

August 26, 2018    In God We Trust Pt. 2    Psalm 27:3-4

This is not meant as a commercial. But I probably do not listen to UCB, the Christian radio station as much as I should. Sunday morning I start my day with their programme, Great Hymns Of The Faith. The format for that broadcast is very simple. They play recordings, back to back to back, of hymns and choruses that are recognized by the majority of the churches. That radio programme tends to set my mood, and helps me focus for what is going to unfold on Sunday morning. It helps me prepare my own mind and soul for worship.

But what I wanted to say about UCB is this: the station has a feature that I do enjoy when I stumble upon it. The announcer simply reads a verse from the Bible, without comment or commentary, and then describes it in these words. Words of encouragement. Much of Psalm 27 falls into that category. The words we find here encourage us, especially when storms have gathered or we are being tried by darkness and difficulty.

David writes, "Though an army besiege me, I will not fear." It was important to me to not exaggerate the meaning of being under siege, so I did what I often do in such circumstances. I got out my Oxford Dictionary and looked the word up that we might be clear in our understanding. Here is what the Oxford says about siege. "Operations of encamped, attacking forces to take, or compel the surrender of a fortified place." In military terms this is serious stuff. If a castle is

besieged, or a walled city, it is surrounded. It is cut off from the rest of the world, resupply or relief. The king or the person in charge understands one thing very clearly. He is alone.

The alternatives are clear. Usually, surrender, or die. If not at the hands of the enemy then by slow but steady starvation and thirst. The whole idea of the siege is to make living conditions so difficult within the fortress, that one will give up, surrender. Accept defeat and the terms of the attacking force. David writes in the words of this 3<sup>rd</sup> verse....even then, "I will not fear." It is not that David is a genius. And it is not that he has some secret means of escape...a plan that he can hatch, a superior strategy that he can command. It is very simply that he knows and believes the living God. He believes in the God who works miracles. He believes in the God who saves people, even if...hear this...even if they die. His testimony is that finding ourselves in an impossible, untenable situation, is not the end. Faith is being aware that God is present. David is saying no matter what happens, I will not give in to fear. Even when all is lost, I am not lost. As they say on UCB..."words of encouragement and hope."

And David is so certain of that reality he repeats the message in different words. "Though war break out against me, even then will I be confident." The KJV says it this way and in fewer words: "though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." Close to 50 years ago there was a gospel quartet called The Imperials, and they recorded a song whose chorus

still rings in the back of my mind though I must admit I have not heard the song for a long, long time. “I’ve got confidence, God is going to see me through...”

One of the lessons that comes from an outbreak of war is that nations involved are plunged into uncertainty. In this age with instant communications and the ability of the media to take us there, live at five, the whole world is touched by uncertainty in a time of war. If war breaks out the stock market falls. If war breaks out the cost of oil, gasoline and everything related to those products become more expensive and shortages are not out of the question. War breeds uncertainty. Faced by war a king understands, especially in the ancient world, there are only 2 alternatives...win or lose. A king could lose his power, his wealth, his influence and of course his life. Because it was expected he would lead his troops and be present on the front lines. David says, “I will be confident.” And he dares to say that, he dares to have the hope of victory, because he expects God to show up in the midst of the battle. God called him to be king. He anticipates the will of God to see him and Israel through it all. It is all about his faith in the God who created and called and saves.

One commentator invokes the night of the arrest of Jesus at this point. He reminds us that when Jesus was arrested he was faced by soldiers, members of the Rabbinical Council of Jerusalem, and superior numbers. Jesus confidence in that hour had to do with HIS certainty that the most important thing

HE could do was to submit HIMSELF to the cross in order to save all of those who would come to know and revere HIS name. Words of encouragement and hope. Confidence in God. In God we trust.

In verse 4 of Psalm 27 we read this: “One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: 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 seek HIM in HIS temple.” We know that when David wrote these words there was no “Temple” in Jerusalem. David wanted to build the Temple but he never got to do it. In David’s time God was worshipped in a large tent. A temporary shelter. David would have made a good Presbyterian. The one thing he wanted as the 4<sup>th</sup> verse unfolds, was the worship experience of being there.

It turns out there is something very special about people who really only want one thing. They tend to get it. And they tend to get it not because they are better than everyone else, but because of two simple realities. They have given voice to the priority of their life. And secondly, having given voice to that priority, having put it into words, they have a greater ability to act in such a way as to actively seek the “one thing they want.”

When I did my doctorate, it was on church growth. I wanted to understand how it is that some churches grow, while others, struggle, wither and even die. Even as a young man I observed that churches I served grew and prospered. And I had

no idea why that was so. I can still remember the day I read Peter Wagner's book (he was my lead professor at Fuller) *Your Church Can Grow*. He said it took two things to cause the church to grow. 1) the minister had to want it and be willing to pay the price. 2) the people in the congregation had to want it and be willing to pay the price. And the price paid by the minister is always different from the price paid by the people. I remember saying to myself, it can't be that easy. And then I said to myself, that could be hard. In both cases it has to do with faith in God, faith in Jesus, faith in the Holy Spirit, and making doing HIS will, God's will the priority of your life. Being of one mind. "One thing I ask of the Lord. This is what I seek. To dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Being God's servant. Being with God's people. In sport they talk about keeping your eye on the ball. The hardest thing in baseball is to see the ball, and then hit it. The hardest thing in football is to see the ball and then catch it and carry it. The hardest thing in soccer is to see the ball, and control it with your feet. Focus. Focus. Focus.

The thread that runs all the way through Psalm 27 is this one. Regardless of your circumstances and regardless of mine....that we might always remember God is faithful. We are not called to get things right all the time. We are called to remember God, to worship HIM and serve HIM. And if we do that fear exits the picture. If we remember we are Jesus' people, and therefore safe, the rest of the details of living tend to fall into place...whether it's a sunny day, a cold day, a

beautiful day, or a hard day. In God we trust. This one thing I ask of the Lord.

Let us pray;

Lord Jesus when we are filled with joy such that we cannot contain it, help us to find ourselves on our knees at the foot of the cross. And Lord when it is a ho..hummm day and nothing of great importance seems to be happening, help us to find ourselves on our knees at the foot of YOUR cross. And on days when we are broken and the world seems to be dissolving around us, open our eyes that we might seek your face, at the foot of the cross. And on all days give us a passion to worship you. In Jesus name we ask this. Amen