

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study guide is to facilitate the study of Psalm 27 as a supplement to the sermon. It is based on my (Michael's) study and meditation on the psalm. This handout can be used for personal study or community group conversation. (I hope you join a group!)

PSALM 27:1-14 ESV

1 *Of David. 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.* 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.* 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!*

STRUCTURE (Modified [by Michael] structure proposed by David Dorsey in *Literary Structure of the Old Testament*)**A Introductory declaration of trust and lack of fear (1-3)**

- "my heart (Heb. *leb*) shall not fear"; "I trust [Yahweh]"
- "may my adversaries (Heb. *saray*) stumble"

B I seek to live in Yahweh's house; may He hide me (4-6)

- "I will seek (Heb. *abaqqes*)... to live in Yahweh's house"
- "may he hide (Heb. *str*) me in the hiding place (Heb. *str*) of his tent"

B' I seek Yahweh's face; may He not hide from me (7-10)

- "come, seek (Heb. *baqqesu*) his face; your face, O Yahweh, do I seek (Heb. *abaqqes*)"
- "do not hide (Heb. *str*) your face from me"

A' Concluding exhortation to trust and not fear (11-14)

- "let your heart (Heb. *leb*) take courage; wait upon Yahweh!"
- "do not abandon me to the desire of my adversaries (Heb. *saray*)"

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

David faces intense danger from "evildoers," "adversaries," "foes" and "false witnesses." Not only do they stain his reputation with lies, but they "encamp" around him, seeking to "devour" him like beasts without a conscience. And it's not just one or two enemies, either. An entire "army" surrounds him. Psalm 27 shows us how to remain confident, even in the face of imminent threats.

The Psalm begins and ends with confident trust. The structure of the Psalm is "chiastic," (a common ancient literary structure) meaning that sections of the Psalm mirror one another, both in theme and language, to communicate a point. Notice how the parts of the Psalm match (see above structure for details):

- A/A': David's heart will not fear adversaries; he will trust Yahweh.
- B/B': David seeks the house and face of Yahweh, first and foremost

Ancient authors communicated not just through words, but through structure. The structure of Psalm 27 shows us why David can remain confident, despite such danger: because first and foremost, he seeks the face of Yahweh. The key to remaining firm in the face of danger is to seek first the face of God. Even more than safety, we must seek the God who saves.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

1 Of David. 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?

—"Of David":

- David suffered enough from enemies that any number of occasions could have provided the setting for this song. Charles Spurgeon conjectures (hesitantly) that David penned it while he was on the run beyond the boundaries of Israel, which would explain why he specifically longs to seek God in His temple (27:4). See Spurgeon below.
- Spurgeon: *"Nothing whatever can be drawn from the title as to the time when this Psalm was written, for the heading, 'A Psalm of David,' is common to so many of the Psalms; but if one may judge from the matter of the song, the writer was pursued by enemies, Ps 27:2-3, was shut out from the house of the Lord, Ps 27:4, was just parting from father and mother, Ps 27:10, and was subject to slander, Ps 27:12; do not all these meet in the time when Doeg, the Edomite, spake against him to Saul? It is a song of cheerful hope, well fitted for those in trial who have learned to lean upon the Almighty arm."*
- If Spurgeon is correct, the story of David being ratted out by Doeg is told in 1 Samuel 21:1-9, and it leads to David's flight to Gath, Philistia (21:10-15), followed by his residence in a cave (22:1-2), then Moab (22:3-4), and then a forest (22:5). Although the forest was in Judah, David would not have been able to freely worship in the temple. If this isn't the background for Psalm 27, it must have at least been a similar background.

—"light... salvation... stronghold":

- These three metaphors work in tandem, for they all dispel fear and aid courage.
- We hear of people being scared of the dark, but almost no one is afraid of sunlight. Light illuminates potential dangers for what they are; darkness exaggerates them. Darkness enables evil to lurk, but light sends them hiding—where? In the dark. The Lord is our salvation and stronghold because He is light. He illuminates our path and the "schemes" of the evil one—of which we are "not unaware" (2 Cor. 2:11).
- In context "salvation" relates most closely to deliverance from human enemies rather than from Satan, sin, or hell. In the metanarrative of Scripture, however, the salvation David sings about foreshadows the greatest salvation of all—salvation in Christ—from Satan, sin, and hell.
- As a stronghold, God does not prevent the attacks of our enemies; He deflects them. They roll off like arrows off from a castle wall. This is not to suggest that the devil can inflict no harm, but rather: (1) He inflicts no harm without God's permission, and (2) He cannot inflict permanent spiritual harm to God's people. The Holy Spirit is our "guarantee" of eternal salvation (Eph. 1:14).
- As light, God illuminates both hallucinations and real threats, diminishing and dispelling them all by His luminous character. As salvation, God delivers us from the harm intended by enemies—both physical and spiritual—who lurk in darkness. As stronghold, God protects us from the attacks that have been permitted by His providence.
- Spurgeon: *"There is a great difference between the light, and the eye that sees it. A blind man may know a great deal about the shining of the sun, but it does not shine for him—it gives him no light. So, to know that 'God is light,' is one thing 1 Jo 1:5, and to be able to say, 'The Lord is my light,' is quite another thing."*

—"Whom shall I fear... of whom shall I be afraid?" The next verses reveal the "whom" of these verses. David needs not fear anyone, but his faith is being tested.

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.

—"evildoers... adversaries and foes... army... war":

- This is no small-scale attack. An entire army seeks David's life. And they don't play by the rules—it's an army of "evildoers."
- Spurgeon: *"It is a hopeful sign for us when the wicked hate us; if our foes were godly men it would be a sore sorrow, but as for the wicked their hatred is better than their love."*

—"eat up my flesh": David's enemies are portrayed figuratively as wild beasts. As such, they have no conscience. Like a pitbull attacking a chicken, they know no restraint.

—“it is they who stumble and fall”: those who live by the sword die by the sword. David’s confidence is in God’s poetic justice. Reaping and sowing is a law writ in the heavens. When we face similar trials against hell-bent adversaries, our confidence is not just in God’s “light... salvation... [and] stronghold”—i.e., His protection. Our confidence is also in His justice. Those who aim to devour others devour their own flesh. When you know God is just, you don’t worry as much about injustice.

—“encamp”: sometimes it feels like our enemies (physical or spiritual) just won’t just go away. The assault David suffers is unrelenting.

—The principles laid out in Psalm 27 for overcoming fear apply to even the most wicked (“evildoers”), ruthless (“eat up my flesh”), persistent (“encamp”), and powerful (“army”) of adversaries. Despite these David’s “heart shall not fear” and he “will be confident.”

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.

—“One thing”:

- The Scriptures commonly boil everything down to “one thing.” Here, it is to dwell in the house of God, where he can gaze on God’s beauty and seek Him. Here are some others:
 - Ecc. 12:13: “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for **this is the whole duty of man.**”
 - Mt. 6:33: “But **seek first** the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
 - Lk. 10:41-42: “But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but **one thing** is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.’”
 - Notably, Luke 10:38-42 comes on the heels of Luke 10:25-28, where the two greatest commandments (love God, love people) are presented; it also comes on the heels of Luke 10:29-37, with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Thus, the flow is: Two Greatest Commandments→Good Samaritan→Martha/Mary. Why is this significant? Look at it like this:
 - Two Greatest Commandments (Love God/People)
 - Good Samaritan (Example of loving people)
 - Mary/Martha (Example of loving God)
 - How do we love people? Like the Good Samaritan. How do we love God first? Like Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. Mary thus illustrates the “one thing” to which we are called, which is to love God first. We love God first by sitting at the feet of Jesus, absorbing His every word, and prioritizing this above every other duty. This is very similar to David’s “one thing.”
 - Of course, if we love God first, we will also love others, which is why Jesus tacks on a “second” greatest commandment to the first.
- In context, I doubt that gazing on God would be the “one thing” most of us sought if our lives were endangered by encamping armies! When I’m terrified, my #1 prayer is typically, “Help!!!!” David understands the secret of knowing God’s peace and presence, however. He’s learned it in the school of suffering. The secret is to make God your “one thing”. As long as my #1 prayer is for help or safety or provision, I have placed blessings above the Blessed One—and I might get neither. But if God is my chief desire, everything else takes care of itself. We see this play out in the verses that follow, where “secondary” prayers (urgent though they were!) are answered because God is David’s “one thing”.

—“have asked of the LORD... seek after”:

- David does not just ask one time for this “one thing.” He seeks after it. He pursues it steadily. If we are really after the “one thing,” we won’t just ask and give up. We will ask and keep asking, seek and keep seeking, knock and keep knocking (cf. Mt. 7:7).
- “have asked”: the present perfect tense suggests that David both asked and is asking. It is both past and present tense action.

—“dwell... gaze... inquire”: the first of these enables the other two. It is within God’s temple that David expects to “gaze” and “inquire” of God.

—“dwell in the house of the LORD”:

- In Old Testament times, people went to the tabernacle/temple to seek and worship God. The house of God was special enough that distant Jews would make pilgrimage. Now, however, we live in an

age where God is worshiped “neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem” but “in Spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:20, 22). Worship used to be located physically, but because of the work of Jesus, the Spirit has broken out from His brick-and-mortar temple, and we seek Him anywhere. We especially seek Him in the corporate gathering of the saints since the church is His new temple (Eph. 2; 1 Pet. 2; etc.).

- No longer do we worship in a brick-and-mortar temple but rather a flesh-and-bone temple!
- David wanted his house to be God’s house. God one-upped him. Through the work of Jesus, as noted above, God’s house is us. Rather than us ascending the hill of the Lord to the house of the Lord, God came down to make His home here.
- If David was living his normal life in the palace, it’s unlikely that he would have prayed so desperately to be in God’s house. Most likely, he was estranged from it, thanks to his enemies.
- During the height of Covid, Christians around the world felt something similar to David’s longing for God’s temple. We longed to worship with other saints because Christianity is an embodied religion. We are not just pixels on a screen. God uses the internet; He uses Zoom; He uses YouTube. But if we are long-term satisfied without embodied worship among the people of God, then we do not exhibit the David’s heart (or God’s!). David’s holy desire to be in the temple translates for us—as New Covenant Christians—as a desire for corporate worship among the saints. We worship an embodied God (Jesus!) while we embody Christ as His new temple. Those who worship God like David long to worship among other embodied believers. If a simulcast feels sufficient for us, our faith is insufficient. Extreme circumstances might prevent gathering for a time, just as David was prevented from worshiping in the temple. But for David, it took an army to stop him. For too many Americans, all it takes is a busy week.

—“all the days of my life”: there are not many things I want to do for “all the days of my life.” I love traveling, but I don’t want to live in a hotel. I love sports, but I don’t want to play or watch them constantly. I love people, but I need my alone time. Here, David displays the extravagance of his love for God’s presence by saying that the temple encapsulates every desire; it consummates his deepest longings, for God is there.

—“to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD”:

- “to behold the beauty of the LORD” (NKJV); “delighting in the LORD’s perfections” (NLT); “gaze at the splendor of the LORD” (CSB); “to look on the pleasantness of Jehovah” (YLT).
- The footnote in the NASB for “beauty” is “delightfulness,” which is also how Alan Ross translates the word. Even if the word is more literally, “delightfulness,” it makes more sense to me that it is translated “beauty” (the most common translation) because it is more natural to conceive of gazing upon beauty than it is delightfulness.
- Practically, what would it look like in my life to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD? What would it look like in my life to make this my “one thing”—my #1 prayer and the daydream of my heart? This is convicting. I too often find myself daydreaming about “more” of other things besides God. And when I do daydream about the things of God, too often it’s about what I want Him to do more than who He is to me. To just gaze at God’s beauty.... Would look like sitting in His presence with no agenda. With prayer lists set aside for the moment. Maybe having my hands opened. And like Mary—just sitting in His presence..... It would look like not just reading His Word to check a box, but to contemplate the mysteries of the Trinity and of the Gospel. To journal about the Word, ruminate over the Word. To not just walk by the fire, but to sit by it and warm myself..... It would look like taking a walk and feeling the breeze and taking in God’s beauty in creation, seeing it as a pointer to the beauty of the Creator..... In short, it would look like taking a breath, slowing down, and being in the position of one who is receiving from God.
- Ross: “This idea may be contrasted with the pagan culture in which people gazed on the beautiful statues of their gods; but in Israel they did not actually see God nor a statue of him. Rather they would perceive his graciousness in his wonderful works.”

—“I will seek (Heb. *baqas*)... to inquire (Heb. *baqar*)”:

- David seeks to seek! True seekers never stop seeking, just because they found what they are looking for. Discovery of God leads only to more mysteries. The more you seek Him, the more you seek of Him.
- “inquire”:
 - “seek” (NIV), “meditate” (NASB), “contemplate” (CSB).
 - Ross: “The last infinitive, ‘to seek’ or ‘inquire’ is probably a reference to seeking the LORD’s will for guidance.” If so, he expands upon this in 27:11: “Teach me your way, O LORD.”

- The Hebrew, *baqas*, appears again in Ps. 27:8. The theme of seeking continues throughout the song. As Christians, we are to fix our minds on God, to seek after, meditate upon, and contemplate Him—His Word, His works, His ways, His character, His “beauty.”

—Kidner: “Note the singleness of purpose (one thing)—the best answer to distracting fears (cf. 1-3)—and the priorities within that purpose: *to behold* and *to inquire*; a preoccupation with God’s person and His will.”

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.

—When our #1 prayer is for more of God, He offers us Himself—and much more besides.

—These are the outcomes of David’s prayer to be in God’s house: protection from enemies (27:5ab), victory over enemies (27:5c-6).

—“hide me in his shelter... conceal me under the cover of his tent”: we would not normally imagine a “tent” providing shelter from murderous armies. But when the Lord is your stronghold, even a tent will do. This “tent” is a particular one: God’s tabernacle. Thus, David emphasizes that it is not the structure but the One who dwells there, who offers the protection.

—“lift me high upon a rock... my head shall be lifted up above my enemies”: David moves from the theme of God’s protection to God’s victory. It’s one thing to survive an assault; it’s another to mount one and triumph. David’s expectations are high.

—When our #1 prayer is for more of God, we will likewise have higher expectations.

—I find that I am sometimes afraid to set too high of expectations because I don’t want to be disappointed. Sometimes, pain from the past tempers my expectation for the future. No doubt David had his own past disappointments. He had been anointed king at a young age, but he did not assume the throne over all Israel for more than a decade. By God’s grace, he did not let past disappointments hinder his faith for the future.

—“I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody...”:

- “in his tent”: David seeks to be in God’s tent (27:4); David expects to find protection in God’s tent (27:5); David anticipates triumphant praise in God’s tent (27:6). Everything centers upon the house of the Lord for David. It is his driving desire, and it leads to great expectation.
- Again, when I consider where we are in redemptive history, David’s desire for God’s house strikes me. The church—God’s people—is God’s house. We really should pine throughout the week for the next gathering of saints. I do, Lord!
- “shouts... sing... melody”: these are things joyful people do. Corporate worship should be a time of shouting and raucous celebration. I’m not suggesting that we shouldn’t create space for lament also; the whole Psalter should inform our worship. But even in hard times, there’s plenty to shout about.
- “sacrifices... joy”:
 - God loves a cheerful giver.
 - In the Old Testament, sacrifice accompanied worship. On one occasion, someone even offered to cover the expense of David’s sacrifice, and he refused: “I will not offer to the Lord my God sacrifices that have cost me nothing” (2 Sam. 24:24).
 - We can’t give God praise unless we also give Him our time, money, and energy. To say you worship God, but without sacrifice, is akin to saying you’re a dedicated father who never sees his kids.

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!

—David has just expressed confidence that God would answer, yet here, he asks God to answer. There is no contradiction. David’s confidence that God would care for him does not preclude him asking God to care for him. When we know God will care for us, rather than diminishing our motivation to pray, it motivates us to pray. Prayer is the channel through which God cares for us; faith is the confidence that our prayers will be answered. The two work together.

—David prefers to seek God in His temple (27:4), but given the impossibility, he’ll seek God from where he is (27:8). We should not require perfect circumstances to seek God’s face. I am reminded of Susannah Wesley. She was the mother of nineteen children—John Wesley was the fifteenth and Charles the eighteenth (famous preacher and hymnist, respectively). Susannah’s days were filled with demands, not

only because of the many children, but also because her husband was twice imprisoned for fraud. Still, she found time to seek God's face. Since there was no perfect time or place, whenever she found herself needing to pour out her heart to God, she would pull her apron over her head and intercede for her family members by name. When children saw the apron, they knew—don't mess with momma. David's Psalm and Susannah's example show us that we don't need perfect circumstances to seek after God. If we're waiting for such circumstances, we will never pray.

—"You have said... my heart says":

- Our seeking is always a response to God's prior initiative. The Father says to seek; our heart responds with seeking.
- Someone in church was telling me this week about the "ten-second rule" with God. The idea is that when God is convicting you of something, you must act quickly. If you wait more than ten seconds, the conviction fades. Obviously "ten seconds" is a made-up number, but the aim of the exhortation is validated by the 27th Psalm. If we want a "seeking heart" like David, we must respond to our Father's seeking heart (cf. Jn. 4:23: "for such people the Father seeks to be worshipers). We must respond promptly.

—"Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger... cast me not off, forsake me not":

- These petitions—each depicted as a negation—are all the same; they expound upon verse 8. In verse 8, David speaks of seeking God's face, but in verse 9, he asks God not to hide His face.
- Despite David's confidence in God's enduring presence, he prays to not be cast off. In context, it relates to this danger. God's "face" speaks of His favor (cf. Num. 6:24-26). David is asking God to not abandon him to his enemies, but rather to show favor by delivering him. Hence, God is his "help" and "salvation" (Ps. 27:9).
- Spurgeon: *"A smile from the Lord is the greatest of comforts, his frown the worst of ills."*

—"You who have been my help... God of my salvation": David remembers who God has been to him to help him believe who God is to him. When we remember God's past faithfulness, it motivates us to trust Him for future faithfulness.

—Given that David now prays for deliverance, it shows that even though seeing God's beauty is his "one thing," it does not preclude him from praying for other things too. We can pray for many things as long as we keep "more of God" our one thing.

—One great help in keeping God our "one thing" is the knowledge that having more of Him will inherently answer all our other needs. That is the point of the Psalm.

—Kidner: "David gets back to the 'one thing' he has set his heart on (cf. 4), and holds on to the fact that the first move, after all, has come from God. He will not ask for our love (8a) and then withhold His own (9a)."

10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in.

—Given that this is poetry, we need not necessarily interpret this literally. It is doubtful that Jesse, who is given a respected place in Scripture (Isa. 11:1, 10; Acts 13:22; etc.), deserted his son David. Numerous scholars make this same point, and I think they are probably right.

—If David's parents probably had not actually deserted him, what is David trying to achieve rhetorically? He's illustrating, by way of contrast, the faithfulness of Yahweh. From a human perspective, rejection from one's own parents is one of the sharpest pains. David expresses the intensity of his rejection from human beings in contrast to the radical acceptance of God. God will not just tolerate David but "will take me in," he says. Even if humans sever the most intimate of ties, God remains faithfully attached.

—We must never measure the faithfulness of God by the faithlessness of human beings.

—Ross: This "could be a proverbial expression indicating that he is friendless and forsaken like a deserted child."

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

—The "way" of the LORD in Psalms often refers to a righteous lifestyle.

- [Psa 1:1 ESV] *1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;*
- [Psa 18:21, 30 ESV] *21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. ... 30 This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.*
- [Psa 25:8 ESV] *8 Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.*

—This probably means, then, that David is not just praying for God's will on matters that are neutrally moral (for instance, "Should I buy this camel or that one?"); rather he is praying for God to show him how to live righteously. This conclusion is bolstered by the parallel, "lead me on a level path"—a Hebrew idiom for a righteous lifestyle.

—"because of my enemies."

- The wicked lie in wait for the righteous to stumble so they can trumpet it through the airwaves. David doesn't want to offer them the ammunition of his own bad example, but he also doesn't trust his own strength. So he prays for God's strength to live the sort of life that his enemies cannot mock. 1 Pet. 3:16: "...having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."
- "enemies" (Heb. *sharar*): Brown's-Driver's-Bigg's Lexicon defines this term literally as a "watcher." Ross comments: "Here they are described literally as 'my watchers' ('waters of me'), and so watchful antagonists. These people were watching for any occasion to accuse and any weakness to exploit."

12 Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence.

—Here we learn more about this assault on David's life. We already knew about the "violence," based on David's language in verses 2-3. Now he talks about "false witnesses." It seems that the war being waged against David is rooted in lies. This seems like it relates to the timeframe of David's flight from Saul.

—One of the most difficult tests of faith is the ruining of one's reputation by public fabrications. Many righteous people of God have suffered it, including our Lord.

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!

—"I believe": the confidence David began with continues through the end of the song.

—"the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living": this verse has always encouraged me. I don't just want to see the goodness of the LORD in heaven. I want to see it on earth. I want to see God's deliverances, God's healings, God's manifest kindness, here and now. Whenever I'm suffering, I ask for deliverance, sometimes repeating these very words: "Lord, let me see Your goodness in the land of the living!"

—"Wait for the LORD... wait for the LORD":

- What a significant theme in Scripture! Consider these examples:

Name	Duration of waiting	Waiting for...	Reference
Abraham	25 years	A promised child	Gen. 12:4; 21:5; Rom. 4:19
Isaac	20 years	A promised child	Gen. 25:20, 26
Jacob	14 years	Rachel to be his wife	Gen. 29:15-30
Joseph	13 years	Deliverance from prison/slavery	Gen. 37:2; 41:46
Joseph	22 years	Prominence in family	Gen. 41:29-30; 45:6
Moses	40 years	Israelite deliverance from slavery in Egypt	Ex. 3; Acts 7:30
Moses	40 years	Entrance into Promised Land, which he never saw	Num. 14:33-34; 20:12; 32:13
Joshua	40 years	Entrance into Promised Land	Num. 14:30, 33-34
Caleb	45 years	His inheritance in the Promised Land	Josh. 14:7-15
David	10+ years	God's promise of reigning over all Israel	1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 2:11; 5:4
Ezra	16 years	Temple construction to begin after disruption by adversaries	Ezra 1; 3:8; 4:4-5
Ezra	24 years	Temple completion, from start to finish	Ezra 1; 6:15
Jeremiah	23 years	People to repent, but they never did	Jer. 25:3
Jesus	30 years	His entrance into public ministry	Luke 3:23

—In this life, we are constantly waiting on the LORD for something because we are on pilgrimage. Our hearts naturally want to "settle" in one situation or another, but as soon as we settle, we've settled.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did well as long as they made pilgrimage (symbolized by living in tents), but every time they tried to settle—in Egypt, in Philistia, etc.—things went south.

—When I say we are “constantly waiting,” part of what I mean is that as soon as God answers our prayers or gives us a victory, there’s something else to wait for. As Christians, we wait and wait and wait—for a thousand different things—but ultimately, we wait for our “one thing”, which is the arrival of Jesus Christ. We are on pilgrimage to the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, and we won’t make it there until Jesus comes here. In the meantime, we wait.

—“be strong, and let your heart take courage”:

- It takes strength and courage to wait for the Lord. Weakness and cowardice lead us to shortcuts. We numb the pain of waiting through diversion. Being on this fast removes even the creature comforts of normal food. It forces us to cast ourselves on the Lord, not only over sin, but over all things. O Lord, give me the strength and courage to wait for You! To not distract myself with worldly diversions!
- Spurgeon: “Let the heart be strengthened, and the whole machine of humanity is filled with power; a strong heart makes a strong arm.”

—“wait for the LORD... wait for the LORD”:

- David is waiting for all the things he just prayed for: to dwell in God’s temple, gaze on His beauty there, inquire of Him there, to be protected from enemies, to be granted victory and vindication, etc.
- Here, however, the final verse comes in the form of a command. Some scholars view this as an oracle, as though David received it as a message to himself from God. In other words, they picture David seeking after God, when a prophetic message comes to him, in the first person, from God: “David, wait for the LORD...” Others view it as David’s exhortation to us. Still others view it as David preaching to himself.
- Kidner captures all three views: “In the final verse the psalmist may be addressing anyone undergoing such a trial, or may be speaking to himself, as in 42:5, to stiffen resolve; or this may even be the Lord’s answering oracle. Whichever it is, the suppliant has no more to go on than the assurance that God is worth waiting for. But that is enough.”
- Ross: “The word ‘wait’ indicates confident expectation, albeit with some tension or restlessness as part of the waiting.”
- Spurgeon: “Wait at his door with prayer; wait at his foot with humility; wait at his table with service; wait at his window with expectancy.”