

The One Thing I Desire

Says Jesus to Martha: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary! Mary has chosen the good portion (dish), which will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:40

The Psalm contains two sections – the first is an expression of confidence; the second a plea/prayer for God's help. This is unusual in the Psalms. I've broken it down differently – our reasons to Fear and our Reasons to have confidence.

Also, remember, as you go to discussion groups: "There are 150 Messianic Psalms" (Clowney, Course on Christ in the Psalms). It is fair to imagine this Psalm, like all the others, as it would have been coming through the lips of Jesus as he memorized and repeated it.

Reasons to Fear!

Enemies

Saul – hatred, anger, jealousy

Absalom—his own son, who rose against him. Many family troubles. Talk about family disputes! His son Amnon molests his daughter Tamar (sister of Absalom), which leads to the coup d'etat...

Friends—Joab, who kills Abner because Abner killed Asahel. David could hardly handle some of his friends.

Philistines (incl. Goliath)— David, the man of constant war may not build God's house.

Jesus, too, had many enemies (his own people don't receive him; Roman authorities, Jewish authorities, Judas, the devil, his own family members refuse to believe and want him to stop his ministry.)

False Witnesses

In our rancorous 2016 Election—Who knows which witnesses are false and which are true?

Have people said false things about you and you can't convince them otherwise? Have you believed rumors about those you love? Sometimes can be cleared up, but not vicious, intentional slander. Jesus, too, dealt with false witnesses.

As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say. Luke 11:53-54

Vicious Hatred

Isis warrior actually eating the heart of an enemy!

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Hatred is not only expressed physically. God charges the Israelite leaders of “eating the flesh” of his people. Here David speaks of being devoured by enemies (picture a pack of wolves tearing their prey apart)

*And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice?- you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones, ³ who eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron. **Micah 3:1-3***

Wars

We are not yet in active war in our country, but many Christians are living in the middle of wars.

*And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. **Matt 24:6***

The war Jesus faced was not physical until the end of his ministry, but he faced a raging war with temptation and the devil.

Reasons for Confidence

God our Rock

Engedi – the caves (see picture – last page. Notice the perspective – how small the people are at the bottom)

1. The Rock, our hiding place (from the heat of day, from destruction)

[David amazingly rescued from Saul] *So Saul returned from pursuing after David and went against the Philistines. Therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape. And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of Engedi. **1 Sam 23:28-29***

*When the men of Israel ... were hard pressed, the[ry] hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns... **1 Sam 13:6***

Where is our hiding place?

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. **Col 3:1-4***

2. Established on the Rock that is unmovable, unshakeable

*Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them...is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. **Lk 6:47-48***

Moses and Elijah both, on Mount Sinai:

*And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen." **Ex 33:21-23***

3. Fed and “watered” from the Rock

He made him ride on the high places of the land, and he ate the produce of the field, and he suckled him with honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. Deut 32:13

“Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” 9 And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him. Num 20:8-9

our fathers...drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. 1 Cor 10:4

4. Encouraged by the constant presence of the Rock

Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge,... For their rock is not as our Rock; our enemies are by themselves. Deut 32:37, 31

In today’s age, when people want to define themselves, they end up ultimately lonely! Enemies of the gospel stand by themselves, alone, in the face of judgment.

He said, “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence.” 2 Sam 22:2-3

God our Home

Don’t forget David’s passionate desire to build a house for God! But here, he realizes that he lives in God’s house; God doesn’t live in the house David will make on earth.

Jerusalem as the “high place” (SOOO Hilly! Bethany only 2 miles, but what a workout!) The high place (“set me high upon a rock” – v. 5) may mean an invulnerable place, but it is also a way of talking about Jerusalem, the temple. David identifies the temple and Jerusalem.

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, but it is not the city that is ultimately the “high place, the holy place.” Jesus was taken to the temple mount by the devil, who asked him to throw himself down. But he has to find his high place by going through the lowest of all places, in the midst of suffering. He finally enters the true holy of holies – the one not made with hands.

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:11-12

Ultimate Rest

Even in the middle of trouble, we are already “sitting in the heavenlies” as Paul puts it “He will conceal me under the cover of his tent.” Ps 127:5

We are utterly safe from the enemy and the avenger. Another sense of Exodus 12 that we learned about on Sunday in relation to the Passover is that God “covers” us – hovers over us – stands guard at the blood-splashed door, to hold the avenger out. Nothing can harm us.

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Ultimate Joy and Praise

We are already singing God's praise with Jesus.

Jesus sings with his disciples on the way up to Jerusalem. The author of Hebrews says that Jesus calls us brothers, "saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."

Did Jesus shout with joy as he ascended back to his Father? In what sense is Jesus now in the tabernacle – in the presence of the Father? Is he present with the Father in his presence with us by the Spirit?

We will never stop inquiring of the Lord! We will live with him forever and never finish understanding the richness of his love, mercy, intelligence, power, beauty and glory.

God the Judge and Justice

Jesus was the only righteous one who cried out to the Lord and got NO answer. He didn't consult the priests, with the Urim and the Thummim. He asked God to let the cup pass, but got no positive answer. On the cross, he, like Saul, was the rejected king. The Father showed him no mercy! For OUR sakes!!! Jesus had nowhere to hide! Opposite of being hidden with God! This is God hiding his face. Jesus took this for us, so that we can be hid with God in Christ.

Yet he triumphed over Satan and sin on the cross. His head was lifted up above his enemies, who surrounded him. Above him was written: "King of the Jews."

He could well have quoted verses 6-7:

"And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me and I will offer n this tent sacrifices with shouts of joy."

He probably had no strength to sing or shout "It is finished," but surely he also had deep joy in knowing that he had finished the work the Father had called him to do, holding firm to the very end. Perhaps we can say that, as Jesus lay in the grave, he was hidden in the Rock? Protected, ultimately, from destruction. Brought to a new life for us by the hovering of the Holy Spirit. Resurrected – the first new man. Now he is food and living water for us. As we are in him and he is in God, we are brought into the new, resurrection life. We are, in fact, already in life eternal! Therefore, we have nothing to fear.

In v. 2 David mentions enemies who "eat up my flesh." Jesus' flesh was indeed mangled for us – brutalized in a punishment reserved for wicked criminals

And now he now gives us his flesh to eat. It is only through his sacrifice that we can now find refuge in God, instead of facing God's judgment.

John 6:53 ⁵³ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Waiting on the Lord

David finishes the psalm with a prayer. His confidence is expressed in the first section. He tells himself to wait on the Lord. Are you waiting for the Lord? I am. Two children and a son-

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in-law who are not following Christ! My dad waited 45 years for my sister to turn back to the Lord. He only saw that prayer answered after he died!

In our waiting, God teaches us our way/His way

*The path of the righteous is level; you make level the way of the righteous. In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul. My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. **Isa 26:7-9***

This is the wisdom we need to walk the straight path in the middle of oppression, pressure, crowd pressure to conform.

*Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD! **Ps 31:24***

*Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. **Ps 37:7-9***

*I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning. **Ps 130:5-6***

*Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you. **Prov 20:22***

*O LORD, be gracious to us; we wait for you. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble. **Isa 33:2***

*The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. **Lam 3:25-26***

If our "one dish," our "one delight" is to know God more richly each day and for eternity, all we need to do is WAIT patiently, quietly, in absolute confidence.

"One thing I have 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."

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Extra Questions for Reflection

1. Can you think of any time when David was falsely accused?
2. What did Jesus do about false accusations? What should you do in your own life about such false testimony?
3. What portions of Psalm 27 might tell you something about the Messiah? Which portions, if any, could Jesus have prayed for himself, or spoken about God for himself? Do you think David was just desiring the temple (which was still a tent, then) or speaking of knowing God more generally? If he was speaking only about the physical temple he knew, is it right for us to put more meaning into the Psalm and think of these words as referring to something greater and to a life with God in eternity, after death?
4. What do you think it means that God is our "light"? See 1 Tim 6:16; Job 38:19; 1 John 1:7; Rev 21:23; 22:5.

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Sources

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