

PSALM 27

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 27

[A Psalm] of David. The Septuagint interpreters add to this title, “before he was anointed”. David was anointed three times, first when a youth in his father’s house; but this psalm could not be written before that time, because he had not had then any experience of war, nor could be in any immediate apprehension of it, as here suggested; he was anointed a second time, after the death of Saul at Hebron, by the men of Judah; before that time indeed he had been harassed by Saul, and distressed by the Amalekites, and was driven from the public worship of God, to which he has a respect, (^{<1274>}Psalm 27:4); and he was a third time anointed, by the elders of Israel, king over all Israel; and between the death of Saul and this unction there was a war between the house of David and the house of Saul; but what is referred to is not certain, nor is it of moment, since these words are neither in the Hebrew text, nor in the Chaldee paraphrase. Theodoret is of opinion this psalm was written by David when he fled from Saul, and came to Ahimelech the priest.

Ver. 1. *The Lord [is] my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?* etc.] The Targum in the king of Spain’s Bible explains it, “the Word of the Lord is my light”; and so Ainsworth cites it; that is, Christ the eternal Word, in whom “was life, and that life was the light of men”, (^{<1004>}John 1:4); and the psalmist is not to be understood of the light of nature and reason, with which the Logos, or Word, enlightens every man that comes into the world; nor merely in a temporal sense, of giving him the light of prosperity, and delivering him from the darkness of adversity; but of the light of grace communicated to him by him who is the sun of righteousness, and the light of the world; and by whom such who are darkness itself, while in an unregenerate state, are made light, and see light; all the light which is given to men at first conversion is from Christ; and all the after communications and increase of it are from him; as well as all that spiritual joy, peace, and comfort they partake of, which light sometimes signifies, (^{<1071>}Psalm 97:11); and which the psalmist now had an experience of; enjoying the light of God’s countenance, and having discoveries of his love, which made him

fearless of danger and enemies: and such who are made light in the Lord have no reason to be afraid of the prince of darkness; nor of the rulers of the darkness of this world; nor of all the darkness, distress, and persecutions they are the authors of; nor of the blackness of darkness reserved for ungodly men; for their light is an everlasting one, and they are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light: and the more light they have, the less fear; and what made the psalmist still more fearless was, that Christ was his “salvation”; by the light which the Lord was to him, he saw his need of salvation, he knew that his own righteousness would not save him; he was made acquainted with the design and appointment of the Lord, that Christ should be salvation to the ends of the earth; he had knowledge of the covenant of grace, and faith in it, which was all his salvation, (~~1~~² Samuel 23:5). Salvation was revealed to the Old Testament saints, in the promises, sacrifices, types, and figures of that dispensation; and they looked through them to him for it, and were saved by him, as New Testament believers are; and they had faith of interest in Christ, and knew him to be their Saviour and Redeemer, as did Job, and here the psalmist David: and such who know Christ to be their salvation need not be afraid of any person or thing; not of sin, for though they fear, and should fear to commit it, they need not fear the damning power of it, for they are saved from it; nor of Satan, out of whose hands they are ransomed; nor of the world, which is overcome by Christ; nor of the last enemy, death, which is abolished by him; nor of hell, and wrath to come, for he has delivered them from it;

the Lord [is] the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? meaning not of his natural life, though he was the God of his life, who had given it to him, and had preserved it, and upheld his soul in it; but of his spiritual life: Christ is the author of spiritual life, he implants the principle of it in the hearts of his people, yea, he himself is that life; he lives in them, and is the support of their life; he is the tree of life, and the bread of life, by which it is maintained; and he is the security of it, it is bound up in the bundle of life with him, it is hid with Christ in God; and because he lives they live also; and he gives unto them eternal life, so that they have no reason to be afraid that they shall come short of heaven and happiness; nor need they fear them that kill the body and can do no more; nor any enemy whatever, who cannot reach their spiritual life, nor hurt that, nor hinder them of the enjoyment of eternal life.

Ver. 2. *When the wicked, [even] mine enemies and my foes, came upon me*, etc.] They are wicked men, men of malignant spirits, and evildoers, who are the enemies and foes of the people of God, and who hate them with an implacable hatred, and do everything they can to distress and afflict them; and such enemies David had, who were many and mighty; and these “came upon” him, or “approached against” him ^{f421}, they drew near to him to make war with him, as the word signifies ^{f422}; they attacked him in an hostile manner; and their view was, as he says,

to eat up my flesh, as they eat bread, (^{<9140>}Psalm 14:4); to devour him at once, to make but one morsel of him, to destroy his life, to strip him of his substance, to take away his wives and children, as the Amalekites at Ziklag, (^{<9800>}1 Samuel 30:1-6);

they stumbled and fell; the Lord put stumbling blocks in their way, and retarded their march, and hindered them from executing their designs; and they fell into the hands of David, and were subdued under him, or fell by death; and these past instances of divine goodness the psalmist calls to mind, to keep up his heart and courage, and animate and strengthen him against the fears of men, of death and hell.

Ver. 3. *Though an host should encamp against me*, etc.] An host of the ungodly, as the Targum; though ever so many of them, even ten thousands of them, as in (^{<9106>}Psalm 3:6); should beset him on every side;

my heart shall not fear; for not only the angels of the Lord encamped about him, as they do about all that fear the Lord; but salvation was appointed for walls and bulwarks about him; yea, the Lord himself was a wall of fire around him, and he was kept as in a garrison by the power of God;

though war should rise against me: in all its terrible shapes:

in this [will] I [be] confident; either in this war, in the midst of it; or in this that he had expressed, (^{<9270>}Psalm 27:1); that the Lord was his light, his salvation, and the strength of his life; so the Jewish writers ^{f423}: or as others ^{f424}, in this one thing, desired in (^{<9270>}Psalm 27:4); but either of the former senses is best, especially the latter of them. Saints need not be afraid, though there is a war within them between the flesh and spirit; and though without are fightings with Satan and his principalities and powers; since they may be confident of victory, and that they are more than conquerors, through Christ that has loved them.

Ver. 4. *One [thing] have I desired of the Lord*, etc.] Not to be returned to Saul's court; nor to his own house and family; nor to have an affluence of worldly riches and honours; but to have constant abode it, the house of the Lord; an opportunity of attending continually on the public worship of God; which is excused and neglected by many, and is a weariness to others, but was by the psalmist preferred to everything else; he being now deprived of it, as it seems;

that will I seek after; by incessant prayer, until obtained; importunity and perseverance in prayer are the way to succeed, as appears from the parable of the widow and unjust judge;

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life: not in heaven, Christ's Father's house, where he dwells, and where the saints, will dwell to all eternity; though to be clothed upon with the house from heaven is very desirable; rather, in the church of the living God, which is the house of God, and pillar of truth, where true believers in Christ have a place and a name, and are pillars that will never go out; but here the place of divine worship seems to be meant, where the Lord granted his presence, and where to dwell the psalmist counted the greatest happiness on earth; he envied the very sparrows and swallows, that built their nests on the altars in it; and reckoned a day in it better than a thousand elsewhere; and to have the privilege of attending all opportunities in it, as long as he lived, is the singular request he here makes: the ends he had in view follow;

to behold the beauty of the Lord, or "the delight [and] pleasantness of the Lord"^{f425}; to see the priests in their robes, and doing their office, as typical of Christ the great High Priest; and the Levites and singers performing their work in melodious strains, prefiguring the churches in Gospel times, singing to the Lord with grace in their hearts, and the four and twenty elders, and one hundred and forty four thousand, with the Lamb on Mount Zion, singing the song of redeeming love; and all the tribes and people of Israel, assembled together to worship God, representing the church of Christ as a perfection of beauty, having the beauty of the Lord upon her, and made perfectly comely through his comeliness; as it is a most delightful sight to see a company of saints attending Gospel worship, meeting together to sing, and pray, and hear the word, and wait upon the Lord in all his appointments; to see them walking in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel, and according to the order of it; this is next to the desirable sight of the bride, the Lamb's wife, in the New Jerusalem state, having the glory

of God upon her: moreover, it was a pleasant sight to a believer in those times to behold the sacrifices of slain beasts, which were figures of the better sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; to which may be added other things that were to be seen by priests; as the ark of the Lord, which had the two tables in it, typical of Christ, the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness; and the table of shewbread, which pointed out Christ the bread of life, and his perpetual intercession for his people; and the golden candlestick, a type of the church, holding forth the word of life to others; with many other things, which, with an eye of faith, the saints of those times could look upon with delight and pleasure: also the presence of the Lord may be intended by his beauty, than which nothing is more desirable to the people of God, even to behold his smiling countenance, to see his face, and enjoy his favour, and to have fellowship with him, and with one another; and particularly the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ may be designed, represented by the Shechinah, or glory, which filled both the tabernacle and the temple; who being the brightness of his Father's glory, and fairer than the children of men, and altogether lovely and full of grace, is a very desirable object to be beheld by faith;

and to inquire in his temple; to seek the face of the Lord, to consult him in matters of difficulty and moment; to search after the knowledge of divine things, and to ask for blessings of grace, for which he will be inquired of by his people, to bestow them on them.

Ver. 5. *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion*, etc.] This, with what follows, is given as a reason why the psalmist desired to dwell in the house of the Lord; because he considered it as a pavilion or booth, as the word ^{f426} signifies in which he should be hid by the Lord, in times of trouble and distress, either through the heat of persecution, or of inward anxiety of mind, caused by the working of a fiery law; the allusion being, as some think, to the shepherd's tent or booth, into which he sometimes takes a poor sheep, and protects it from the scorching heat of the sun at noon: and of such use is the tabernacle of the Lord; (see ²³⁰⁶Isaiah 4:6);

in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; alluding either to the tents of generals of armies, who receive into them those whom they would protect from the insults and injuries of others; or rather to the most holy place in the tabernacle, called the secret place, (³⁰⁷²Ezekiel 7:22); typical of

Christ, the hiding place of his, people, in whom their life is hid, and where it is safe and secure;

he shall set me up upon a rock; where he would be above and out of the reach of his enemies; meaning Christ, comparable to a rock for its height, he being higher than the kings of the earth, than the angels in heaven, than the heavens themselves, and much more than the sons of men; (see ^{<B61D>}Psalm 61:2); and for shelter and safety, he being a munition of rocks, a strong tower, a place of defence, and rock of refuge; and for firmness, solidity, and strength, he being able to bear the whole weight of the building of the church, and every believer laid upon him; and for duration, he being more immovable than rocks and mountains; so that such who are set up upon him are in the most safe and secure state imaginable.

Ver. 6. *And now shall mine head be lifted up*, etc.] That is, when brought into the house of the Lord, hid in the secret of his tabernacle, and set upon the rock Christ; by this phrase he means, either that he should be then restored to his former happy and comfortable condition, as it is used in (^{<O40B>}Genesis 40:13); or that he should overcome all his enemies, and triumph over them, being exalted, as he adds,

above mine enemies round about me; so that not only they should not be able to come at him, but should be subdued under him;

therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy: attended with shouting and sounding of trumpets: in allusion to the blowing of trumpets at the time of sacrifice, (^{<O40D>}Numbers 10:10); Sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, with a joyful heart, for mercies received, offered up publicly in the house of the Lord, are here intended;

I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord; for whom praise waits in Zion, to whom it is due; he being the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, and the author and giver of all blessings, temporal and spiritual.

Ver. 7. *Hear, O Lord, [when] I cry with my voice*, etc.] Which is to be understood of prayer, and that in the time of distress; and of vocal prayer, as distinguished from mental prayer; and the phrase denotes the vehemency and intensesness of it: and the request is, that the Lord would hear it; not only as he is omniscient and omnipresent, and so hears the prayers of all, good and bad; but as a God gracious and merciful, who sometimes very quickly hears, and answers in a gracious way, and sometimes seems to turn a deaf ear, to shut out the prayers of his people, and cover himself with a

cloud, that they should not pass through, or, however, defers an answer to it for a little while; yet, sooner or later, he always shows himself a God hearing prayer;

have mercy also upon me; by delivering him out of his temporal distresses, and by forgiving his iniquities;

and answer me; by speaking a word in season; commanding off the affliction he lay under, and by saying to him that his sins were forgiven him.

Ver. 8. [*When thou saidst, seek ye my face*, etc.] To seek the face of the Lord is to attend his house and ordinances, where he grants his presence; and with this view to enjoy his gracious presence, and the light of his countenance, not being content with bare attendance without it; it is to seek the Lord himself, and communion with him through Christ, the brightness of his glory, and the Angel of his presence; for the right way of seeking the Lord is in Christ, who is the way of access to him, and of acceptance and fellowship with him; and that by prayer and supplication for his sake, and with all the heart and soul; and this the Lord calls upon his people to do, in his word, in his providences, and by his Spirit moving upon their hearts, and inclining them to it, as follows;

my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek: it is an encouragement to believers to seek the Lord when he calls them to it; for it is a command with promise, that they shall find him, see his face, and enjoy his favour; and he never says to any, “seek ye my face, in vain”; and they always find it good for them to draw nigh to him: and as it is the best way of seeking God, when the heart is engaged in it, so it is a token for good; and it looks as though the Lord had a mind to manifest himself, and grant the favour sought for, when he inclines the hearts of his people to pray unto him for it; and this the psalmist makes mention of as taking encouragement from it, to hope and believe that the Lord would hear and answer him, and have mercy on him; because he had bid him seek his face, and he found his heart ready to do it.

Ver. 9. *Hide not thy face [far] from me*, etc.] Yea, not at all from him; for the word “far” is not in the text: this is sometimes the case of the best of men, and was of the psalmist at times, and might be now, notwithstanding his strong expressions of faith and joy in the preceding verses; for frames are very changeable things; and this case is consistent with the everlasting and unchangeable love of God to his people; though they are ready to

impute it to wrath and anger, and is what is very cutting and grievous to them; and therefore deprecate it as the psalmist does here,

put not thy servant away in anger; either cast him not away from thy presence, as being angry with him, though there is just reason for it; or suffer him not to go away angry, fretting and murmuring: he makes mention of his relation to God as a servant, as he was; not only by creation as a man, and by his office as a king, but by efficacious grace as a converted man; and this only as descriptive of himself, and as acknowledging his dependence on the Lord, and his obligation to him; but not as a reason why he should be regarded by him, for he knew he was but an unprofitable servant;

thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me: which request, as the rest, he might put up in faith; for God will not leave his people destitute of his presence finally and totally; nor to themselves and the corruptions of their hearts, nor to the temptations of Satan; nor will he forsake the work of his hands, the work of grace upon their hearts; or so forsake them as that they shall perish: and that the Lord would not leave nor forsake him in such sense, the psalmist had reason to conclude; since he had been his help in times past, a present help in time of trouble; and his arm was not shortened, his power was the same to help as ever, and so were his inclination and will; since he could also call unto him, and upon him, as follows:

O God of my salvation; the author both of his temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation; and what might he not hope for from him? salvation includes all blessings, both for soul and body, for time and eternity.

Ver. 10. *When my father and my mother forsake me*, etc.] Which is not to be understood strictly and literally of his parents, that were in that near relation to him according to the flesh, nor of anything that had past; not of his parents leaving him to shift for himself, after having brought him up; nor of his father being unmindful of him, when Samuel came to anoint one of his sons to be king; nor of any slight and neglect of him by them when persecuted by Saul; nor of their inability to help him then; (see ^{4021B}1 Samuel 22:3,4); but this is to be understood of something supposed yet to come; and it seems best to interpret it of his nearest and dearest friends, his closest adherents, best counsellors, and most firm allies; that when they should fail and drop him, his God would not leave him: the design of it is

to set forth the love and care of God, as superior to that of the most affectionate friends; (see ^{<23914>}Isaiah 49:14-16);

then the Lord will take me up; like a foundling in the street, and such are called, in the Talmudic language, “persons gathered up” ^{f427}; and so the words may be rendered here, “then the Lord will gather me” ^{f428}, into his arms and bosom, and under the wings of his protection, and at last to himself in glory.

Ver. 11. *Teach me thy way, O Lord*, etc.] Of providence, grace, and duty; (see Gill on “^{<49250>}Psalm 25:4”);

and lead me in a plain path: as the path of truth is to those that understand and find knowledge; and as the way of holiness is, even to such who in other things are fools, but shall not err therein, (^{<2189>}Proverbs 8:9) (^{<23378>}Isaiah 35:8); or the path of righteousness, in which Christ, the wisdom of God, and shepherd of his people, leads them, (^{<4273>}Psalm 23:3 ^{<2089>}Proverbs 8:20);

because of mine enemies, or “those that observe me”; who eyed him as Saul did, (^{<989>}1 Samuel 18:9); and waited for his halting, as Jeremiah’s familiars did for him; and lay in wait to deceive him, and lead him out of the way, as false teachers do; and come upon him at an unawares, and take every advantage against him, as Satan does.

Ver. 12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies*, etc.] It is a dreadful thing for a man to be given up to his own heart’s lusts, and to be delivered up into the hands of Satan; who would fain have even the people of God themselves in his hands, that he might distress them at pleasure, if not destroy them; and also to be suffered to fall into the hands of wicked men, whose tender mercies are cruel;

for false witnesses are risen up against me; laying to his charge, that he sought to take away from Saul his crown and kingdom, and even his life, (^{<9249>}1 Samuel 24:9);

and such as breathe out cruelty; as Doeg the Edomite, whose tongue was as a sharp razor, and by whose hands four score and five priests were slain, on account of David’s being supplied with bread by Ahimelech; the word is in the singular number; (see ^{<4531>}Psalm 52:1-4 ^{<9228>}1 Samuel 22:18); compare with this clause (^{<4491>}Acts 9:1); and Horace’s phrase, “Spirabat amores” ^{f429}.

Ver. 13. [*I had fainted*], etc.] When false witnesses rose up against him, and threatened to take away his life, and the life of his friends, in the most barbarous and cruel manner: the people of God are subject to faintings, in the present state of things; by reason of afflictions; because of the nature, number, and continuance of them; and especially when they apprehend them to be in wrath and sore displeasure: and on account of their sins, and the corruptions of their hearts; fearing lest there should be no pardon for them; or that the true work of grace is not in them; or that they shall fall, to the dishonour of the name of God, and to the reproach of his, cause and interest; or that they shall perish eternally: likewise, by reason of Satan's temptations, which are sometimes so grievous, that if Christ did not pray for them, their faith would fail; and also on account of the hidings of God's face, which they cannot bear: they are sometimes ready to faint in the way of their duty, in the course of their profession, because of the difficulties and discouragements, reproaches and persecutions, they meet with; and sometimes in the expectation of blessings; and of the fulfilment of promises, and of answers of prayer, which have been long deferred. This clause is not in the original text, but is a supplement of our translators; and it is generally agreed there is a defect of expression, which must be supplied in some way or other: the Jewish interpreters generally refer it to the preceding words; one supplies thus ^{f430}, "those false witnesses would have rose up against me, and consumed me"; another ^{f431} after this manner, "mine enemies had almost got the dominion over me"; a third ^{f432}, "I had almost perished at their sayings": and a fourth ^{f433}, "and they would have destroyed me". Perhaps it may be as well supplied from (^{f432}Psalm 119:92); "I should then have perished in mine affliction"; it follows,

unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living: both the providential goodness of the Lord, in supplying him with the, necessaries of life, and in delivering him out of the hands of his enemies; and his special goodness, which he has laid up in his covenant, and in his son; even all spiritual blessings in Christ, in whom he causes all his goodness to pass before his people. The psalmist believed that he should "see"; that is, enjoy all these, or whatever was needful for him; all the good things of life, all special favours; as supports under afflictions, views of pardoning grace under a sense of sin, strength against Satan's temptations, and deliverance out of them; the discoveries of the love of God, and the light of his countenance, after desertions, and divine refreshments in his house, from his word and ordinances; and at last all the

glories of the other world; and faith in these things is the best antidote against faintings. By “the land of the living” may be meant either the land of Canaan, where the living God was worshipped, and living saints dwelt, in opposition to other lands, the habitations of men dead in sins; and at a distance from which David now might be; or else the world in general, in opposition to the place and state of the dead; or, as some think, heaven, or the life of the world to come, as Kimchi expresses it; and so Apollinarius paraphrases it,

“I shall see the blessed God with my eyes in the land of the blessed.”

The word **al wl**, rendered “unless”, is one of the fifteen words which are extraordinarily pointed in the Hebrew Bible.

Ver. 14. *Wait on the Lord*, etc.] This, with what follows, is spoken by the psalmist either to himself or to others, or it may be to both, upon the rich experience he declares in (~~127~~ Psalm 27:13): it becomes believers to wait on the Lord for the common blessings of life, for even the eyes of all wait upon him for their daily food; and for the light of his countenance, when it is withdrawn from them, for he will return again at the set time; and for answers of prayer, which will be given sooner or later; and for the performance of his promises, which are yea and amen in Christ: they should wait upon him in his house and ordinances constantly, with reverence and godly fear; they should wait upon him as servants on their masters, observe his orders, and diligently execute them; and, as beggars for their alms, they should knock and wait at Wisdom’s gates, tell their case and wait, take repulses and wait, and, when they succeed, give thanks. It is good to wait upon the Lord; many are the favours and blessings such receive now, and eye has not seen what God has prepared for them that wait for him;

be of good courage; the saints have need of courage, considering the enemies they have to grapple with; the corruptions of their own hearts, the enemies of a man’s own house; the worst of all, Satan, and his principalities and powers; and men of the world, and a world of them: and they have great reason, notwithstanding, be of good courage, since God is for them; Christ is the Captain of their salvation; the Holy Spirit, that is in them, is greater than he that is in the world; angels encamp around them; they are provided with the whole armour of God; they are engaged in a

good cause, are sure of victory, and shall wear the crown of righteousness; and it follows,

and he shall strengthen thine heart; that is, the Lord will do it, as he has promised to them that wait on him, (^{234B}Isaiah 40:31 41:10); or “let thine heart be strengthened”: as the Septuagint render it; and so the Chaldee paraphrase, “strengthen thine heart”; taking it for an exhortation; as indeed it seems to be by what goes before and follows; (see ^{400B}Joshua 1:6,9);

wait, I say, on the Lord; this is repeated, to express the importance of this duty, and to encourage to it.