

The Book of Psalms is a book of poetry, which was used as the “prayer” of “service” book in the ancient Israelite Temple. Composed of 150 poems, Rev. Eugene Peterson writes that, they form are a “prayer book that gives us a language adequate for responding to the God who speaks to us.” They can teach us how to pray. Psalm 27 seems to be both a prayer of orientation, singing of trust and confidence in Yahweh in verses 1 to 6, and one of disorientation, in which there is a complaint a prayer for God to be faithful in versus 7 to 12. The poetic prayer seems to model the reality that trust and need come side by side in life. Even if we have confidence and trust in God to provide, we often find ourselves in wrestling matches with fear. And God’s promises of light and salvation are not just for a far off distant, other-worldly, future; but for us here, now, in the land of the living.

Throughout the psalm there is a repetition of certain words and metaphors, which are often reversed or expanded upon in each use.

Light : אור [or] ad in Greek φῶς [foce] meaning to be or become light” as in 1) the sun, moon & stars; 2) as well as to light up, cause to shine, shine, followed by accusative such as “to light a lamp Psalm 18:29” and 3) to make shine, of face of “Yahweh make his face shine upon thee” Numbers 6:25. The psalm brings to mind several scriptures stating how God is our light, the ultimate light:

- “Then God said, “Let there be **Light** ”; and there was **Light** .” Genesis 1:3;
- “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is **Light** and in him there is no darkness at all.” 1 John 1:5
- “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a **Light** to my path.” Psalm 119:105 .
- “The **Light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” John 1:5

FEAR : The Hebrew word יָרָא [yare] carries a number of meanings. There is both the definition being "terrified" or "afraid" along with the definition of having "reverence", "awe", or "respect." In Greek, the word φόβος [phobeō] carries similar meanings of both "being afraid" and "having reverence or awe". Notice that the word is repeated in verses 1 and 3.

Stronghold : There are several different words used throughout the psalm as metaphors for a safe, sure and stable place; always associated with the presence of Yahweh, such as **house of the Lord, in his temple, in his shelter, high on a rock, the cover of his tent.**

Hide : notice the double use, and reversal of the term between its use in verse 5 where God is asked to hide the poet from danger and in verse 8 where it is about God hiding from the poet.

SCRIPTURES FOR

SUNDAY 9.3.2017

Psalm 27

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Triumphant Song of Confidence
Of David.

¹ The Lord YAHWEH 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 devour my flesh—

my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.

³ Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not FEAR;

though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

⁴ One thing I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:

to live **in the house of the Lord**
all the days of my life,

to behold 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 set me **high on a rock.**

⁶ Now *my head is 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.

my head is lifted up: The image is a metaphor of hope and confidence, contrasted with the image of one looking at one's feet out of fear, shame or uncertainty. How does this image speak to you?

FACE : the Hebrew פָּנִים [panim] means "face, faces." Throughout the First Testament seeing the face, or in the face of God is an expression of being in God's direct presence. It's used to describe Moses on the mountaintop and Elijah in the cave as God passes by. In modern English it's similar to our expression of seeing face to face; or looking someone in the eyes.

WAIT : The Hebrew word קָוָה [qavah] means "to wait, look eagerly for" and also "to expectantly hope for" This is an exhortation, not to others, but by the poet to himself. His stronger self exhorts his weaker self not to despair, but to wait upon God

Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

- What shimmers for you in this passage?
- Read it again. What phrase or image most speaks to you today?
- When have you heard this psalm before? What has it meant to you before?
- How does it utter a good news word to you in regards to whatever you're living today as you may struggle to put your trust in God as a shepherd guide or as one who invites you to his table?
- How does this psalm feed your soul?
- What do you fear these days?
- What makes you drop your head, and look at your feet, rather than looking ahead with confidence?
- How have you seen the goodness of the Lord here and now?
- What things do you ask of God?
- How has the beauty of God's goodness changed the light in which you see God, the world, others, yourself?

⁷ Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,

be gracious to me and answer me!

⁸ "Come," my heart says, "seek his **FACE**!"

Your **FACE**, Lord, do I seek.

⁹ Do not *hide* your **FACE** from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.

Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,

O God of my *salvation*!

¹⁰ If my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will take me up.

¹¹ Teach me your way, O Lord,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.

¹² Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.

¹³ I believe that I shall see 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!