



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 27

Bishop Youssef



# Introduction

- The title is *A Psalm of David*
- And according to the Septuagint translation the title states, *Of David himself, before he was anointed*
- David had received the royal anointment three times
- In Bethlehem from the hand of Samuel, in the house of his father Jesse when he was young; 1 Samuel 16:13
- At Hebron after the death of Saul, by the men of Judah, 2 Samuel 2:4
- And by the elders of Israel, at Hebron, when he was acknowledged king over all the tribes; 2 Samuel 5:3

# Introduction



- It is not known at which of these anointings the Psalm was written, or whether before any of them
- Most likely it was not written before his first anointing, but before the second time, while he was yet an exile because of Saul's persecution
- However, as with many of David's psalms, it is impossible to confidently state which period of his life it comes from
- Some commentators say that it is a Psalm belonging to the captivity



# Introduction

- And others say it was written by David after he had been in danger of losing his life by the hand of a Philistine, and must have perished had he not been rescued by Abishai, 2 Samuel 21:17
- Others say it was written at the time of Absalom's rebellion
- It speaks of trouble from enemies, adversaries, false witnesses, and violent men, but this was true of many periods of King David's life



# Introduction

## Psalm Outline

- David's Sure Confidence in God 27:1-3
- David's Desire for God's Presence and His Blessings 27:4-6
- A Prayer 27:7-13
- David Exhorts Others to Trust in God 27:14

# David's Sure Confidence in God

## 27:1-3



- God is to David the source of light; He guides and leads him
- Like many psalms, King David wrote this from a time of trouble
- Yet it is a song of confidence and triumph: because David was not in *darkness* or *ultimate peril* because *the LORD* was his *light* and *salvation*
- Darkness is the symbol of distress, trouble, perplexity, and sorrow
- Light is the symbol of the opposite of these
- God provided him such light that these troubles disappeared, and his way was bright and happy

# David's Sure Confidence in God

## 27:1-3



- It is the light of redemption in contrast to the darkness of condemnation (Psalms 18:28,36:9,43:3; Isaiah 60:1,20; Micah 7:8; John 8:12,12:46; 1 John 1:5)
- We ought not to fear the powers of darkness for the Lord, our light, destroys them
- *My salvation*, He probably meant this as rescue both in the immediate and the ultimate senses
- God had rescued him time and again, and would do so into eternity
- David was a skilled, experienced warrior and must have been a man of impressive physical strength

# David's Sure Confidence in God

## 27:1-3



- Nevertheless, he looked to the *LORD* as the *strength* of his *life*
- Because God was his *light*, his *salvation*, and his *strength*, there was really no reason to *fear* or *be afraid*
- “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” Romans 8:31
- The purpose of repetition is to make his point
- St. Augustine says, “The Lord will give me both knowledge of Himself, and salvation: who shall take me from Him? “The Lord is the Protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?” The Lord will repel all the assaults and snares of mine enemy: of no man shall I be afraid.”



# David's Sure Confidence in God

## 27:1-3



- Perhaps, David here in verse 2 remembered how God had proven Himself reliable in the past
- There were times when *the wicked* or even *an army* came against him, yet God still showed that He was David's *light*, his *salvation*, and his *strength*
- Or, it may be a confident anticipation of the shame of his enemies
- *To eat up my flesh*, When his enemies wished to devour him at once, to destroy his life, to strip him of his substance, the Lord put stumbling blocks in their way and hindered them from executing their plans

# David's Sure Confidence in God

## 27:1-3



- This was literally true in the case of our Lord in Gethsemane
- When the enemies of our Lord, as soon as He had said, "*I am He,*", went backward and fell to the ground, John 18:6
- Some scholars see a far deeper mystery in the verse, "*When the wicked.*"—thus speaks the Immaculate Lamb, Whose Flesh is meat indeed, and Whose Blood is drink indeed—"*came to eat up My Flesh* at the altar, came unworthily, *they stumbled and fell*
- This was the base of their iniquities
- David's *heart* would not tremble, He would not feel that there was anything of which to be afraid

# David's Sure Confidence in God

## 27:1-3



- God had shown Himself superior to the power of hostile armies
- David is so confident of the Almighty's protection, that even if he is alone and surrounded by an *army*, his *heart shall not fear*
- He is in the hand of God; and while in that hand, he is safe
- Believers do not need to be afraid, though there is a war within them between the flesh and spirit, Galatians 5:17
- And though are fighting with Satan and his principalities and powers; but in the meantime, they may be confident of victory, and they are more than victorious, through Christ who has loved them

# David's Sure Confidence in God

## 27:1-3



- St. Augustine says, “The Emperor is protected by his guards, and is safe; mortal is shielded by mortal, and feels secure; the Immortal defends a mortal, and do you dare to tremble?”
- When St. Antony, after one of those strange physical assaults of the enemy by which the Divine love permitted him to go through, remained victorious, but through very exhaustion prostrate on the ground, he chanted, “*Though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him.*”



# David's Desire for God's Presence and His Blessings 27:4-6

- The experience of the goodness and greatness of God made David think about how wonderful it is to seek Him and to experience His presence
- To him the service of God upon earth was not tiring, nor did he anticipate that he would ever become weary of praising God
- David knew there was *beauty* in the nature and presence of God, beauty that could be perceived by the seeking eye of faith
- He could think of no greater occupation than to fill his mind and heart with the goodness and greatness of God



# David's Desire for God's Presence and His Blessings 27:4-6

- *And to inquire in His temple*, In God's presence, David wished to go from contemplation to inquiry
- He wanted to know more of God and more of His ways
- *All the days of my life*, I will never cease
- *"Men always ought to pray, and not to lose heart."* Luke 18:1
- It must be spiritual, *that I may dwell in the house of the Lord*, all the days of our present life, struggling, in the Church Militant; and after that, for ever and ever, gloriously, in the Church Triumphant
- How can a man be prepared for an eternal life who finds the worship of God on earth boring?



# David's Desire for God's Presence and His Blessings 27:4-6

- This verse gives a good reason for David's desire to  *dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life*
- David knew that there was special blessing and protection for the one who earnestly seeks God
- It wasn't a promise to prevent all trouble, but to give security and blessing even in the midst of it
- *His tabernacle*, Some think it may refer to the most holy place in the tabernacle, called the secret place, Ezekiel 7:22; typical of Christ, the hiding place of His people, in whom their life is hid, and where it is safe and secure



# David's Desire for God's Presence and His Blessings 27:4-6

- According to St. Augustine, the tabernacle or the pavilion of the Lord refers to His incarnation, as He emptied Himself and hid His Deity, to complete the salvation work by the cross, to let us hide in Him from the arrows of the enemy, and the reproach of sin
- “The pavilion of Christ in which He hides me, is His body resurrected from death, in which, by dwelling in it, I am protected against my corrupt nature; as it is written: “On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down” (Amos 9:11).” (St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers)





# David's Desire for God's Presence and His Blessings 27:4-6

- *He shall set me high upon a rock*, Where he would be above and out of the reach of his enemies
- The Rock upon which the Lord sets me high is the living faith in Him, which is the foundation of the church
- Christ comparable to a rock, *for its height*, He is higher than the kings of the earth, than the angels in heaven, than the heavens themselves
- And *for shelter and safety*, He is a strong tower, a place of defense, and rock of refuge
- And *for firmness, solidity, and strength*, He was able to bear the whole weight of every believer laid upon Him



# David's Desire for God's Presence and His Blessings 27:4-6

- And He is more immovable than rocks and mountains; so that such who are set up upon Him are in the most safe and secure state imaginable
- *And now my head shall be lifted up*, In affliction a person bows down his head and in prosperity he lifts it up
- This verse expresses the confident expectation that he would be enabled to triumph over all his enemies, and as the result of this, he will offer sacrifices of praise to his great Deliverer
- He anticipates not protection only but triumphant victory
- God will complete His work



# David's Desire for God's Presence and His Blessings 27:4-6

- David's life was filled with celebration and gratitude for all what God had done
- He would *sing praises to the LORD* who blessed him with His presence and rescued him so often
- Some scholars say that *my head shall be lifted up*, is by freeing our hearts from earthly affections; by bestowing on us Divine knowledge; by kindling in us the love of heavenly things
- Some scholars take *my Head* in the sense of Him Who is our only and our True Head, Jesus Christ



# David's Desire for God's Presence and His Blessings 27:4-6

- *Lifted up*, He was lifted up on the Cross, as well as to the Throne, and in that sense also may we take it,—that when we are suffering from our *enemies*, our Head makes those sufferings His own
- St. Augustine remind us that, our Head being already there, we, His members, ought to be with Him now in thought and desire, as hereafter in joyful reality



# A Prayer 27:7-13

- One might think that when trouble came there was no struggle, either with self or God
- Yet David showed us that he who sought God with such passion, sometimes felt that God did not hear him immediately
- He had had assurance of the divine help and he had found God ready to help him
- He did not doubt but that He would help him; yet all this did not prevent his calling upon Him for the support which he needed, but rather motivated him to do it
- *Have mercy also upon me*, Mercy is the hope of sinners and the shelter and safety of believers



# A Prayer 27:7-13

- God invited David to seek Him, *Seek My face*; yet there was a sense in which David felt that God was hiding from him, *Do not hide Your face from me*
- *My heart said to You*, Because the heart speaks alone to God
- And as the heart is the instrument and the tongue which speaks to God; thus, as men understand only what the tongue says, so God hears only that which the heart speaks, and pays no attention to that which the tongue says
- So, if the heart does not speak, though the man may say the same thing a hundred of times, but so far as God is concerned, that person does not speak one word



# A Prayer 27:7-13

- David, in spite of his disappointment, sought God more diligently and desperately
- David used God's past *help* as a reason to ask and expect *future* help
- It would be useless for David to *seek God's face*, if God should determine to *hide his face* from him
- David felt from time to time as if God's face was hidden from him, as we see in other psalms (Psalm 10:1, 13:1, 69:17, etc.)
- In most instances, probably, God sends the feeling as a rebuke, that the heart may turn with more sincerity to him



# A Prayer 27:7-13

- St. Augustine says, “Hiding His face because of our sins does not mean forsaking us in anger; for He may hide His face from your sins, but He would never hide His face from you as a person.”
- God’s face may be hidden for some causes besides that of displeasure
- It may be in pure love; it may be for our own protection; it may be only that we may seek more earnestly and find more gloriously
- God never leaves man, unless man first leaves Him
- Three times the term of, *the face of God*, is repeated; thus, they conclude the doctrine of the Holy Trinity





# A Prayer 27:7-13

- David knew that the love and care of God could go beyond even the closest human bonds
- David probably did not expect his parents to *forsake* him; yet even if they did, God would not
- The explanation of St. Augustine, is that by the father, the devil, by the mother, corrupt human nature, is signified; both of whom forsake us when we earnestly and with purpose of heart turn to God
- Others, see in this verse the complaint of our Lord of His rejection by His father, the Jewish nation, and by His mother, the Synagogue, who “*shouted saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him*”, Luke 23:21



# A Prayer 27:7-13

- *Teach me Your way, O LORD*, This was a simple prayer for a life of true discipleship
- David didn't want to live *his* way, but the LORD's *way*
- And who is the way? "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*", John 14:6
- We have to strive after Him
- *Teach me*, or, as others have interpreted it, *Enlighten me*
- In Him and by Him Who is the Light as well as the Way
- *Your way*, As the path of truth is to those that understand and find knowledge



# A Prayer 27:7-13

- As we read in Isaiah 35:8, *“A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray.”*
- And as we read in Proverbs 8:9, *“they are all plain to him who understands, and right to those who finds knowledge.”*
- David's enemies are at hand to swallow him up, so he is asking God's guidance
- St. Augustine says, *“And direct me in the right way of its straits. For it is not enough to begin, since enemies cease not until the end is attained.”*



# A Prayer 27:7-13

- David had many *adversaries, false witnesses* against him, and violent men opposing him
- In asking for a *smooth path*, he wasn't asking for an easy life but for a stable and secure place to stand against the storms of this life
- It's as if in David's mind, those enemies are on either side of the path waiting to get him
- And so, David asks that the Lord would keep him on that path and not let him get off that safe path
- His enemies are waiting to deceive him, and lead him out of the way, as false teachers do



# A Prayer 27:7-13

- And come upon him unexpectedly, and take every advantage against him, as Satan does
- David's seeking after God, and his knowledge of the Lord, led him to this triumphant statement in verse 13
- He refers to the state of mind because of the efforts of his enemies to destroy him, as mentioned in (Psalm 27:12)
- They were so numerous, mighty, and terrifying, that he says his only support was his faith in God
- He would have given up *lost heart*, but he knew that the good God would find a way to show His goodness



# A Prayer 27:7-13

- By faith, David saved himself from the despair which threatened to seize upon him
- He assured himself that he would experience *the goodness of the Lord* in some merciful intervention and deliverance
- Some think that David meant *the life to come* when he wrote of *the land of the living*
- St. Gregory says, “I do not believe that the prophet calls this earth “the land of the living”, on account of that it only produces mortal things; and all what come out of it will eventually dissolve. But, by “the land of the living” he meant that land, not approached by death, nor on which the wicked tread, or evil has a place.”

# David Exhorts Others to Trust in God 27:14



- Some think that this is an exhortation, not to others, but to himself (Psalm 62:5,42:5,11,43:5)
- His stronger self exhorts his weaker self not to despair, but to wait upon God
- Others think that David spoke to all of us saying that from his experience he can encourage us to seek after God *Wait on the LORD* and to take courage in Him *be of good courage*
- *Wait ... Wait* This particular word for waiting means a tense or eager and patient anticipation of the Lord
- And this is the sum of all the instruction in the psalm

# David Exhorts Others to Trust in God 27:14



- The lesson is to encourage and persuade others, from the experience of the psalmist, to trust in the Lord
- To rely upon Him; to come to Him in trouble and danger; and to wait for His intervention when all other resources fail
- Across the centuries David spoke to us, telling us to be confident that there is strength in the LORD for those who seek Him and trust Him
- This profound promise is for us
- The idea behind *wait...on the LORD* is not a passive sitting around until the LORD does something



# David Exhorts Others to Trust in God 27:14



- Yes, God gives us strength; but we don't expect it to come as if He were pouring it into us as we sit passively
- He brings it to us as we seek Him, and rely on Him, instead of relying on our own strength
- You cannot be unsuccessful; *fear not*
- *Wait, I say, on the Lord*, wait for His help in doing His will
- St. Athanasius says, "If your enemies violently attack you and become a crowd like soldiers camped against you, looking down on you as through you were not anointed—and for this reason they want to fight—do not cower in fear, but sing Psalm 27."

# Discussion



- What are some of the “right/appropriate fears” that David is facing in Psalm 27?
- To what extent were those fears threatening David?
- How does David respond in the opening verses of Psalm 27? What do his responses say about the condition/orientation of his heart?
- What is surprising about David’s words in verses 4-6? What might you have expected him to ask for?



# Discussion

- What is David asking for and seeking after? What do these things represent? How does God promise to satisfy David's heart? What practical effect does it seem to have on David in verse 6?
- What are some of the things that David is pleading for in verses 7-12?
- Based upon God's character and promises, what responses can David expect for each of his petitions?



# Discussion

- For Christians, how do we see the face of God (2 Cor. 4:6)? What promises in the New Testament assure us that God will answer the petitions of verses 7-12?
- According to verse 13, does David really expect to gain literal victory and physical deliverance every time he prays? What is he saying in this verse?
- How would you describe David's idea of waiting in verse 14? Is it active or passive? Why? What is David grounding his exhortation on (*Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart*)?