

So there I was outside school clinging to a lamppost afraid to go in, which is a bit odd seeing as I was Head of the RE department. No I was about 5 and school was new and for some reason that day I was afraid and I didn't want to go in to school. Eventually somehow my Mum arrived and she took my hand and led me into the school. There she sat with me in the classroom. I sat close to her and felt safe. With Mum there all was well. While she was with me I felt confident even in that place which had filled me with fear earlier that morning.

The next day I remember again feeling anxious but Mum had been with me it was OK and I went into school as it were with the memory of her being with me.

Today we look at Psalm 27. It has in it that great verse 4, "One thing I ask of the Lord this is what I seek, 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 seek him in his temple". However, we see the Psalmist facing some real anxieties but also expressing a real confidence in God's power to keep him through the battles he faces. Surely that is a message to help us. If we were to ask one thing of the Lord we might not ask to dwell in his house, as in simply spend time with God rather, we would ask to feel his hand taking ours into the situations that cause us to worry and sensing his presence by us in those moments of anxiety.

### **1. The fruit of experience v1-3**

To my mind the first part of v1 is the key verse and the one we should grasp and hold onto, "The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?"

David the Psalmist says two things about God, he is his light and he is his salvation, and both are key for David in terms of facing troubles.

**a. the Lord is my light.** Richard Bewes in his excellent little book talking about prayer writes this: "It was a cat or so I thought, as I stared through the twilight at the dark shape silhouetted on our grass. Better drive it off. Softly I walked up the garden path. Yes, it must be a cat.

'Hullo, hullo, hullo - psst!' I hissed menacingly into the gloom. Not a movement. I stepped a little closer. Suddenly I realized that I was talking to a watering can."

It is light which helps us see things clearly.

Light help us see reality but also light can remove fear. Many homes with young children in will have a night light to dispel the fears of the darkness. The Lord is my light, he helps us to see things differently. As light we draw closer to him because in his light we are safe.

Just think for a moment of some of the issues you face that may even this morning be causing you concern, casting darkness into your life. It might be a difficult situation at work, or problems in relationships. It could be fears about health or concerns for family. When the Psalmist said "the lord

is my light” he meant God helps me see with his eyes the things that concern me. As we echo those words God helps us view these things with godly and spiritual eyes

**b. The Lord is my salvation**, the stronghold of my life. As he wrote this David was probably King and standing in Jerusalem, a stronghold which was secure. But as he spoke his confidence in facing an army besieging him or war breaking out against him was not in the stones of the city wall but in God. This was a confidence born out of experience. God had over and over again proved David’s salvation. As King Saul and his men hunted him it was God who saved and protected him. It was God who answered his cry for help.

God did not just show him a different view of things but God was actively on his side to help him through those things, to rescue him from those who were against him.

Facing our dark things we seek God’s light but we also, rightly, seek his rescue. We do that as we talk to him about those things. So as you think about the things that trouble you and as you think of them in the light of who God is and ask him to rescue you, to save, you from them.

I’m sure we all like the story of David and Goliath. I think it speaks to us here as we read this Psalm of David. When talking with Saul about going to fight Goliath, David said “The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam 17:37). In effect he was saying the Lord is my salvation. Then when faced with Goliath he said, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head.” (1 Sam 17:45-46). David viewed the giant in the light of the Lord and his power to rescue.

I don’t like to use analogy and ask “what is your Goliath” but can you see the attitude as David faced Goliath and which is here in the words “The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?” As we know concerns so we can know God’s light to help us see the issues clearly and God’s salvation to helps us through those situations. Indeed as Christians we have that light and salvation in a greater form through Jesus but the Psalm does the same for us in terms of encouraging us to put our confidence in God in the face of the things that worry us.

## **2. The overwhelming desire v4-6**

David had found God faithful and able to deliver him over and over again and that led not to a complacency like the spoilt child whose parents bail him out of trouble over and over again but to a desire to draw closer to God.

So we get this verse which is perhaps one of the best known in the Psalms. David speaks of his desire for more of the light. He wants to be in God’s presence. To know God more is what he wants above everything else. Friends it is always good to ask the question what one thing would I ask of the Lord.

I remember once reading the quote possibly taken from a prayer by a Confederate soldier which said, "I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. I was given life that I might enjoy all things".

I think here David here David is saying I asked for God that I might see all things clearly.

For David God's presence was to be sought in a location. For him and the people at that time God was to be found in the house of the Lord (v4), in his temple, which is used figuratively as the temple in Jerusalem was yet to be built, in the tabernacle. David thought of going to a place to meet with and be with God. For us it is different in that we have God's presence with us always. We are his temple.

But the question is do we really want more of God? Do we really want more of his presence in our lives? It is that presence realised in our daily walk which gives us confidence. It is in seeking his presence that we are in effect putting our hand in God's hand each day and wanting to walk with him, to know his reassuring presence especially in the difficult situations. Can we say "one thing I ask....." Do we really want and long to be in his presence to reflect on his beauty and especially the beauty of Jesus in his death for us.

### **3. There may be trouble ahead v7-12**

The tenor of the Psalm seems to change as we come to v7 and there is an urgency a need in David's call to God. We know that not all was smooth for David through his life. It had not been all green pastures and still waters. Here in v12 we see he faced trouble but David did the right thing. Out of his experience and his confidence in God he called out to God. Sure of God as his light and salvation he turned to God in the face of his troubles. He was still seeking God but the way he expressed it was different. David's confidence doesn't change but he seems to have lost some of his buoyancy. He sees clearly the foes set against him and he speaks to God in some agitation and yet with the same confidence because "you have always been my helper" v9.

It has been his experience and perhaps ours too that time spent with God when troubles loom is never time wasted. When we do that and God shines his light and sometimes the trouble just disappears. At other times the trouble remains what it was but we have a new clarity and courage in facing it. The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? David's answer would be no one and nothing and as he faced trouble he called on God to be his help and strength.

### **4. God will come through v13-14**

David's confidence in God was that sooner or later his prayer would be answered positively. He expected God to answer and he expected it in the here and now.

It raises the question of what we can expect of God in answer to our prayers?

During a drought in the deep south of the USA a congregation came together to pray for rain. "But you have no faith" the preacher said, "where are your umbrellas?" During a drought in England

however, the Vicar was asked to pray for rain and replied, “not while the wind is in this direction”. The first was saying God must answer because I have prayed and the second it is impossible for God to do this.

We may fluctuate between those two viewpoints that God must answer or God can't answer. But the questions are there for us, will God remove all our troubles? Will he defeat all our enemies? Will he end all our suffering?

Is that what David is saying here? I don't think so.

Can God remove all our troubles? Yes he can. Can he defeat all our enemies? Yes he can do that as well. Can he end all our suffering? Yes he can. However, as David found for himself sometimes nothing changes and we are thrown back on the great facts about God. As Tim Hedgecock said a couple of weeks ago in the words found on a wall at the Cologne concentration camp “I believe in God even when he is silent”. David's expectation was that God would show his goodness in the land of the living that is during his life and that should be our expectation too. God can and does act in our lives to help, to rescue, to save. However at times we may not see those positive answers in our lifetime. We wait for the Lord with confidence and expectation trusting in his goodness and his perfect will for our lives.

Tomorrow may be scary and we may not be rushing to get into it. Through this Psalm God is offering to pry our fingers from the lamppost we are holding on to for security and offering to be with us as our light and salvation as we step into tomorrow.

If we have in the past experienced his help and deliverance then he asks us to use that experience to our good and for our confidence. He asks us to draw closer to him that his light may help us see the way ahead as not so scary. He encourages us to talk to him about those fears, anxieties and agitations and trust that we will see him at work as we wait upon him. God's presence with us as we step into the week ahead is our confidence and assurance.