

Sermon — A Courage That Borrows Strength — Ps 27

Introduction: We Need Courage

- David writes Psalm 27, it appears, in the midst of difficult and maybe even dire circumstances. David, with enemies surrounding him, recognizes that what he needs most is courage. In many ways this Psalm is a prayer for courage. David realizes that he needs the courage to trust God.
- Doesn't that resonate with you? My guess is that it does. As we think about our lives right now in this current moment, don't we, as a people, need courage. We live in a world that is chock full of fear. You could wake up tomorrow morning and turn on the news, read the newspaper, hop on social media and there would be a whole host of new things you ought to fear. And the things you were supposed to already fear haven't passed, they're not gone, there's just a whole new crop that's come up. And honestly, we don't need the world to remind us that there are many things to fear, we see that in our everyday lives. My guess is that many of us have come in this morning and we're tired. Anybody else feel that, maybe because it's February in Indiana, but sometimes it just feels like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. Maybe in these past few years it seems like life has been hardship after hardship after hardship. And you're just tired, maybe even exhausted. But maybe it's not the constant multiplication of fears in the world, maybe it's not even the hardship that's going on in your own life, maybe it's just sin. Maybe you've come this morning and you're just in a battle with sin. Your sin just feels so pervasive, and temptation seems to be creeping around every corner, it's like Satan has your number. No matter what it is, when you think about living the Christian life, you're just....overwhelmed. I think we, like David, if we're honest recognize that we need courage.
- What we need is: courage. And yet, even that feels daunting. Courage, so often, feels fake. Something we have to create. I'm going to be courageous — I got this. I can do it. When deep down, we know we can't.
- But Christian courage is different. It doesn't arise from a confidence in ourselves, our abilities, strengths, but a confidence in God. His abilities and actions. We're going to look at Ps 27 this morning, a Psalm, or prayer of courage. Here's how David ends it:

*Ps 27:14 — Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!*

- It's almost as if David ends this Psalm by preaching to himself. Calling his heart, as he often does, to trust the Lord, to be strong! And tells himself, us — to let your heart take courage. Let your heart be encouraged. The call here is both active and passive: be strong, and be strengthened. Be courageous and receive courage.

- The Christian life calls for great courage, but such courage, as one theologian says, *borrow its strength from God*.

Main Idea: We need a courage that borrows its strength from God.

Three Ways to Borrow Strength From God

1. Know His Character

***Psalm 27:1–3** — 1 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? 2 When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. 3 Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.*

- It seems incredibly likely that David is writing this psalm in the midst of a very dark and difficult season. His enemies are numerous. All would expect that the only thing greater than his trials would be his fears. And yet, he proclaims resolutely, “my heart shall not fear.” Asking twice the rhetorical question, “whom should I fear?”
- Why? Because the Lord is his light and his salvation, the stronghold of his life. These phrases are significant:
 - Light in the Bible is a token of joy — like sunshine, it brings warmth and happiness to the face of the believer. Thus, reads *Isaiah 60:20, Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.* To His people, the LORD is like a sun that never goes down, that’s never clouded, that is an unending source of light & warmth. The Lord is David’s light, His very joy. And the Lord’s resources never run out, His delightful rays never cease or fade.
 - He who is David’s joy is also His salvation. One of the most prominent themes of the entire Bible can be summed up in three simple words: The Lord Saves. I love what *William Plumer* says, the Lord, *as He sees best, saves through trouble, out of trouble, or from trouble altogether.* There is no pit too deep, army too great, sin too pervasive for the Lord and there is nothing from which He can’t rescue us.
 - Not only does God save, He also protects and preserves. The Lord is David’s stronghold, his fortress, the strength of his life. David’s Lord is the Lord Almighty, He has all might. There simply is no greater power, force, or strength.
- This is why David does not fear, because if the Lord is His joy, if the Lord is His hope, and if the Lord is His strength, then, surely, he can’t finally nor ultimately lose. This is the God who is Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer. Who or what can thwart Him?
- David finishes this section of the Psalm with an incredulous statement: he imagines the worst that might beset him, and then asserts, “yet I will be confident.” (v. 3)

- This is Christian courage, a courage that resounds not from a confidence within, not from a confidence in oneself, but from a confidence in God — in His character and works.
- Why don't we have such confidence?
 - John Calvin — *Those who have never tasted the grace of God tremble because they refuse to rely on him, and imagine that he is often incensed against them, or at least far removed from them. But with the promises of God before our eyes, and the grace which they offer, our unbelief does Him grievous wrong, if we do not with unshrinking courage boldly set him against all our enemies.*
 - Our Two Plaguing Doubts: God is not there. God is not good.
 - Nominal Christian: Have you tasted such grace? Have you relied on Him? Is He your light, salvation, and stronghold?
 - Christian: See the promises of God. He is there. He is good. Let God loose on all your fears, on all your enemies. He may rescue us out of trouble, or from it altogether, or He may rescue us through it. It may be in this life, or in the life to come. But He will rescue us.
 - As you read God's Word, highlight His promises, write them on a notecard. Rehearse them. Turn God's promises into prayers. This is how David prays.
 - This, church, is how we borrow strength from God. We remember who our God is, what He has done, and what He will do. And we pray.

2. Dwell in His Presence

Psalm 27:4–6 — 4 One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. 5 For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock. 6 And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

- Here is the crux of David's prayer, the main petition. One thing he asks, one thing he seeks: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life.
- This doesn't mean he wants to be a priest, he's not speaking vocationally, it means he wants to be with God. To enjoy His presence.
 - David uses many words to describe God's dwelling in these verses: house, temple, shelter, and tent twice. All of these places are significant in the OT, for they are places where God dwells with His people. The reason David interchanges all of these places is because what David longs for, what he most desires, is to be where God is. To dwell with God. It's God's presence that he desires. This presence, in David's mind, is connected to places, but it's God he's after, not a place.

- Why does David want to dwell in God's presence? To enjoy His PERSON and PROVISION
 - Enjoy His Person: David simply wants to know God (not about God, but to know God). He longs *to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple*. What does it mean to gaze on the beauty of the LORD? It can't just mean to look, gaze implies something more robust, but how do we gaze at Him who is Spirit, who is unseen. Surely, David is speaking of meditating, considering, thinking deeply of God's character and God's works. Who God is and what He has done. It means to enjoy Him. To think on how delightful He is, how good He is, how just He is, how powerful, wondrous, loving. To consider what He's done, He is the one who creates, sustains, redeems, and restores. To remind ourselves that this God is our Father, our Creator, our Savior, our Lord, our Comforter, our Helper, our Advocate, our Friend. And it's not passive. It's to actively gaze and to diligently seek. David wants to sit before the feet of his God and stare at Him and inquire of Him.
 - I think marriage is probably the best earthly picture. Marriage, in its best moments, is about gazing at your spouse, taking them in, and wanting more & more of them. You long to be with them, to talk with them, to know them. It's the joy of communing with God. (Illustration: Steph & I's trip to Nashville)
 - Friends, do you even have a category for enjoying God? For gazing upon the beauty of the LORD? Have you ever read the Bible, and just thought about how amazing God is? You didn't just check it off, but instead thought about Him, in awe, for a minute or two. Have you ever heard a point in a sermon and just wanted to burst into singing? To praise Him. Or been reminded of His greatness in a book, song, by a friend & just couldn't wait to share it with someone. Do you enjoy God? One suggestion: it takes time and focus. It takes time to gaze, ponder, consider. Distraction is our great enemy here.
 - Enjoy His Provision: briefly, because it's related to our first point, but David knows that it is in the LORD's hands where he is most safe. The LORD will be a shelter in the midst of any and all trials, he will lift him up. The imagery here suggests the LORD placing David at a height where his enemies can't get him. Where their most dangerous weapons can't reach. *Romans 8:35, 37–39 — Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- How We Dwell in God's Presence — The Significance of the Church
 - David connected the presence of the LORD with places — In the OT, God dwelled most prominently with His people in the tabernacle/temple; but in the NT, through the work of

Christ, the presence of God is not associated so much with places, as it is with peoples. While it is true that in Christ, we all are temples of the Holy Spirit, God dwells in us, it is also true that God is especially present with His people as they gather together in local assemblies, churches. Thus, Peter says, *1 Peter 2:5, you yourselves like living stone are being built up as a spiritual house, to be holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* Temple language used to describe a people together, not a place. As Jesus Himself asserts, in *Matt 18:20, For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*

- There is a very real sense in which Jesus is always with us, all times in all places (I am with you always), but there is a sense in which as we gather as the church, in one location, together, singing/praying/hearing from His Word — that it is uniquely heavenly, Christ is especially present, especially here in our midst.
- There are many in our day who might say that “I experience god most when I’m walking in the woods or outdoors, or having a dinner with friends, enjoying a great concert or listening to worship music while driving.” I don’t need to gather with the local church. I could take or leave the Sunday gathering of God’s people. That’s not how the apostles spoke, nor the early Church, nor the great majority of Christians throughout church history. No, they all long for corporate, public, gathered worship of our Triune God. They know that’s where the truest, fullest, tastes of heaven are.
- This is what we do when we gather together. We gaze at the beauty of our LORD and we relish in His gracious and merciful protection. Through singing, praying, and hearing from God’s Word, we proclaim together to one another and for one another, we remind each other, that our God is here, in Christ, He is with us, He is our Sanctuary, our satisfaction and our security.
- Illustration: Heaven is our Home, gathering with the church, an outpost of Heaven, is like stepping in the warmth and comfort of home.
- Gathering with God’s people: enjoying the presence and security of God — it’s how we grow in courage. How we borrow strength from God.

3. Walk in His Way

Psalm 27:7–14 — 7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! 8 You have said, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, Lord, do I seek.” 9 Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation! 10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in. 11 Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. 12 Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. 13 I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! 14 Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

- The second half of David's psalm is a prayer for God's help. David knows that God's character and he longs to dwell in God's presence; but he also knows that if he is to dwell in God's presence, he must walk in God's way. This is significant: obedience is central to enjoying God's presence and protection.
- Now, here's the interesting truth: David needs courage, he needs to borrow strength from God, to walk in God's way, but it is also true that walking in God's way increases his courage and strength in God. There's a beautiful continual circle at the heart of living for God.
- Church, sin, disobedience breeds insecurity, shame, and fear. It is obedience, it is walking in God's way that brings forth true courage. If we are to borrow strength from God, we must know that we find such strength in walking with God, according to His will and way.
- Thus, David asks in v. 11, *teach me your way, O LORD.* He knows to walk with God is to walk in His way. So he prays, *Teach me your way, O LORD.* Show me how. Help me, LORD, to walk in your way. *Lead me on a level path because of my enemies.* Make my way straight. Help me not to walk crookedly. Wrongly. Sinfully. David knows God is His way. And He wants to walk in God's way. But he knows he needs God's help.
- What do we learn from David here on how to walk in God's way? Two primary truths: we must recognize our need and trust God's supply
 - **Recognize Our Need:** Throughout this section David is praying fervently for God's gracious aid. Why? Because he knows he needs it. He needs help to walk in God's way, for he has enemies both within and without. He fights his sin within and his adversaries without. He is faced with both temptation and trial. (Can't we resonate?) First, see his requests in v. 9
 - v. 9 – *"Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger...Cast me not off; forsake me not.*
 - Why would God hide his face, be angry with, cast off or forsake David? His sin. David know his sins are many. He knows what his sin earns him. Not God's presence, but His absence. Like Adam & Eve, David is very aware that his transgressions should remove him from God's presence, he should be turned away, forsaken, cast out. He should not know God's blessing, but only His wrath. So he cries out to God, *be gracious to me and answer me!* In light of his sinfulness, David's only hope is God's grace.
 - But while David's greatest problem is the sin in him, he has many problems from outside as well. Look at how David describes his enemies in v. 12, *Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe our violence.* David is experiencing the very worst of earthly trials — both in the nature of his enemies (*they breathe out violence*) and their works (*they bear false witness*); as William Plumer writes, *"Who can stand before false testimony? How it pierces the soul with anguish! It is the most intolerable species of murder. It kills by torture..."* These are those whose *breath stinks of blood.*

- **Trust God's Supply:** But David prays not only because of his need, but also because of his faith. As aware he is of his dangers, within and without, he is even more aware of God's glory and goodness. His prayer drips trust in his LORD:

- v. 9 – *'O you who have been my help...O God of my salvation'*; David seeks God's face, he comes to God, in his trial & hardship, in obedience to God's call to do so. He is trusting God's Word. His faith is bolstered through remembering what God has already done for him — he knows that God has already been his help and is the LORD who has saved him. The Importance of Remembering: Many Christians, throughout the history of the church, each night before bed, have recalled all the good things that God did that day. We so easily forget God's good works.

- And then v. 10: *For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in* — this verse is difficult because we have little reason, especially in light of the testimony of the rest of Scripture, to believe that David's parents had forsaken him. It's possible that David's parents had died and thus had departed from him. Or, more plausibly, David is saying, even if my parents forsake me, you LORD will take me in. David knows that God is greater than even his parents, the closest of familial relationships, that which we trust most, the LORD is better, greater. What a testimony of faith!

- Finally, v. 13 — *I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!* What kept David going in the midst of dire circumstances, was the belief that he would see God's goodness in this life. It would not be all trouble, hardship, and trial. There would also be mercy, grace, and goodness.

- Church, Jesus is the greater David. The one who perfectly exhibits a commitment to the way of the LORD and who, in doing so, becomes our very way. Jesus was confronted with the worst enemies and hardship known in the world. His enemies included His family, friends, His people, and the empire of the day. They bore the greatest false witness in history of humanity. They maligned the one who was perfect. All other false witness likely has some truth in it, but not this one. Jesus was perfectly, completely, innocent in every single respect. And His enemies hated him, they breathed out blood, calling passionately for His crucifixion. And He walked this path in full trust of God the Father — seeking His face in the garden, saying, not my will, but yours. And God gave Jesus over; in His humanity, He was forsaken, cast off, hidden from the goodness of God. He took upon Himself the full penalty for our sin, the wrath we deserved, dying on the cross. And He rose from the dead, defeating sin, Satan, and death; making the promise of all promises that those who trust in Him would dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life. He lived, died, and rose, so that His followers, His people, would be reconciled to God; so that they would know God as their confidence, sanctuary, and way.

- We borrow strength from God, when we look to Jesus, our example and our Savior. Jesus shows us the way of God perfectly, but He also is the way for us. We obey, we walk in God's way; only in Him. Only through His life, death, and resurrection for us.
- Our strength, our courage, must be gospel strength, gospel courage.

Three Practical Applications (William Plumer)

1. **Get deep in doctrine.** (*Weak doctrines will not be a match for powerful temptations.*)
2. **Gather regularly with your local church.** (*God's visible worship ever has been and ever must be a source of continual joy to the right-minded.*)
3. **Go to God in prayer.** (*One of the best exercises of a devout mind is converting promises into prayers.*)

*Ps 27:14 — Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!*