

PSALM 27: EMPLOYING GOD'S WAY IN "THE TIME OF TROUBLE"

"TEACH ME YOUR WAY O LORD..." (PSALM 27:11)

KEY TEXT: Psalm 27

"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? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident. One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: 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. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord. Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. WHEN YOU SAID, "SEEK MY FACE," MY HEART SAID TO YOU, "YOUR FACE, LORD, I WILL SEEK." Do not hide Your face from me. Do not turn Your servant away in anger. You have been my help. Do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me. Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence. I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord!"

I. We Are In a "Time of Trouble"

Beloved, we are in a "time of trouble" (Psalm 27:5)

- A. God's primary objective isn't to remove us from trouble. God is primarily interested in *telling us something through* the trouble; either giving us insight into the nature of our trouble, or disclosing some important truth about His character pursuant to the trouble.
- B. How we define trouble is frequently quite different than how God defines trouble. It's imperative that we learn to *not allow* the course of this world: social, political, familial and economic pressure to define what trouble is at any given period. A whole generation in Noah's time were preoccupied with their own values and worldview, and therefore did not see the true nature of their trouble until the rain of God's judgment began to fall on them. Sin and selfishness had seared their minds and dulled their spirits so that they shunned God's *light and salvation* (Psalm 27:1) As a result of *not* entering into face to face dialogue with God, they missed all the cues about the nature of the trouble they were in, and the impending calamity.
- C. It's vital that we understand how God is defining the *trouble* in our world. (Beloved, if the response our Lord is looking for is Psalm 27, I can guarantee you our primary *trouble* IS NOT corona virus...)
- D. Most evangelical Christians, pastors and leaders, in any season, because of the littleness of their prayer lives, live conventionally disconnected from understanding God's definition of trouble. They are living in a dangerous way while a great "*time of trouble*" filled with "*devouring wickedness*" consumes the land. (Psalm 27:2)
- E. In order to hear God's definition of trouble, we must "*inquire of the Lord*" (Psalm 27:4) It takes intentionality to press against the natural gravity of seeing things from a different perspective than the one we're used to operating from. We won't see ourselves, our world, or God from God's perspective if we're doing it casually, or "*on the run*".
- F. There is a greater trouble coming than COVID-19.
 1. Before Jesus returns, there will be escalating judgments, warnings and alarms. These calamities are all about God removing everything that...
 - a. hides our condition from us,
 - b. keeps us in our selfish pride, and
 - c. hinders us from entering into the covenant love that He's created us for.
 2. "*If mankind wants to try to live without our Maker, He will actually let us, but it is deadly*

and painful. Right now we are literally witnessing man fail to control disease, economics and social structures. If we repent and make God our strength, turn from our selfish ways, give ourselves to prayer and intercession, we will find that He will lead us and protect us from what is next. If not, He will give us over to more of our own leadership and that will be much more painful than empty shelves. Read Lamentations. All this happened to the "Apple of God's eye" because they would not repent. What is coming is much worse than what is described in Lamentations." Tom Stolz (Director of Lighthouse of Prayer)

3. Jesus warned His disciples that **trouble** would increase and intensify before He returned. **For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.** (Matthew 24: 7-14)
- G. Our daily reality is, we live in trouble.
1. Corona virus will lift and dissipate and we will still be in a **"time of trouble"** (Psalm 27:5).
 2. There's an even greater pandemic that's already infected 7.4 billion of us. It's mortality rate is 100%. You don't need to test for it. You've already got it.
 3. The good news is, there's a Cure that's come out of the nation of Israel. His Name is Jesus of Nazareth. He took the disease in His own Body. And now His blood is the Perfect antibody. His ability to save is 100%. It's vital that the Church not only see the "threat" of the **"time of trouble"** but also wholeheartedly seize the Holy Spirit orchestrated opportunities that come with God troubling the earth, and declare God's divine antidote to the trouble.

II. God Chiefly Defines "Trouble" According to What's Happening in Our Heart

- A. The trouble that the Lord sees in our hearts are attitudes that corrupt faith and hinder love between ourselves and God, and ourselves and others that God loves.
- B. These attitudes include, pride, selfishness, covetousness, unforgiveness, impurity, lust of pleasure, bitterness, offense, fear, unbelief, hostility, idolatry, deceit, alienation, malice, rebellion... etc. **When Christ (who is your life) appears, then you too will be revealed in glory with him. So put to death whatever in your nature belongs to the earth: sexual immorality, impurity, shameful passion, evil desire, and greed which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. You also lived your lives in this way at one time, when you used to live among them. But now, put off all such things as anger, rage, malice, slander, abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with its practices and have been clothed with the new man that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created it.** (Colossians 3:4-10; See also Ephesians 4:31)
- C. If these attitudes are not addressed and purged from our lives we (yes, even *believers*) will actually find ourselves warring against the Son's sovereign, holy and perfectly loving reign. In a simple sentence, our hearts will be "anti-christ".
- D. As I encounter different waves of trouble, and I'm tempted to give footholds to selfishness, fear, anxiety and hostility, the Holy Spirit is training me to ask a simple question that reorients the overall perspective of my heart: **What will I want my heart to be filled with on the day I meet my Bridegroom King?** I'm also praying this prayer for myself and my sisters and brothers through this hour of trouble: *"Holy Spirit, use this season to fill our hearts with the attitudes and qualities that are most pleasing to our King."*
- E. Some of the attitudes and emotions that I want my heart to grow in include: Awe, excitement, humility, gratitude, zeal for others' well-being in God, compassion, tenderness, worship, yieldedness to His ways, agreement with His leadership, first-commandment love, trust, intimacy, no shame, purity, integrity, forgiveness, mercy-giving, desire for unity with Him and others, adoration etc. Note: On that day when we meet, I believe one of the heart dynamics that will be most valuable to me will be to look into His smiling eyes and rejoice over the shared history of love that we had cultivated with each other. Episodes like the corona-virus outbreak, are a marvelous opportunity to make a memory of increasing in our love for this Man that we will one day see face to face.

III. Our Hearts Are Weaker than We Think

- A. Our hearts are weaker, and therefore, in more trouble than we're conscious of. Our hearts are more susceptible to the *wickedness* that is *encamped* and *warring against me*. David writes: **the wicked**

- came against me to eat up my flesh...* (Psalm 27:2) Our hearts are more at risk of being *devoured* by contra-Kingdom attitudes than we are aware.
- B. Unassisted, our hearts are no match for the forces of darkness, the pressures of the world, and the temptations of the flesh. Apart from the intervention of the Holy Spirit, the human heart will lose a one-on-one battle with the *lion who is seeking someone to devour* 100% of the time.
“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)
 - C. When the pressure of crises like corona-virus hit our heart, we violently default to attitudes that will unplug our faith and corrode our love for Jesus. If we’re not vigilant the trauma of these events *will* trigger self-defense mechanisms in our inner-man that abort humility, meekness, compassion and other beatitudes; (attitudes that Jesus says contain the blessing) in favor of fear, unbelief, selfishness, pride, anxiety, hostility, accusation etc.
 - D. When the antichrist is on the earth his power to deceive will be great. (Matthew 24:11; 2 John 1:7) His deceit will shipwreck the love and faith of millions of born-again believers. However, the power he employs to deceive and defile the human heart will not only be an external power, it will be a power that draws on 7000 years of natural human tendency. Millions will have no power to resist his temptations because they never considered the weakness of their own flesh to do so, and never cultivated a history of learning how to infuse their hearts with the victorious power of Jesus’ strength.
 - E. The pressure on our hearts to succumb to devouring wickedness is only going to increase in 2020, and the years ahead.
 - F. Right now, the Lord is graciously allowing the world to feel our weakness and littleness, and our great need for Him, so that we can learn to turn to Him, repent and be clothed with His Christlike strength.
How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust, and who has not turned to the proud, nor those who lapse into falsehood. (Psalm 40:4)
 - G. The great task in the hour of trouble isn’t for us to get strong in our own strength again! This is *such* a counterintuitive mindset. No matter what, none of us are going to be strong enough for what is coming. The point is for us to see that we’re weak enough in order for us to have the life-saving conversation that the Lord wants to have with us! The Lord is saying: *“I see your weakness. I’m not put off by it. I’m exposing it to you so that you and I talk about your need for Me and My strength.”*
 - H. Our Lord is *gloriously committed* to us knowing that our hearts are not as strong as we think they are; and that He’s more loving, more compassionate and more capable of leading people with weak hearts than we think He is.

IV. God is Leading Us into a “New Normal”

- A. Our nation and our world needs more than a perfunctory day of prayer to stave off death. God bless every cry in crisis, but these prayers ultimately cannot merely be about our world economics, political aspirations, and power-structures returning to an old-normal.
- B. Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, is about to return to rule 195 nations! His arrival will be the greatest "new normal" planet earth has ever seen.
- C. We want the new normal that comes with His presence! It’s the glory, the power and the righteous order that we pray for and long for!
- D. Year after year, and day after week, the Lord is preparing the heart of the Church for His arrival, removing spot, wrinkles and blemishes (Ephesians 5:27) faithfully leading us deeper and deeper into His vision of the earth’s new normal, so that ***when He appears we will be like Him.*** (1 John 3:2)
- E. In His perfect love and grace, He’s just brought 7.4 billion of us into "lock down mode" - all to have a focused conversation with us about the new normal He’s inaugurating.
- F. He’s zealous for our hearts to be filled w the truth of His goodness ***in the land of the living*** (Psalm 27:13), so that we’re prepared to respond to Him in love and confidence through the great and terrible *now*, and in the days that are ahead...
- G. It takes supernatural revelation and faith to declare in the face of this raging and enticing world: *“For my part, I want the new normal of the King! I want generosity, joy and love instead of selfishness, doom and condemnation.”*
- H. It’s also important that we let this be our message to our world. You *really do* want the new normal of the King. We want Him to reign over sin; over the curse; over death - in us, *and* our world!

V. The Way to Shift Our Heart Into God’s New Normal is to “Focus on Jesus”

- A. Psalm 27 is the Holy Spirit’s urgent exhortation to focus the eyes of our heart on the God/Man, Christ Jesus.
“One thing I have desire of the Lord, that will I seek; 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.” (Psalm 27:4)

- B. A prayer-phrase from Jon Thurlow succinctly expresses the spirit of verse 4, and the spirit that the Holy Spirit is engendering in the hearts of billions in this hour: *"I turn off the other distractions; I isolate this one conversation; O, Spirit of wisdom and revelation, open up my eyes to the beauty of our King!"*
- C. The only way we will make the shift away from our strength to the Lord's strength; away from our old normal to His new normal is by beholding the sufficiency of the strength and goodness of our coming King.
- D. In order to do this we need to **"Seek My Face!"** (Psalm 27:8) and to establish (Psalm 27:4) lifestyles of intimate dialogue with the Lord that will fill our hearts with love for Him, and confidence in His good and perfect ability to reign.
- E. The Spirit is saying: *"Lock eyes with Me, My Bride! Just as Moses cried out to see My glory, come into the cleft of the rock as I pass by... I long for you to be strengthened with revelations of My goodness and My glory!"*
My beloved spoke, and said to me: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away. For lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. The time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away! O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret places of the cliff, Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, And your face is lovely." (Song of Songs 2:10-14)
- F. The Holy Spirit is zealous to declare the dynamic realities of Jesus (John 16:13-15) into our hearts, so that we are conformed to His image. *This* is the focus of the preparation that the Holy Spirit is engendering in these hours of crisis. These dynamic realities are divine strength in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16). Furthermore, they can only be received and appropriated in our lives through the dynamics of prayer.
- G. Warning: It's folly for us to believe that in the intensifying heat of the Day of the Lord, any of us will have more wherewithal, to cultivate sufficient spiritual strength in the place of prayer if we are not **"seeking His Face"** (Psalm 27:8) today. We should not assume that in the day of increased turbulence, persecution and anxiety we will see the value of this lifestyle any clearer or have any more bandwidth to cultivate it then.
"For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You. In a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him. You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance." (Psalm 32:6-7)
- H. In this hour it would be extremely wise for the Church to entreat the Holy Spirit to train us up in Psalm 27. The Lord has even conveniently divided the Psalm into fourteen individual verses - one for each day that many are quarantining. Each verse is packed with God, Who is our solution to this and every future crisis.
Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. (Psalm 27:11)
- I. Our Lord is zealous to lead us into His definition of increased strength in this hour. His **way** entails doing Psalm 27:4 and letting our hearts be saturated by the beauty of our coming King. If we fail to give ourselves to this regimen, we *will* be overwhelmed with the intensifying curse on the earth. Simply put, if we focus on the plague around us, it will obscure the King. But if we focus on the King it will obscure the plague, no matter how intensely it surrounds us.
He shall set me high upon a rock, and my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me. (Psalm 27:5,6)