

Facing 18
Facing our Fears
Psalm 27

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Text Introduction: We are beginning this year with a series we are calling “Facing Eighteen.” What will we face in 2018? Last week, we acknowledged this most basic truth of all. We don’t know. We don’t know what the next minute holds let alone what our whole year looks like. But, we said, God has a way for us to face our future with faith and not fear.

Well, there’s another layer to add on top of the unknown. What about what we do know? It is one thing to fear the unknown, but something else to know what you fear and be paralyzed by that fear.

The Bible passage in front of us today gives us God’s word about those known fears in our lives.

Text: The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom should I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
whom should I dread?

²When evildoers came against me to devour my flesh,
my foes and my enemies stumbled and fell.

³Though an army deploys against me,
my heart will not be afraid;
though a war breaks out against me,
I will still be confident.

⁴I have asked one thing from the LORD;
it is what I desire:

to dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
gazing on the beauty of the LORD
and seeking him in his temple.

⁵For he will conceal me in his shelter
in the day of adversity;
he will hide me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.

⁶Then my head will be high
above my enemies around me;
I will offer sacrifices in his tent with shouts of joy.
I will sing and make music to the LORD.

⁷LORD, hear my voice when I call;
be gracious to me and answer me.

⁸My heart says this about you:
“Seek his face.”

LORD, I will seek your face.

⁹ Do not hide your face from me;
do not turn your servant away in anger.

You have been my helper;
do not leave me or abandon me,
God of my salvation.

¹⁰ Even if my father and mother abandon me,
the LORD cares for me.

¹¹ Because of my adversaries,
show me your way, LORD,
and lead me on a level path.

¹² Do not give me over to the will of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
breathing violence.

¹³ I am certain that I will see the LORD's goodness
in the land of the living.

¹⁴ Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart be courageous.
Wait for the LORD.

Introduction: A recent survey found that Americans most fear government corruption, terrorist attacks, not having enough money for the future, and people they love dying or becoming ill.ⁱ Note that none of them has to do with present-tense issues; each focuses on the future. As the sociologist who conducted the survey noted, "People often fear what they cannot control."

Indeed, it is one thing to fear the future, but that doesn't seem to be the issue for David in Psalm 27. His reckoning with fear is more concrete. Evildoers, foes and enemies, deployed armies, and wars are not possibilities, they are realities.

I want to overview this whole Psalm and then isolate one verse that I think serves as the heart of this Psalm.

Exploring the Depths of this Psalm

This Psalm divides into two parts.

The Placement of Trust

Verses 1-6 present the placement of David's trust. Like a stronghold, David has come to the place of anchoring Himself to God.

The Petition Because of Trust

Verses 7-12 present the petition because of David's trust.

The Product of Trust

The whole Psalm presents the product of placing our trust in Him. That's the way prayer and dependence should work in our lives. The Psalm ends with an affirmation that he is certain and thus waiting on the Lord.

Applying the Decisions of this Psalm

Now, let's come back to verse 4. "I have asked one thing from the Lord." That is an attention grabbing phrase. What is that one thing to ask of the Lord? By the way, what would that be for you? What would be the one thing that you would ask the Lord? There are seemingly three things, but he said one. So, I sense there is one decision with two demands because of that decision.

The One Decision:

- Dwell in the Presence of God.

For David, there is a definite connection between the Temple and the Presence of the Lord. Psalm 26 and 27 go together in some way in this regard. (See especially 26:8) So, the one thing is the dwelling in the presence of the Lord. Now, what did this mean to David? The Bible is the best commentary on the Bible. So, go back to Psalm 15. Do you see the connection?

The Two Demands of this One Decision:

How do we dwell in the presence of God? Let the verse continue.

- Gaze on the Pre-Eminence of God.

I firmly believe that we do this through two primary avenues—authentic worship of God and the Word of God.

- Seek God through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Again, believing that the Bible is the best commentary on the Bible, consider John 2:17-22.

And his disciples remembered that it is written: Zeal for your house will consume me.

¹⁸ So the Jews replied to him, "What sign will you show us for doing these things?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days."

²⁰ Therefore the Jews said, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?"

²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

And then again, we read from Paul as recorded in 2 Corinthians 3:18—

“We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord.”

The Gospels tell us about a blind man named Bartimaeus. He is the one who cried out as Jesus began to make His way to Jerusalem. He cried out, “Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me.” Bartimaeus, in wanting to see Jesus, parked Himself on the road to where Jesus was inevitably going to come. We should do the same. This is how we seek Him. Do we seek Him and find Him by running here and there, seeking out the latest craze or latest fad. No, we seek Him where we know He will be found. We seek Him by seeking relationship by grace and then obedience because of that grace.

So What?

Some questions give us our “So What” today.

- What is your fear factor?

Most fears expose what is really important to us.

- Have you placed your faith in Him?

Our fears lead us to the only One who can conquer our fears.

- What is the evidence that you have placed your trust in Him?

In 1851 an English missionary named Allen Gardiner was on his way to South America to start a new mission, and he was shipwrecked on a very remote island. He and his companions tried their very best to stay alive until somebody came to find them, but nobody did. Finally he died, far away from everybody, far away from his loved ones, far away from his family, dying of thirst, dying of hunger.

When they finally discovered his body they found right next to his body was his journal. For the last entry, he had written out Psalm 34:10. “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” Right underneath it, the last words he penned were, “I am overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God.”

Huh? What do you mean, “I am overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God?” Why wasn’t he mad? Why wasn’t he angry? Why wasn’t he scared? Because he had the “one thing,” and there was nothing to be afraid of. Don’t you see it’s your only hope? Come and get it. Dwell. Gaze. Seek.

ⁱ Copied from sermon by Jim Denison who cites: Mary Bowerman, “Survey reveals what Americans fear the most,” *USA Today*, October 12, 2016 (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/10/12/survey-top-10-things-americans-fear-most/91934874/>, accessed 18 October 2017).