

Psalm 27

1 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 the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

3 Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.

4 One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.

5 For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred
tent
and set me high upon a rock.

6 Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts

of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.

7 Hear my voice when I call, Lord;
be merciful to me and answer me.

8 My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”
Your face, Lord, I will seek.

9 Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.

10 Though my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will receive me.

11 Teach me your way, Lord;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.

12 Do not turn me over to the desire of my
foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
spouting malicious accusations.

13 I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.

14 Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

Sermon Summary: Hope is a picture of what you believe is possible. This psalm helps us to picture the nature of our true hope, and gives us the wonder to believe it truly is possible.

Struggling with hope: David addresses the full spectrum of human trouble (e.g. vv. 2-3, v. 10). But his confidence that he will see God's goodness in "the land of the living" (v. 13) pushes back on the tendency to put our hope not in God, but in human power (cf. the modern idea of a disenchanting world). Because human power inevitably fails us, hoping in it will always lead to profound disappointment.

Picturing hope: To "seek God in his temple" (v. 4) meant to look for a specific revelation or word from God. As part of David's one great hope of dwelling in God's presence (v. 4), this is a way of picturing or meditating on the hope we really need in God. Jesus is the ultimate manifestation of God's word (John 1:14), and meditating on his life, sacrificial death, and physical resurrection is a powerful way to push back on disenchantment and picture the hope we need.

Waiting in hope: To "gaze on the beauty of the Lord," specifically the beauty of Jesus' sacrificial love on the cross, opens our hearts to the wonder of a God who takes our darkness, disappointments, and failures and brings hope and new life out of them. This gives us "confidence" (v. 13) and the ability to "wait for the Lord" (v. 14), which in Hebrew also means "hope in the Lord." Biblical hope is not wishful thinking, but eager expectation (like waiting in a darkened movie theater for the show you know is about to begin).

Application Questions:

1. Hope exists, and often falters, in the tension between our desires and our disappointments. In light of this tension, describe your own experience with hope and hopelessness.
2. "Disenchantment" describes our modern world that tends to ignore the presence and action of God, and trains us to hope in human power. What are some ways you see this tendency in our culture, and especially in your own life?
3. Christian meditation is (among other things) meditating on who God is and what he has done. Why is meditating on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus such a powerful way to do this (as opposed to meditating on abstract ideas like "love," "peace," "joy")? What are some different ways of doing this that could make God more real to you? (This could be a brainstorming time for your group - perhaps dividing into breakout groups for a bit and then regathering to report on your discussions.)