

Psalm 27 The Ups and Downs of Life

By Pastor Roy Hogan

The dictionary defines temperament as the combination of mental, physical, and emotional traits of a person. In other words, temperament is a person's disposition. One's temperament, that is, disposition, determines their behavior. My favorite kind of people are those who have an even temperament. You always know where they stand. I do not like surprises. Some are grumpy, but, praise God, they are grumpy all the time. Some are happy every time you see them. Thank God for this group. The kind you need to look out for are those who are bouncing off the ceiling with joy this Sunday, but bouncing off the floor next Sunday. When you meet them, you never know what you are going to get.

We all have periods of down time and some peaks of joy, but, as a rule, we are about the same a large portion of the time. I believe David was a level-temperament kind of person. However, in this Psalm, we see two sides to David. In verses 1-6, he is on the mountain-top. In verses 7-14, he is in the valley. In this single chapter, he goes from faith to fear, from trust to trembling, and from confidence to cowardice. I cannot fault David, nor can a one of use, for we have all been there at some time in our life. So vast is the swing of David's mood in this chapter that some believe this chapter may be the work of two writers. I am confident, as are most of the commentaries I have read, that David is the writer of the chapter in its entirety.

Part A verse 1-6

27:1-3

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2 When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

David begins the chapter on the mountaintop, so to speak. He expresses that he has no fear of any man. Verse one contains two questions: “whom shall I fear?” and “of whom shall I be afraid?” Fear is indeed a monster. Many lives have been ruined by fear. Fear can take a person hostage.

Why can David ask these two bold questions? How can he be so brave? It is because the Lord was *his*. Notice the occurrence of the personal pronouns *my* twice in verse one. Is the Lord yours? Is he your light and salvation as he was to David? David could resist fear because he had a LORD. His LORD provided him light and salvation. Light is fear’s worst enemy. Burglars strike in darkness. Vandals do their damage at night.

Not only does having the LORD as light take away David’s fear, he states the LORD is also his *salvation*. If, perhaps, the enemy gets over the fence and comes nigh unto David, he has the Lord to save him. He has the Lord as his *strength*. There is no way to keep the enemies of life outside a chain-link fence. They will at some time penetrate the barrier. There is some hand-to-combat in the life of a disciple of Christ. David came face-to-face with the both a lion and a bear. He took both down by virtue of the strength God gave him in the hour of need. I believe in divine adrenaline.

Not only did David defeat fear based on his personal possession of the Lord, he also counted on his past dealing as we see in verse two. Have you any past victories you can look to? Has God seen you through attacks in the past? Often, I have found strength in past victory. I believe this was the reason Moses ordered Joshua to record the first victory over the enemy that Israel experienced in the beginning of their wilderness journey. If God can do it once, he can do it again. The army of Israel was filled with fear when David approached them in the days of the giant, Goliath. They mocked David for the thought that he, a lad, should confront Goliath. David told them: “I have past experience. I have already whipped a lion and a bear.” The Devil took the steering lose in my father’s car during a tent revival as he was preaching the Gospel they hated. On another occasion, the enemy loosened the lug nuts that secure the

wheel to the car hoping the wheel would come off as he traveled down the highway. God stepped in and the car kept on going safely to its destination. He did not miss a single night of the tent revival.

Have you any experiences with the Lord where you can say with certainty that the Lord saw you through? I do not like trouble. Trouble makes me fear. I need God's strength and salvation. I thank God for past experiences in serving him that I can look back on.

Verse 3 reminds us of the times when Saul's army pursued David. He hid in caves and in the forest. Once he stood on a hillside and beheld an entire army, that was pursuing him, camped in the valley below. Christians live their entire life outnumbered. You may be the one believer of the 20 that work on the assembly line at your place of employment. No one like being outnumbered. The Devil have an empire of fallen angels on his side. One angel has the strength of an army of me.

I have wondered what David meant by the word *this* in verse three: *in this will I be confident*. I am inclined to believe he was thinking of that day when Samuel poured the anointing oil on his head as a lad. I remember the day the Lord anointed me at an ol' time altar when I, with a broken heart, cried unto him to become my Savior. How does the sinner, lost without Christ, face fear?

27:4-6

One thing have I desired 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 behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. 5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. 6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

What is your feeling toward the house of the Lord? To many believers, it is an inconvenience. It is a disruption of their routine. I will make this emphatic statement: a believer who is not in love with

the house of God has a heart problem. Of all the buildings in our city, the houses of God are the special places. No other building on earth ranks in importance with the house of God.

David was a man who sought the heart of God. David was a man who wanted to be like God. Do you desire to be like God? I believe any person desiring to be like God will be in love with the house of God. David wanted something impossible, yet desirable to want. He could not possibly live in the house of God. He had to tend sheep. He had to lead the army in battle. He had to sit on the throne. Yet, daily his desire was to be in God's house. We struggle with three services a week. David wanted to live there. I have heard my mother say many times "the church, Oh I wish I could live there."

The house of God has good things for us. There we can *see the beauty of the Lord*, verse 4. Would you like to know what God looks like? A good place to see him is in the house of God. God is beautiful. Another benefit of being in the house of God is found in verse 4: *to inquire in his temple*. Life is filled with questions. You likely are just like me; I do not have all the answers. I need God's wisdom shared unto me. He does have all the answers. Do parents really know how to parent? Do supervisors really know how to lead the folk who report to them? Many are the issues of life. It is a maze. Do I turn left or right or go straight? We can drop by the temple and inquire.

There are yet more advantages to dwelling in the house of the Lord. Verse 5 tells us of the *protection* found in the house of the Lord. Life is just as dangerous as it is complex. There are many pitfalls set by the Devil. David had many enemies. When trouble came, he was not always able to physically place himself in the temple. Yet, his soul's desire to be there placed him there. What will you do when you are face-to-face with trouble and you have neglected the house of God? To neglect the house of God is to forfeit God's protection in your life. If you desert the temple, you are on your own. In the manner of God, it is his prerogative to shield you from the enemy or to hide you from the enemy. A good place to hide is in the temple. Have you, like me, ever noticed how church-deserters run to church in

time of trouble? Suddenly, they know where the church is located and what time the service starts. The event of 9/11 is a very good example. To run to God's house only in time of trouble makes a mockery of the ways and desires of God for a person's life. God and church are not spare tires.

Verse 6 is the pinnacle of chapter 27. David is about to leave the mountain top. Meanwhile, he has his head held high. Sometimes, we forget God in time of victory. When all is going well, God and church are a distant memory. This was not true in the life of David. He went into the temple to celebrate victory over the enemy. That is a good place to go to celebrate. He walked into the temple head held high. What did he do once inside? I note the word *sacrifice* in this verse 6. A sacrifice is an offering. A sacrifice involves giving unto the Lord. We owe God and can never get him paid-in-full, but that should not stop us from making installments. Come to the house of God with the intent of giving God something. Do we walk into Walmart without a method of payment?

David brought a sacrifice. I believe a sacrifice is a sanctified offering. What did David bring? He may not have had money to bring. Yet, he had something to give God that God delights in. He brought an offering of praise: *therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* He brought a sacrifice of joy and singing. No, this was not some silent praise and silent joy and silent singing. It was audible. Some are misguided. We need a doctor in attendance in the house of God to check some folks pulse and seen if they have a heartbeat. An illustration goes like this: a man died in the middle of a church service. Emergency personnel were called. The medics carried out 4 before they finally got to the dead one. Praising God audibly is legal. The Bible is filled with audible praise.

Hebrews 13:15 *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*

Part B verse 7-14

In verses 1-6, David seemed on the mountaintop. He was in a mood of rejoicing and contentment in the Lord. No, in verse 7 he is in the valley. How could this sudden change in his temperament be possible? How can we, as God's created, go to bed happy and get up sad? Such is the nature of mankind. We are happy one moment, and the next moment may bring sadness. I am reminded of the prophet Elijah on this occasion. He had a great contest on Mt Carmel with his opponent being the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the grove. Elijah's God won the contest handily. Yet, the next chapter in Elijah's life places him under a juniper tree asking God to end his life!

Probably, we have all had an Elijah experience in our life time. Such is the way of life. As I write these words, my heart is heavy. I just got words of a tragic event. A mom was preparing the evening meal. She had called for dad, who was out on the farm, to come and eat the prepared meal. There was no answer. So, she sent one of the two sons to call dad to the evening meal. The son found the husband and father dead. He was killed by a falling tree log. It is safe to say that the evening meal was not eaten that day. The surest thing about life is that it is unsure. Expect the unexpected. It has been said that *fear lives next door to faith*.

Let us now descend from the mountaintop of rejoicing into the valley of despair.

27:7-8

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8 When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

David is no longer rejoicing; he is in mourning. He is crying unto the Lord. Crying unto the Lord surely indicates a state of despair. Often, we pray to the Lord, but we have all at some time *cried* unto him. This is not the first time David had been in a state of crying unto the Lord. We only have to read Psalm 51 where David had reached the bottom in his life when he sinned with Bathsheba. In that chapter he offered a sincere, earnest, and urgent unto heaven.

Have you ever had a time in your life when your prayer was not a usual prayer, but was, instead, a cry? I was once visiting an elderly lady who was in recovery at Park West Hospital in Knoxville. In the room next to her room, apparently the folk had just been notified of the tragic loss of a loved one. The cry unto God from that room sent chills up my spine.

My companion in travel on missionary journeys, Evangelist John Mantooh, became seriously ill upon arrival back in our hometown, Athens, Tennessee. After visiting his physician and being admitted to the emergency room at the local hospital, it was determined that he needed to be flown to Memorial Hospital in Chattanooga for diagnosis. After a few hours in that hospital, my phone rang. It was Brother John's wife, Pat, with the worst possible news- Brother John had malaria and was near death. The doctor's there told her to tell me that I needed to ungently go to my doctor and to be checked. I hung up the phone. I stood from my chair. At that moment, every ounce of strength in my body left me. I collapsed on the floor. I could not pray. I could only cry unto the Lord "Dear God please help me."

If you have not yet been to the place in your life where your prayer turned to crying, I predict it will come! David cries for two things: God's *mercy* and God's reply (voice). We all need mercy, for sure. We are all acquainted with mercy. Mercy is what brought us the light of this day. Beyond mercy, we also need to voice of God. I have often been to the point where I lift a hand toward heaven and say "God, I am your son and you are my father. Can we not talk?" I believe every child of God will at some time in their walk experience a time when it seems God's phone is turned off. I have no explanation for this, but there is surely an explanation in the Bible somewhere. Does this happen to us to make us appreciate more our communion with God? More than one time, David spoke the words "God, hide not thy face from me."

Oh well, I see the answer in verse 8, sort of. Those times when we can't seem to reach God, he is teaching us to seek him. I recall how the "my love" sought after "my beloved" in the book of Solomon. If

we had the presence of God all the time every day, would we appreciate him? It is the plan of God that we sometimes have to *seek* him. We will understand it better by-and-by.

27:9

Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

David seems to express in verse 9 that dreadful feeling that God has rejected him. He feels God has gone into hiding. He may very well feel like an orphan. “Lord, do not hide from me. Lord, do not put me away. Lord, do not leave me. Lord, do not forsake me.” I would be feeling really sorry for David at this moment excepting for the fact that I, too, have felt as he feels in this verse 9. Have you ever had this experience? We pray and seems our words come back and hit us in the face. We pray and nothing happens. God seems a million miles away.

Yet, we know his promise that he will never leave us nor forsake us. Evangelist Billy Mitchell, one of my heroes in the faith, was severely injured when his automobile was hit more-or-less head-on by a large truck hauling crushed stone. I visited him in the hospital and have never seen such a mangled human being. I wondered how he lived. I thought if I spoke to him, at a minimum, I would hear him complain or place blame. Not so. His only words to me in this dire moment were “Brother Hogan, a man better walk by faith.” I will carry those words to my grave.

I once heard a missionary preach a simple message. I do not recall all of the message, but these words from that man of God I will never forget: “God is not against us. He is for us.” Mom and dad. In years gone by, sang a song that contained these words: “standing somewhere in the shadows you’ll find Jesus.”

Worse than praying and getting no answer is when we lose our desire to pray. I have been there, have you? The feeling of what’s

the use comes over us. We sometimes get to the point of thinking “oh well, whatever happens is going to happen.”

God *is* our friend. God *is* our father. God *is* for us. We are on the winning side.

27:10

When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

I sense David’s faith taking over. His spiritual temperature is going up. This verse gives us hope that he will make it over this dark valley.

Once, David hid in the cave of Adullam when pursued by Saul. While in hiding in the cave, word came that his parents were in danger. He thought first of bringing them to the cave. He decided it best is he approach the king of Moab and request he allow them refuge in Moab. Jesse’s grandmother was a Moabitess. Perhaps this connection to the land of Moab would gain him some favor in the eyes of the king. The king granted David’s request. His mother and father found refuge in Moab. This is the last reference we have to David’s beloved parents in the Word of God. Did they die in Moab? Maybe they did, or, for whatever the reason may be, David may never have heard from them again.

My mother and father did so much for me. Anything good that is in me, I owe them credit. They are now gone from this life. I miss them beyond what words can describe. Perhaps David knew the same feeling- no mom or dad. Yet, I can say as did David *When my mother and father forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.* God is not dead. He is not even sick. I can close my eyes, listen closely, and still hear my mom and dad singing that precious song “Standing Somewhere in the Shadows You Will Find Jesus.”

27:11

Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

In this grave hour, David prayed for **direction**. He desires the LORD lead him in a *plain* path. *Plain* means level or even. He did NOT ask that his enemies die or even become sick. David did not pray for a *easy* path. He simply requested the Lord go in front. The shepherd leads the sheep. God does not follow us. When we think we have it all mapped out and just want God along for the ride, we are in trouble. God needs to be in the front seat, not the back.

27:12

Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

We live in the day of the *liar*. Find a man who tells the truth most of the time and have him sign your Bible. Sadly, I believe a vast portion of the population sees no wrong in lying. How many good men of God and good Christian folk have been harmed by liars?

Not only are the liars a problem, but those the speak cruelty abound. Social media is mostly about cutting people down and criticizing them. Many they are that, as David described them, *breathe out cruelty*. Is there a law against speaking kindly to people? Recently, I was in line waiting to speak to the pharmacist. The lady, or whatever she was, in front of me spoke so cruelly to the pharmacist who was also a lady. When my turn came to speak to the pharmacist, I believe I saw tears welling in her eyes. I apologized to her on behalf of the witch in front of me that had been so cruel. I asked her how she takes so much of this world's cruel speech. She said "I go home and cry."

A couple of days ago, I met a lady in a fast-food restaurant who I knew from the past when she worked at Staples. I asked her why she left her job there. She gave a couple of reason, the primary one being that she could no longer deal with the rude public. God help fallen mankind.

27:13-14

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

What medication can we take to withstand this lying, cruel society? Sometime I think I will faint. Do you feel this way? Cursing, lying, murder, robbery, and other sins dominate the landscape. Is something that will help available at the local pharmacy? We can only make it by faith. Notice the word believed in verse 13. What would we do without our faith in the Lord? Maybe not soon or maybe not tomorrow or the next day, David believed God would reappear. God would come to his rescue. God would deliver his vexed soul.

You and I have the option of fainting. Some have fainted. They are not dead, but they are not moving. They once sang in the choir. Some of those that have fainted have taught Sunday School. They are now lifeless. Will you be next? Will I be next? There has never been a time when it is more important to say, as did Joshua, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” We live in trying times. It appears it will only get worse.

In verse 14, we are asked to wait on the Lord. I do not like to wait. I fear I am caught up in the world of instant gratification. I want it now. Yet, God seems never to be in a hurry. Several years ago, I had a desire come in my heart to preach in the African nation Tanzania. I would look at a map of the African continent and stare at Tanzania on the map. Finally, about one year ago, God arranged it. HE sure knew the right time. He always does. He does not own a calendar or a watch. If we ask God what time it is, he would say *now*. If we ask him what day it is, he would say *now*. Well, Lord, we may ask, what day follows this day? His answer would be the same- *now*.

When will this sin be gone? When will violence cease? When will the lying tongue cease? When will cruel words die away? God’s answer is one simple word- *wait*. This is not the answer I am looking for- how about you? Nevertheless, God is God and God is on the throne and God IS in CHARGE.