verses (11-12): *Teach me Your way, O Lord* (vs 11). While rendered as an imperative verbal phrase (command mood verb), *teach me* (Hebrew, "hovreni") is best understood as a request made, not as a demand imposed by a lesser upon a greater.

The root word from which *teach* is taken means to shoot, throw, or toss in a specifically intended direction. *Your way* discloses that David wishes to learn all that he can from God. The king of Israel purposefully subordinates himself under the Lord's will to be "pushed" toward a particular destination. He recognizes that following God's path is for his enduring best interest.

David asks the Lord, *Lead me in a level path* (vs 11). Learning is a journey that requires discipline, commitment, experience and opportunity to exercise what is learned. David asks that Yahweh precede him—*lead* him—on the trek to godly insight and living, clearing the way and helping him with each step forward. The poet-psalmist refers to that journey as *a level path*.

A too steeply ascending or too deeply descending learning curve might trip up even the stoutest of hearts. A pitted, twisted and uncertain course easily could confuse and discourage one wishing to be devoutly dedicated to heaven's purposes. David prays for a *level* (from the Hebrew root verb, "yashar") *path*, a well-tended corridor along which he can not only learn but also grow in competence and confidence knowing that the path-maker is the righteous and loving Lord God Yahweh Himself.

While Jesus would later teach that "the way is narrow that leads to life" (Matthew 7:14), it is nevertheless the path prepared by God and thus the path that is truest, most secure, and certain to lead to His intended eternal destiny for the traveler (Jeremiah 29:11).

The reason David pleads to be taught and led along God's path is straightforward: *Because of my foes* (vs 11).

All other routes lead away from the Lord's will; all other ways are certain to be populated by people and things that do not serve David's best interests; these are all David's *foes*. At best simply having only contempt for him, at worst actively pursuing ill toward him, David knows that these *foes* represent antagonism against God's better and wholesome desires for him.

These *foes* are hostile forces pitted against the psalmist, watching for an opportunity to perpetrate treachery against him. They truly are, in the plainest sense of the word, *foes* (Hebrew, “shorer”). If, however, Yahweh leads along the path then David knows he will ultimately be able to testify, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me” (Psalm 23:4a).

Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries (12), he continues. The renowned 6th century BC military strategist and philosopher Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War* that it is imperative to “know the enemy and know yourself.” From what precedes in the psalm, it is clear that David knows himself well enough to understand he is dependent upon the Lord God to find a way forward through the challenges he faces. David prays God’s aid in delivering him from the evil intentions of his *foes*.

Verse 12 confirms that David also knows his opponents and their intentions very well indeed. Those set against him are cast not as mere competitors on a level playing field, but as *adversaries* (Hebrew, “tsar”). They are intractable opponents who literally desire and pursue the destruction of all that David is and represents.

Some of David’s *adversaries* are *false witnesses* who *have risen against* him (vs 12). Accusing where there is no fault, stooping to lies that serve their own nefarious purposes, David’s enemies are *false witnesses* who act on their own counterfeit testimony. Their goal is to overthrow not only the person of David, but also to decimate all that is associated with him. They have *risen against* the psalmist with unjustifiable warfare.

These enemies *breathe out violence* (vs 12). These foes are the definition of opposition. The very air that they breathe in and exhale reeks of the *violence* (Hebrew, “chamas”) they perpetrate. They are dedicated enemies bent on oppression, destruction, and utter conquest by any and all means.

The king of Israel, and by direct implication the nation and God of Israel, are the primary targets against whom this relentless enemy is set. David’s prayer is that he not be left exposed, vulnerable to those who seek his complete humiliation and demise. He seeks the ongoing intervention and loving support of His Lord and God, recognizing his ongoing need and dependence.

Biblical Text

**⁷ Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice,
And be gracious to me and answer me.**

**⁸ When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You,
“Your face, O Lord, I shall seek.”**

**⁹ Do not hide Your face from me,
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;
Do not abandon me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation!**

**¹⁰ For my father and my mother have forsaken me,
But the Lord will take me up.**

**¹¹ Teach me Your way, O Lord,
And lead me in a level path**

Because of my foes.

**¹² Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries,
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.**