

"SACRIFICES OF JOY"

Psalm 27

Intro: Many who have written on this Psalm have said that there is no clue as to the exact period in his life when this Psalm was composed. And so it may be that this was the prayer that he prayed often in the many times of trouble that he faced throughout his life. Before he became king he was in trouble with Saul. After he became king, he faced many enemies, the worst of which was the insurrection which was led by his son, Absalom. There are those who reading this Psalm in a superficial manner would say that David was outstanding as a soldier, and that his own ingenuity had been the difference between him and his enemies. But David would not accept such an honor for himself. Instead, the Psalm shows that David was a man of faith, and weak faith at times, but a faith which always caused him to turn to the Lord in times of trouble. This Psalm leaves no doubt but that David's confidence was in the Lord, and in the Lord alone!

Those of us who have been memorizing this Psalm, will confess that it has been a great blessing to hide it away in our hearts. For some it has meant reviving and renewing a Psalm which has been memorized before. It is not a particularly easy Psalm to commit to memory, but the work that it takes is well worth all of the time and energy which it takes.

In some ways this Psalm for David was biographical. It speaks of the way he lived and where he found the strength to face the trials which he faced one after another throughout his life. For any who are just starting out in the Christian life, what David said in this Psalm is an excellent example to follow. And for those of us who have known this Psalm and loved it for many years, it is an opportunity to place our lives alongside of that of David to see if we have fallen behind at all from the way we used to live.

Almost all who have written on this Psalm have different ways of dividing it into its various divisions. And so I am going to take the liberty of making my own outline which I trust will be true to the Psalm itself, and which will impart to all of our hearts the message which David sought to impart, which is the message that the Spirit of God would reveal to us.

It seems to me that there are four main sections in this Psalm:

- 1) David's confident testimony (vv. 1-3).
- 2) David's constant desire (vv. 4-6).
- 3) David's compelling prayer (vv. 7-12).

4) David's consistent message (vv. 13-14).

It seems to me that this Psalm, like so many of David's Psalms, was a "sacrifice of joy." The word "joy" suggests that his joy was expressed in shouting, sometimes even to the blowing of a trumpet. This expression, "sacrifices of joy" is found inverse 6, and the phrase that follows it helps us to understand what he meant by "sacrifices of joy." It meant that he would sing praises to the Lord, and that expression was stated very emphatically. "I will sing, yea, I will sing praises to the Lord." So his "sacrifices of joy" were sacrifices that he was presenting to the Lord. You don't finish this Psalm thinking about how great David was, but about how great David's God was. Whatever else we can say about David, we can say that he was excited about the things of the Lord. And that excitement seems to have grown the longer he walked with the Lord. For example, see what he did when he was finally successful in bringing the ark back to Jerusalem. Michal, his wife, despised the way he expressed his joy when they brought the ark back. But this is what he said in response to her:

21 And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.

22 And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour (2 Sam. 6:21-22).

So first let us think of

I. DAVID'S CONFIDENT MESSAGE (Psa. 27:1-3).

Note the personal relationship that David claimed to have with the Lord. He said that "the Lord is my light . . . my salvation . . . the strength of my life." He could have said simply that the Lord is light, salvation, and strength, but that would not have enabled to ask, "Whom shall fear?" and "Of whom shall I be afraid." It is in a personal, saving acquaintance with the Lord that the Lord Himself keeps us from fearing and being afraid. How important it is to be able to say, "He is my Lord." "The Lord is my Shepherd."

What did David mean that the Lord was his Light? He could have meant many things. In the Lord's light David had seen his own need while he was still in darkness. The Lord used light to protect Israel in her journeys

and to guide her along the way. "God is light" means that He is righteous; He is holy.

Perhaps he had salvation in mind because He went on to say that "the Lord is my salvation." This meant not only the One Who had brought salvation to him, but the One Who kept him in salvation, guarding him through all of the trials and dangers of life. Obviously David meant that he had found in the Lord a great and grand sufficiency.

The Lord was also "the strength of my life." He is the One Who enables us to stand in all of the trials of life. He more than compensates for our weakness. Without Him we are nothing, and we can do nothing, and we have to realize this before we will realize how much we need the Lord's strength.

An example of the truth of David's testimony here is stated in verse 2. (Read.) That was past. Verse 3 speaks of possible dangers in the future, and David was sure that the Lord would prove to be in the future what He had been in the past. David was not speaking of minor trials in his life, but about conditions when his life was in danger and when, humanly speaking, there was no hope that he could escape from his enemies. There were great dangers behind David's words here in verses 2 and 3. But what confidence he had in the Lord, knowing that the Lord would never fail him.

But there is something about facing dangers and trials which makes us realize how much we need to delight ourselves in the Lord. So look with me at the next section.

II. DAVID'S CONSTANT DESIRE (Psa. 27:4-6).

David has told us here what the one, great, and continuing desire was in his heart. And it was not just a desire that he had in his heart, but it was a desire he sought to fulfill by seeking the Lord

Where would he find the Lord? He would find Him in "the house of the Lord." But was it only to be able to present his petitions to the Lord in his times of need? No. It was so he could gaze upon "the beauty of the Lord" in the first place, and then "to enquire in His temple."

Samuel Rutherford wrote a little book called, "The Loveliness of Christ." This is what David was thinking about. And it was not that he, David,

would be looking at some physical appearance of the Lord, but that there in His presence He might meditate on the attributes of God. In Zech. 9:17 we read, "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty." So the goodness of the Lord was a major part of the beauty of the Lord, and David had experienced that goodness time and time again as He had walked with the Lord, and trusted Him.

And it was there in the Lord's presence that David was hidden, and it was there that he knew that he was safe. And all of the forgoing truths which David had found so comforting and securing, caused him to offer there in the presence of the Lord his thankful "sacrifices of joy"! This is where most of us are very deficient. We need to learn to delight ourselves in the Lord first, and then in the way He is continually working in our lives to meet our needs and to protect us from all the evil that is around us.

There may be times when we are filled with apprehension of various kinds, either for ourselves, or for those we love, but we can always have the joy of the Lord in our hearts. It may not be an exuberant joy such as David expressed when he brought the ark back into the city of Jerusalem, but it will be a deep and real joy nevertheless, which is always accompanied by the peace of God.

All of us have in our lives the things, or thing, that is more important to us than anything else. What is it with us? Can we honestly say what David said? Is our life on continuous seeking of the Lord? Or do we just talk about it, or seek the Lord when things go wrong. It surely seems that one reason we have as many testings as we do, is because that is what it takes for us to seek the Lord. If we can't honestly say what David said, in verse 4, let us pray that the Lord will give us that single purpose of heart which we pursue every day we live. What benefits await us when we meditate upon the Lord!

Now as we move from verse 6 to verse 7, we see in David's experience, and we know it to be true in our own, that trials of different sorts continue to come. And here we have in verses 7 through 12 not only an example of how David prayed, but a great lesson in how we need to pray. How good the Lord has been to record for us the prayers of outstanding men and women of God to teach us what it means to pray and to call upon the Lord. Undoubtedly David was comforted as he looked into the present and the future by remembering how the Lord had graciously met his needs in the past. But let us turn now to David's prayer. There is much for us to learn in these verses that we come to now.

I have called it,

III. DAVID'S COMPELLING PRAYER (Psa. 27:7-12).

I have called it "compelling" because there is a great evidence of urgency in what David had to say.

I will always be thankful that I got my training at Dallas Seminary when I did. In those days we were not as concerned about how many degrees a man had after his name, as we were about what he knew about walking with the Lord. Many of my teachers would not be permitted to teach there today because they did not have the academic credentials that are now required. There is nothing wrong with getting a good education, but that should never be the primary qualification for a person to teach. I had one teacher who came to us every year as a special lecturer who had not even finished high school. But he was a self-educated man, and probably any university would have been glad to have him to teach world history because he knew it backwards and forwards. But what I remember mainly about him was the way he walked with the Lord. And you can never get away from that kind of an influence whenever you have been under it.

Well, as we move on into verse 7 we are in David's prayer chamber, in the place where he met with the Lord. And we hear him praying the words that we find in this third section of Psalm 27.

In verse 7 we see how burdened he was for a life of closer fellowship with the Lord. And this continues down through verses 9 and 10. How it must have delighted the Lord to have a child of His seek Him as David did. We all know that we need to seek the Lord, to seek Him daily, and to seek Him earnestly, but how many of us seek Him. It is no wonder that David is known as a man after God's heart.

And then look at verse 10. There really is no one who cares for us in this life like our fathers and mothers do. And there is nothing sadder than when children lose a father, or mother, or both.

Illus: One of those men Lucille and I met in those seminary days was Dr. Vansteenberg of the Belgian Gospel Mission. He told us what came to his mind as he and Mrs. Vansteenberg watched the Nazis take their son away to his death.

The Lord is always sufficient for the needs of His people, even when those

needs are the greatest.

In verses 11 and 12 we find that David presented three requests to the Lord:

- 1) "Teach me Thy way, O Lord."
- 2) "Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies."
- 3) "Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies."

How important it is for us to learn the Lord's ways because they are so different from our ways, and much higher than our ways, according to what the Lord said through Isaiah in Isa. 55:8-9:

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

We don't have the same kind of enemies (at least most of the time) like David had, but we have our enemies. They are not flesh and blood, but they are our enemies never the less, and we need guidance and deliverance continually. How simple are all of these requests, and yet how very, very important! There is not a day that we do not need the Lord's help in many ways, and so there should never be a day but what we are calling upon the Lord to make Himself known to us in greater ways, and calling upon Him to teach us and to lead us and to deliver us.

This Psalm ends with what we can call:

IV. DAVID'S CONSISTENT MESSAGE (Psa. 27:13-14).

We don't know if David was here speaking to the Lord about himself, or if he was speaking to others about himself, or just speaking to himself. But let us say that he was speaking to those who read this Psalm like you and I are doing tonight.

What a testimony this is, a testimony of how deeply he found that he needed the Lord.

The words, "I had fainted," are in italics (if your Bible uses italics to show words that have been added to make the meaning clearer). The NKJV adds the words, "I would have lost heart." And there is no question but that is what David was seeking to convey as he brought this Psalm to a close. As I mentioned in the beginning of my message tonight, David was

not showing himself to have been some kind of a superman, but, on the other hand, how different his life would have been if he had not known the Lord, and walked with the Lord, and experienced the goodness of the Lord in so many ways! But it is when we are weak that the Lord gives us His strength to make us strong.

I will leave it to you to decide whether David said the words in verse 14 for himself as he faced another day, or if this was his parting words for us. It may be that he intended it to be both. But he was encouraging patient. He was encouraging prayer. He was encouraging faith and courage for the strengthening of his own heart, or our hearts, or both.

Concl: What a wonderful Psalm this is! If you have memorized it, don't let it get away from you. If you haven't memorized it, I encourage you to do it. Make it your Psalm. Let it reflect your own delight in the Lord, and the way you are trusting Him day by day.

But remember, if you can't say what David said at the beginning, then you can forget about the rest of the Psalm. Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for your own salvation, and then you will be able to say what David said in verse 1, and to go on as David did in the rest of the Psalm.