

Bringing the Inside Out

In a recent Bible class, I was privileged to study **Psalm 27**. I guess it goes without saying that this is a wonderful psalm (as if I would say any of them were not so). But I was really moved by it. I don't have room to include the psalm in this article, so you'll want to read this with your Bible open to **Psalm 27**.

This psalm has three distinct sections. Section 1 is **vss. 1-6**, in which David refers to God in the third person. He is talking about God. Section 2 is **vss. 7-12**, in which David refers to God in the second person. He is actually praying to God. Section 3 is **vss. 13-14**, in which David wraps up the psalm with a powerful exhortation.

The first section is a wonderful picture of faith. David is without fear because he knows Jehovah is his light, his salvation, his stronghold. His enemies will stumble and fall. The Lord will allow him to dwell in His House. Therefore, he is going to praise and worship God.

If the psalm were just made up of this section, what would you think of David's spiritual condition? If you are having trouble making that assessment, read **Psalm 23**. It is very similar. What do you think of David's spiritual condition when he wrote that psalm? We would likely view David as on a spiritual high. He has great confidence and faith. Things are going very well for him, and he is very connected to God.

But what if **Psalm 27** were just made up of the second section (**vss. 7-12**), what would you think of David's spiritual condition? If you are having trouble making that assessment, read **Psalm 6**. It is very similar. What do you think of David's spiritual condition when he wrote that psalm?

We would likely see a man struggling. He fears that God will abandon him. He remembers that God has reason to be angry with him. He is, after all, a sinner. He is convinced that God is his salvation, but there is some fear that God will hide His face from Him. He knows he has enemies, and he fears being given over to their will. So he is begging for God's guidance. He clearly knows God's promises, but seems to be struggling with hanging on to them at a gut level.

What's the deal? How can both of these sections be in the same psalm? Is this multiple-personality disorder? No. We get to see a wonderful and spiritually intimate picture of David's relationship with God. We get to see David outside and in.

In the first section, we see the public confidence. This is David "at church," if you will. This is David in public settings of worship. This is what David expresses on the outside. It is confident. It is praise-filled. It is worshipful. It is where we all want to be (and sometimes are). But in the second section, we see the insides. We see his private communion with God. We see him in his prayer closet. We see the vulnerability. We see the fears. We see the struggles. Do not misunderstand. This is not hypocrisy. Rather, this is reality. The public praise and worship is based on those quiet moments of struggle and doubt that are taken to God allowing the faith to win out in the struggle.

This beautiful contrast highlights a problem many of us have. Too often, all we see in others is the outside. We come to our assemblies and see everyone dressed up in their best. We see the smiles. We watch the singing and the bowed heads in prayer. We see people taking notes during a sermon. We see the faith and confidence. And we are envious because we don't always feel like that on our insides. Rather, the second section is all too real for us. Then, instead of understanding that everyone has that second section inside of them, we think we must not be doing this Christianity thing right. We either then go out of our way to try to prove to others that we really are good Christians or we give up on it entirely.

The first option causes us all kinds of heartache and turmoil. We focus so much on ourselves that we can't even accept the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God. Further, we cease to extend God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness to others who need it because we need to prove how bad they are to make ourselves feel better. The second option leads to despair and costs us our soul.

But notice what David has done. David has brought the inside out. He has let us see not only his outsides, but also his insides. Perhaps we would do well to follow his example. Maybe we need to bring the insides out a little more. Perhaps we need to let others see the doubts and struggles. Perhaps we need to be open about those moments when we just aren't so sure that God is going to take care of us. Perhaps we need to express those moments when we just aren't sure that God's way is going to work in our lives, our homes, our work. Perhaps it is by expressing those moments that we can gain the strength to get back to faith.

Then there is the final exhortation. Look at different translations of **vs. 13** and you'll see that there is a struggle with what to do with this verse. Some translations add in an italicized phrase to try to explain it. Others remove a word from the translation because it confuses them. Perhaps a better rendering of the verse would be: "If I had not believed that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living..." The ellipsis (...) is on purpose. It appears that David started a sentence and then didn't finish it. The prospect and consequences of not believing he would see the goodness of the Lord were so horrendous he couldn't even write them down. It was this faith that got him through the struggle. It was this reminder that pushed him to continue seeking God's face even when he feared God might turn away.

So he concludes with a powerful exhortation: "Wait for the LORD!" David is not saying be patient. He is saying be expectant. Even in those dark moments, expect God to pull through. He is working on His timetable, not yours. He will deliver when the time is right. He will carry you through. Expect the Lord to be with you and live based on that expectation. The prospect of not living with that expectation is simply too awful to write.

Let us learn to follow David's example here. Let us learn to bring the insides out. Let us learn to hang on to our faith through the entire mess. Let us learn to be expectant and wait for the Lord.

--Edwin L. Crozier