

ONE REQUEST OF GOD

Psalm 27

WEFC July 26, 2009

God's Tunes ... contain the lyrics of the songs of God's people from long past centuries. We have a downloaded hard copy ... a rather large selection in the book of **Psalms**.

Like songs, they tell the best, the worst, and everything in between.

Psalm 27 takes us to one of the more painful experiences that we can have ... dealing with people who hate us intensely. (Next week, Lord willing, **Psalm 94** will also deal with this, but from a different angle, one that leaves us far more uneasy.)

Hatred still walks the streets of many hearts. It still loads its pointed ammunition, aims, shoots, without good thought, wounding people to its sadistic delight.

To be on the receiving end of intense hatred is painful and devastating.

Questions like,

- "What did I do to deserve this?"
- "Where did this come from?"

... often yield few good reasons.

A person reflects ...

Saving for a new car on a teacher's salary takes a while. So in the meantime, a mechanic friend loaned me an old junker so beat up, even the dents had dents. I came out of school one day to find a police officer and a woman examining it. "What's going on?" I asked.

"I saw her hit your car," the cop explained. "But I can't figure out where."

At times we find that even the dents of our life get dented. We get so banged up that we cannot distinguish between one bruise and another; they just run together and our soul is black and blue.

David, who later became the leader of the nation of Israel, discovered that his road to national leadership was filled with opposition, hatred and serious threats.

What stands out uniquely in this man is that hatred did not harden him. It had the opposite effect. And what it did in David's life is good to replicate in ours.

KEY THOUGHT:

We often look for beauty only when faced with the ugliness of sin.

This God Tune realistic assessment of what was happening begins with this:

1. People's threats are real, but so is God & His protection

1 - 3

Before the problem surfaces in song, the solution trumps it.

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?

Intimidation, brute force, attacks, instability and threats were almost routine for David.

Yet the first thing coming out in the lyrics of the song is God's ability to deflect the piercing attacks.

The **LORD** – the proper name for the one true God – is David's **LIGHT, SALVATION** and **STRONGHOLD**.

God EXPLAINED or MADE CLEAR or DECIPHERED, He RESCUED and He PROTECTED.

God stood out; He figured more prominently than did the attacks..

It is important to recognize that the threats did not stop. The attacks continued.

Though we have heard it often most of us have not accepted this fact. **God allows the attacks on us to continue and overcomes them by heightening His Personal Security over us.**

This leads us to conclude that **events or people that nudge us to increased God-dependency are seen to be of value - even if they cause us stress.**

In these pressure-cooker times God steps up to the plate. He comes through.

If we dig just a bit into some of the personal details of David's life what we find may be helpful.

When David calls God His LIGHT, SALVATION and STRONGHOLD ... He apparently is not talking of an experience where the clouds parted, the sun broke out, and the birds began to chirp sweet melodies.

Instead, David was a fugitive, running to for his life, trying to stay ahead of those who were hunting him like you would an animal for a kill.

With God as LIGHT, SALVATION and STRONGHOLD, David dealt with the negatives and positives while still in them, yet was able to honestly recognize God's genuine involvement and care.

His knees knocked, but he was sustained because God kept on getting him out of one jam after another.

It was by no means calmness, but protection in the middle of chaos.

God being his Light, Salvation and Stronghold did not mean the REMOVAL of the problem, but RESILIENCE while working through the problem.

His biggest problem – and ours - during times like this - FEAR.

Fear that maybe, just maybe, ... we are in over our heads so deep and in such a dilemma that NOT EVEN GOD CAN HANDLE THESE PEOPLE AND THE FORCE OF THEIR HATRED.

Fear is when we act as if God's hands are tied and God Himself is sweating bullets due to the advance of the evil actions of others.

No wonder we don't sleep.

No wonder we are afraid.

God is either on life-support, crippled up, or under full anesthetic and is unable to keep up on His promises.

David, even while he is sweating it out, literally running for his life, decides to somehow sing.

The ONE TRUE EXISTING GOD ...

- throws good light on the circumstances ... and they are not as bleak as imagined
- tweaks circumstances in such a way that we are rescued from our enemies desired aims
- does not extricate us from danger, but surround us in that danger and keeps their malicious paws and claws from ripping into our heart

David was developed IN and THROUGH those experiences so that he might one day be prepared for the responsibility that God would place upon Him.

Yes, there have been evil men and there will continue to be evil men.

But, contrary to what we at times conclude, these enemies of ours and God's one day **will stumble and fall.**

His confidence in God had risen to such a level that he could say,
**Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.**

Transition:

What changes have taken place in a person who is being threatened by others that he can have such a confidence?

Where does this optimism come from?

2. Without minimizing the intensity of other's hatred toward us, we must maximize the Lord's attractiveness 4 - 8

Read the next number of lines ...

They are not what we normally read about from people are being hunted.

- If we don't look for beauty, we will not find it

⁴One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall 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 meditate in His temple.

There was ONE THING ... ONE DRIVING DESIRE ... ONE REQUEST – To be with God.

The images that were locked in the song writer's mind would have been of the ugliness of hatred, the devilishness of bitterness, the piercing eyes of jealousy ... all the acid that eats away at one's being.

There was no beauty, no pleasantness, nothing attractive in these circumstances.

But instead of being haunted by that image, he instead chooses to gaze upon another "live portrait" ... that of God Himself.

Both are real, though one is far more attractive and immensely more powerful.

This is what he wanted his eyes to soak in; ... absorb.

He wanted to live in God's "house", His temple, where he could "see" God, be enthralled with His attractiveness and mull over His insightful and intelligent statements.

He wanted to have that experience where God('s) ...

- takes away his breath
- intelligence, brilliance, and perceptiveness delightfully overload the circuitry of His mind

His life is being hunted and what he desires most is to be with the Lord.

Get real! Be practical! Use your head! ... your very life is being threatened and all you desire is to be with Jesus! You are a nut case! ... a fanatic!

... and he would respond back to us: **Why on earth are you so singularly focused on earth's garbage when God has also given us the freedom to see His beauty?**

One is a depressing dead end; the other a refreshing picture of godly, gracious grandeur.

There is an unspoken rule:

What we gaze on, we begin to resemble.

If we constantly stare at death, we start to look like a corpse, act like a corpse, because we are not far from being a corpse.

But to lock our eyes on the One that is perfect in beauty likewise transforms us ... so that soon we begin to look like Him, act like Him and live like Him.

Watch people ... the same circumstances and yet such a difference between them. One has rancid pus of bitterness and hatred oozing from their infectedness; the other gushes with an exuberance and a smile.

The difference? ... that upon which they are focusing.

Why would one "waste" their time gazing upon the Lord when their very life was almost being extinguished?

Isn't this the classic case of a religious fanaticism? ... a denial of reality? ... and becoming "paced out on God"?

Go to the next lines of the lyrics.

⁵For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.

- Beauty mingled with power equals delightful security

This is a beauty pageant with a difference. This is not beauty and beauty alone, but **beauty mingled with power.**

This is the development of ties, of connectedness, or relatedness ... for precisely times like this.

This is not a pretty face and a pretty picture ... this is beauty blended with power ... the best of the best.

That is how our Lord is portrayed.

Since we have spent time with God, complimenting Him, thinking about what He has said, growing in appreciation and love of who He is ...

When we find ourselves being attacked by people who hate us ... we call on God for help ... and He doesn't have to pull out a family pictorial directory and look up our picture to see if belong to His family because its been such a long time since we last spent time with Him.

Rather, when trouble hits, we hardly have the words out from our lips and God is acting ... because we are so close to Him.

To those who treat God as God ought to be treated, He protects, He takes personal responsibility for them, He solidifies life,

⁶ Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.

- One good deed leads to another

If God blesses us ... then let us bless God.

If God does good to us ... then let us do good to God.

The result ... David's enemies have him surrounded, but they can't touch Him because God is protecting him.

He is not bowing to them, but above them.

It is these kind of experiences that cause him to acknowledge God with "**shouts of joy**".

That is why when he gathered for worship with the family he sang and made music to the Lord.

God was alive! ... working in his life ... because God was the one on whom he locked His eyes.

We may be neither shouting or singing because we are not looking at the Lord – we haven't seen the Lord's beauty or His power in our lives.

He is the God of our Fathers ... but not much the God of us.

We come here, all up on the hassles, troubles of society, the latest news, but we see little beauty ... no pageantry, no grandeur, because we haven't gazed upon the Lord.

... and if you haven't been looking at the Lord outside of here, it is going to very difficult for us to lead you into seeing Him in a few minutes on a Sunday morning.

What you gaze on, you will resemble.

That is why the children's song is not trite ... "Oh be careful little eyes what you see ..."

... a big, muscle-bound man named Daniel had been swindled by his own brother. He vowed that if he ever saw him again, he would break his neck.

A few months later, Daniel became a Christian. Even so, he couldn't forgive his brother. One day, the inevitable encounter took place on a busy avenue. This is how Daniel described what happened:

I saw him, but he didn't see me. I felt my fists clench and my face get hot. My initial impulse was to grab him around the throat and choke the life out of him. But as I looked into his face, my anger began to melt. For as I saw him, I saw the image of my father. I saw my father's eyes. I saw my father's look. I saw my father's expression. And as I saw my father in his face, my enemy once again became my brother.

The brother found himself wrapped in those big arms—but in a hug. The two stood in the middle of the river of people and wept. Daniel's words bear repeating:

"When I saw the image of my father in his face, my enemy became my brother."

David got to this point, probably not at this point, but he did get there.

The ability to see God our Father in the midst of all the trash ... is not at all our first response ... but it is not an impossible response.

- God creates in us what He desires

⁸When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You; "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."

God is not being brash or arrogant when He tells us to seek His face.

This is not a God who is so taken up with Himself that He cannot see beyond Himself.

He gives us this directive because this is where the action is. This is where life comes together.

This is the best that we can experience.

For us to seek His face is to get our lives together.

With realism, David doesn't hide the dirty laundry of life. It's there, but it's not the focal point.

We are not more "honest", more "authentic", more "real" if we walk around saying, "Look at the opposition I face and this is awful." ... and such is truly the case ... and we ignore the greater reality, but one we do not feel as acutely, that our Lord is beautiful and powerful.

That reality is just a real, but far more powerful and far reaching than are the reality of our troubles.

What we gaze on, we begin to resemble.

David stared at his Lord – unfading beauty, unchanging power ... and that resulted in a sweetness that allowed him to walk through the garbage of life and yet come out smelling like a rose.

God speaks to us. He tells us, "**Seek my face.**" He creates in us what He desires ... He gets us to go in the right direction and then asks us to follow through on His Spirit's nudging.

If we have not heard Him speak to us His words, "**Seek my face,**" we probably should ask why not?

We are not used to our Lord's kind of beauty. It is somewhat foreign to our nature ... That is why our Lord needs to "prime the pump" of our hearts first ... to get us going.

There is nothing more beautiful than our Lord.

Nothing.

But if we have never seen Him in His beauty, His power, the words will probably hardly excite us.

Transition:

That ONE REQUEST is big ... and in a sense the concluding lines of the lyrics of this God Tune wrap things up by explaining in real time and real circumstances what needs to take place so that we would find beauty at the strangest of times, when we are faced with the ugliness of sin.

KEY THOUGHT:

We often look for beauty only when faced with the ugliness of sin.

3. Radical behavioral change does not come automatically

9 – 14

Loving our enemies is about as easy as asking us to swallow some more cod-liver oil, or telling your parents that you would love to vacuum the rugs and wash the dishes and clean up the house.

David got the concept that the hatred of people can be used to lead him into God's rich love ... but he has a problem.

It is the problem of what he still feels, experiences ... as his enemies continue to exist and bug the daylights out of him.

This isn't over. He wakes up in the morning and his enemies are alive, real and in his face.

He grapples with it as he closes his song.

- this is such a different way to approach matters, so "un"-normal, that God has to stick with us through this because no one else will

9Do not hide Your face from me, Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation!

10For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the LORD will take me up.

David steps out into such new behavior, such new territory, that he knows he is out of his league.

He will not do it all right. He will make mistakes. He will sin.

Therefore, he prays that God would not abandon him as he walks through this process

Though he understands his severe limitations, he again chooses to focus instead on God's ability to do what is radically different, than to be in touch with his own feelings of mistrust.

A person writes ...

Several years ago one of my wife's friends took a missionary furlough with her husband and family after an unusually tiring stint of service. She had been looking forward to this time with great anticipation. For the first time she was going to have a place of her own, a new, large townhouse-styled apartment with a patio. She is very creative and made the patio the focus of her decoration.

After a few months some new neighbors moved in. The word to describe them would be "coarse." There was loud music day and night along with a constant flow of obscenities. They urinated in the front yard in broad daylight. They totally disrupted her peace. She could see nothing good in them.

She asked the Lord to help her be more loving, but all she got back [from her neighbors] was disgust and rejection. The crisis came when she returned home to discover that her neighbors' children had sprayed orange paint all over her beautiful patio—

the walls, the floors—everything! She was distraught and furious. She tried to pray but found herself crying out, "I cannot love them; I hate them!"

Knowing she had to deal with the sin in her heart, she began to converse with the Lord in her inner being, and a Scripture came to mind: "And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Colossians 3:14 NASB).

In her heart she questioned, "Lord, how do I put on love?" The only way she could picture it was like putting on a coat. So that is what she determined to do—she chose to wrap herself in the love of God!

As a result she began to experience a deeper life of Christ within her.

She made a list of what she would do if she really loved her exasperating neighbors, then did what she had listed. She baked cookies, she offered to baby-sit for free, she invited the mother over for coffee—and the most beautiful thing happened!

She began to know and understand them. She began to see that they were living under tremendous pressures. She began to love her "enemies." She did good to them. She lent to them without expecting anything back.

The day came when they moved—and she wept! An unnatural, unconventional love and captured her heart—a supernatural love—the love of Jesus.

- new behavior requires a rewriting of the textbook of life

11 Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a level path because of my foes.

This is so new, so different, so out of step with what we would do, that unless God teaches, unless God leads us by the hand, we would not walk this way.

This is not something we figure out for ourselves. It is so un-human that it takes God's Word and Spirit.

- If we don't deal with our enemies, who does?

12 Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, For false witnesses have risen against me, And such as breathe out violence.

We cannot do everything ... and if we make the choice to seek God's face ... then who takes care of those who are gunning for us?

Who handles the slander we face?

Who keeps us calm when threatened?

Therefore, without really getting any answers or specifics as to what God is planning to do, David still feels the heat of their anger and he reminds God that he definitely needs His help.

Things are not at all settled.

Out of one side of his mouth he is "slightly" worried. Then he seems to say, "O Lord, I believe! Help me in my unbelief!"

13 I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.

- everything that is true and good is not obvious

Again, so different is this kind of behavior, that David now understands much more of what we would call FAITH in God and His strange ways.

But he writes, " ... **unless I had believed that I would see ...** "

We can have faith in humanity ... and we will be disappointed ...
or we can have faith in God ...and we will ALSO BE
DISAPPOINTED.

Yet David again defers to the future.

Life's scores are not all settled today.

The gun has not gone off and the game is not over.

The clock is still ticking.

... and that is why he ends his lyrics with these words ...

**14 Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart
take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.**

- waiting on the Lord is not a cope-out; but sweating reality

- Threats ... the Lord ...
- Hatred ... God's consistent care
- Ugliness ... God's unparalleled beauty
- Hunted ... Protected
- Opposition ... support
- Lies ... truth
- Violence ... Safety
- Enemies ... Sheltered by God Himself

It wasn't a nice, organized and clean. It was a muddled-up mess.
And that is why David wrote this song.

Wait for what? ... more hassle?

Just wait ... let God work things out.

A person noted the following while working in Saudi Arabia ...
that whenever I need something quick, I'm told, "Burka, inshallah"
is the same as "manyana", except it doesn't carry the same
degree of urgency."

**Life is not tidy ... but it can still end up on its feet (like a cat)
because of God.**

Its true ... **we often look for beauty only when faced with the
ugliness of sin.**

Trusting in God is no cop-out; it is only sane way to live.

When you are not the strongest, smartest, sharpest, or biggest
person ... and life is unfair and heated ... it is good to know that

**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?**