**The Lord my light and my salvation**  24/9/23 dkm

Read: Psalm 27, Hebrews 13

Text: Psalm 27

Psalms: 23, 62:1-6, 121, 72:17-19

Have you ever been in a dark place in your life? Maybe you are in such a place at the moment. I think the former CEO of Qantas is in rather dark place at the moment, struggling to find friends- although his arrogance and his millions might serve as dim lights. David was in a dark place when King Saul turned on him, forcing him to flee home all alone. But David was never arrogant. In fact he turned to the Lord in times of darkness. Your time of darkness may have been a family dispute or church dispute. It may have been when a loved one died or when you were diagnosed with a terminal illness. Did you turn to the Lord at this time? Maybe you turned to Psalm 27 and sang, ‘The Lord’s my saviour and my light, who will make me dismayed? The Lord’s the stronghold of my life, why should I be afraid’. We joyfully sing these words in public worship, but the time will come when we struggle to express the faith and confidence found in these verses- ‘Why should I be afraid?’

In Psalm 26 we saw David being falsely accused by enemies and crying to the Lord to vindicate him. He openly professed faith in the Lord and personal integrity as he gathered with the upright in the house of the Lord. Psalm 27 similarly focuses on the house of the Lord, the place where David felt safe and secure because of the presence of the Lord. In Psalm 28 David is again in the house of the Lord expressing faith and hope in the Lord, even as he prays for protection from enemies, from wicked men with no fear of God in their hearts.

Psalm 27 begins with David expressing a determination not to fear his foes, and a desire to live in the presence of the Lord. The second part of the psalm is a prayer for mercy, and for the Lord to teach him how to live by faith in a fallen world. David’s final word, ‘Wait on the Lord’, is like an answer to his prayer.

**1. Determination not to fear enemies**

David begins with what our NKJV Bible calls, ‘An exuberant declaration of faith’. Others refer to the confidence expressed by David as he faces enemies wanting to devour him; the words ‘eat up my flesh’ picture wild dogs, or the like, tearing at the flesh of their victim (27:2). David felt surrounded by wicked and violent men, as indeed he was on a number of occasions (1Sam 23:26), but still expresses confidence in the Lord and his covenant promises.

Three times in the opening three verses David declares that he will not fear or be afraid of wicked enemies. When we fear the Lord as David did, we will not fear wicked people or anything in this world, even death? David was focussed on ‘the land of the living’ (27:13), but the greater Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ, knew that not even death could separate him from the love of God the Father- although bearing our sins on the cross brought him agony and a brief moment of separation from the Father.

David knew the Lord as his light and his salvation, or as his saving light (27:1). Light stands in contrast to darkness; the Lord is light and in him is no darkness at all. This is actually true in the physical sense (Rev 21:23); but the reference here has a moral sense. God is good and his enemies are evil. God is loving but his enemies hate the person who trusts in God. David also knew God is all powerful; ‘The Lord is the strength of my life’ (27:1). David felt blessed to know God as his saving light, and the all-powerful saviour he could call upon to help him: ‘You have been my help (27:9). Do you have the same confidence in the Lord, or are you fearful of things going on in this world, and of what you might face in life, or maybe are facing at present?

David remembered the covenant the Lord made with his people through Moses, and the covenant he made with him personally. David learnt from listening to the Lord and spending time in the house of the Lord, as well as from experience. Some parents listen to ignorant ‘experts’ in education telling them to let their child find their own way in this world, let them learn from experience. But the wisdom of the Bible is, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it’ (Prov 22:6). Knowing God’s power as the creator and sustainer of this world is the place to start appreciating the almighty power of our almighty God.

**2. Desire to live in the presence of the Lord**

Both Adonijah and later Joab fled to the tent of meeting to take hold of the horns of the altar when Solomon became king (1Kings 1:50, 2:28). The altar of burnt offerings was in the courtyard of the tent of meeting- the temple was not built yet. In Psalm 26 David spoke of going about the altar (26:6). The tent of meeting was seen as a place of refuge from enemies. David was not clinging to the horns of the altar but he loved being in the presence of the Lord. David desired above everything else in life to be in the house of the Lord. He had a beautiful palace to live in, and lots of treasure, but his desire was to be in this simple tent housing the ark that symbolised the presence of the Lord. Not everyone was allowed into the house of the Lord. In Psalm 24 David says that only those with clean hands and a pure heart could stand in ‘His holy place’.

David here speaks of beholding the ‘beauty of the Lord’ (27:4). We often sing these words, but what do they mean? This beauty is not outward, although there was a certain beauty in the ‘*shekinah*’ glory above the ark (26:3), and Paul speaks of ‘beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord’ (2Cor 3:18). The beauty of the Lord is an inward beauty, beauty associated with a pleasant nature, beauty associated with the love of a father or mother. The name ‘Naomi’ means pleasant. The Lord is beautiful because we can approach him and ask for help at any time (27:4).

David approached the Lord in his dwelling place in times of trouble and felt secure in this place, secure in the presence of the Lord (27:5). The building was nothing without the presence of the Lord of course. The Jews of Jeremiah’s day, and later in NT times, trusted in the beauty of the temple instead of the beauty of the Lord. They lived to see the structure destroyed by enemies. Jesus lamented the people’s trust in Jerusalem and its temple saying, ‘How often I wanted gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing’ (Mat 23:37). David was willing; are you? He desired to be in God’s presence each and every day; what about you? Only in the Lord do we have complete security and salvation.

Adopting a different though related metaphor, David speaks of the Lord setting him on a high rock (27:5). Jerusalem, which housed the temple, was on a hill which gave the people a great advantage when they were attacked. However, David did not trust in the walls of Jerusalem any more than he trusted in his sword. He trusted in the Lord to lift him up in victory over his enemies all around (27:6). After praying for victory, he always returned with shouts of joy to give thanks, along with a sacrifice, to the Lord. The Lord never failed David and he will never fail you who trust in him as David did.

**3. Prayer for mercy and instruction in the way of the Lord**

After declaring faith that freed him from fear, and his desire to be in the presence of the Lord, David turns to prayer. He pleads for the Lord to be merciful and help him in his present trouble. David had no right, and we have no right, to demand anything from the Lord, although we do approach him on the basis of the covenant he has made with us. We come as his adopted children. We pray in the name of Jesus because of the covenant the Lord has made with us in the blood of Jesus Christ. Not only did the Lord give us his Spirit when we believed, but we have Jesus as our mediator and high priest. As the Lord listens to our prayer, he looks at the blood of Jesus by which he redeemed us, and has mercy on us.

In verse 8 David speaks of seeking the face of the Lord; a bit like his desire to ‘behold the beauty of the Lord’ in verse 4. The Hebrew is rather difficult, but David seems to be responding to the Lord telling him, ‘Seek my face’ (27:8). The Lord makes the first move in our salvation because we were dead in our sin, and deaf. But when the Lord opens our ears to hear, we must open our hearts to listen and obey and seek the Lord. Remember young Samuel hearing the voice of the Lord, and say as he said, ‘Speak Lord, for your servant hears’ (1Sam 3:10). Is there a message here for you today?

David goes on to plead that the Lord not hide his face from him, or turn away in anger (27:9). Why would the Lord do this? If we cherish sin in our heart the Lord will not hear (Ps 66:18). David was a person who confessed his sin, as we saw in the previous psalm. Again he recalls how the Lord helped him in the past and never left him or forsook him. He truly was, ‘the God of my salvation’ (27:9). David pleads with the Lord to help him again in whatever trouble he was in at this time. With the same sentiment as Isaiah who said, ‘Can a woman forget her nursing child’ (Isa 49:15), David says, ‘When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take care of me’ (27:10). He is not necessarily talking about his own parents but teaching that the Lord will not forsake his covenant children, as parents must do when they die. The Lord will never leave us or forsake us (Josh 1:5, Heb 13:5, 6).

Brothers Samit and Pradeep recently told us about ‘troubles’ when opening their new church. As they gathered for worship a violent mob gathered outside telling them to close the church. The brothers stood together praying to the Lord, with one of them calling the police, who were not far away apparently. The mob ran off when they saw the police. I have just had an email from these brothers telling of ongoing attacks. They are experiencing the same troubles as David, who we see here praying for mercy when false witnesses came threatening him with violence (27:12). It was a spiritual battle, and he did not want the wicked getting their way or their will. David knew the Lord could deliver him and pleaded for him to do so (cf. Ps 41:2).

Still David needed the Lord to teach him how to respond. David learnt not to take personal revenge. He asked the Lord to lead him in a smooth or straight path (27:11). He would not adopt the tactics of the wicked, and neither must we. We, like the apostles, have Jesus to teach us and show how to respond to bullies and violent men. Jesus of course, suffered and died at the hands of violent men, but not until the Lord allowed this. Jesus was always doing the will of his Father in heaven, even as he died on the cross. It was important to David, as it is for us, to be walking in the will of our heavenly Father, trusting in Him and looking to ‘the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living’ (27:13).

**4. Wait on the Lord**

David concludes on a note of hope, hope in the Lord. Verse 14 may be a direct answer to his prayer, or as often is the case, an indirect answer by way of reminding himself that the Lord is my light and my salvation, and he ‘will take care of me’ (27:10). David was encouraged, and we are encouraged, to wait in faith upon the Lord. Faith in the Lord is at the heart of this psalm, faith based on the unfailing covenant love of the Lord. In faith, David waited in hope, in confident expectation, that the Lord would deliver him from his enemies. ‘And He will strengthen your heart’ (27:14). A strong heart is more important than strong arms!