

Confidence Psalm 27

Confidence Introduction

- The best children’s literature is not only written for children.
- Fairy tales can be full of danger and drama and life and death struggles – like the best literature.
- Only then does, “and they all lived happily ever after” take on its full meaning.

- Superheroes are continuously saving the world from imminent destruction.
- In Calvin and Hobbes (which used to be my personal favorite comic) there are always monsters under the bed, aliens or “Deranged Killer Monster Snow Goons” ready to attack.
- It’s the drama that makes them so enjoyable.

A Nauseous Nocturne – by Bill Watterson

*From the darkness, by the closet
Comes a noise, much like a faucet
Makes: a madd'ning drip-drip-dripping sound.
It seems some ill-proportioned beast,
Anticipating me deceased,
Is drooling poison puddles on the ground.*

*This disgusting aberration
Of nature needs no motivation
To devour helpless children in their beds.
Relishing despairing moans,
It chews kids up and sucks their bones,
And dissolves inside its mouth their li'l heads!*

- Consider the opposite – a purely happy, uneventful story:
 - Boy meets girl.
 - They fall in love.
 - They live happily ever after.
- Seriously, what’s that for a story?

- Here is another version:
 - Boy meets girl; they fall in love.
 - Girl has second thoughts and leaves him.
 - She ends up with a real loser.
 - Boy goes off to war and nearly dies.
 - Girl comes to her senses and writes boy, not knowing he is in the hospital and clinging to life by a mere thread.
 - (To be continued ...)

- Part 2:
 - Boy, now strengthened by hope, recovers from his wounds.
 - He returns home, finds girl, they get married, and now they live happily ever after.
- Now that's a story!
- It's the drama, the danger, the heartbreak, the suffering that makes the story worth telling.
- It is the possibility – the absolute likelihood – of things turning out badly that makes the happy ending truly happy.
- Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel came from Poland to New York to escape the Holocaust.
- In the 1960s he supported the Civil Rights Movement and marched at Selma with Martin Luther King.
 - *The man who has not suffered, what can he possibly know, anyway?*
 - *Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907 – 1972)*
- In Psalm 27 David expresses confidence.
- This is not a self-confidence or silly, superficial fantasy.
- It is confidence based on far-reaching, deep-seated trust in the Lord.
- It is the possibility – the absolute likelihood – of things turning out tragically that make his trust so meaningful.

Confidence in God Psalm 27:1-3

- The Lord is my light – In the New Testament, Jesus frequently ascribes attributes to himself that in the Old Testament point directly to God.
- John 8:12 ... *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
- salvation – *yeshua* – this term is related to the Hebrew name of Jesus.
- Saying "my Jesus" and "my salvation" are in fact saying very similar things.
- fear – *yirah* – The same word is used to describe the fear of God as well as the fear of man, monsters or any terrible circumstance.
- We might say that if we have a healthy fear of the Lord, there is no need to fear anything else.
 - *According to the Bible the principle religious virtue is yirah. What is the nature of yirah? The word has two meanings, fear and awe ... Job, who said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," was not motivated in his piety by fear but rather by awe, by the realization of the grandeur of His eternal love.*
 - *Awe, unlike fear, does not make us shrink from the awe-inspiring object, but, on the contrary, draws us near to it. This is why awe is comparable to both love and joy.*
 - *In a sense, awe is the antithesis of fear. To feel "The Lord is my light and my salvation" is to feel "Whom shall I fear?"*
 - *Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907 – 1972)*

- It doesn't matter to David if there are evildoers, adversaries, armies encamped against him or monsters under the bed.
- He knows God and is in awe of him.
- This kind of fear has a way of surpassing everything else.

Desire for God Psalm 27:4-6

- The temple or tent (tabernacle) was the visible sign of God's presence among his people.
- The longing David expresses is to be in the very presence of God and never have to leave.
- C.S. Lewis referred to these sentiments as an "appetite for God" – a fitting description.
- With David this is a physical, tangible longing.
- God's presence is a place of safety, a place of comfort in a world that is awfully full of trouble.
- 24:6 sacrifices with shouts of joy ... sing ... make melody
- Have you ever thought of sacrifice as a joyful thing?
- Far from the somber fulfillment of duty, David sees it as a chance for wonderful celebration.
- On that high rock of absolute safety, God deserves praise.

Prayer to God Psalm 27:7-12

- This section gives us a change of mood.
- God's presence is no longer enough.
- He wants the very face of God.
- You can almost hear the desperation as he knows he is absolutely dependent upon the Lord.
- Whatever the actual circumstances, human help is not going to be sufficient.
- It is unreliable and lacking at best when compared to confidence in God.
- God's faithfulness is more to be counted on than the love of a father or mother.
 - *The extravagance of this declaration of trust in God, perhaps the most extreme in the whole Bible, is breathtaking and perhaps even disturbing ...*
 - *... In the best of circumstance, the most unconditional, unstinting love and care we experience are from a mother and father ...*
 - *... We can imagine, the psalmist says, circumstances in which even that love might fail, but God will be both father and mother to him in the most dire straits.*
 - *Robert Alter, professor of Hebrew and comparative literature, UC Berkeley*

More Confidence Psalm 27:13-14

- The psalm began with confidence and it returns to confidence again.
- The difficulties are real, the enemies are strong, the situation may be desperate.
- Still, David's confidence is deliberate and unshaken.

- It is the absolute likelihood of defeat that makes this kind of confidence so necessary.
- This kind of trust can only be developed in struggles and suffering and the very real opportunity for failure.
- Be strong and let your heart take courage
- These verbs occur together in their command form 12 times in the Old Testament.
- Four of those times are in Joshua 1 – just before the Israelites made their entrance into the land.
- Joshua 1:6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.
- 7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you ...
- 9 *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.*
- 18 ... Only be strong and courageous.

Confidence Conclusions

- At the beginning we read a poem from the comic strip Calvin and Hobbes.
- It was nighttime and Calvin was feeling the very real threat of a monster.
- Here is how the poem ends.

A Nauseous Nocturne – by Bill Watterson

*As speedily my end approaches,
I bid a final "buenas noches"
To my best friend here in all the world.
Gently snoring, whiskers seeming
To sniff at smells (he must be dreaming),
He lies snuggled in the blankets, curled.*

*HEY! WAKE UP, YOU STUPID CRETIN!
YOU GONNA SLEEP WHILE I GET EATEN?!
(Suddenly the monster knows I'm not alone!)
There's an animal in bed with me!
An awful beast he did not see!
The monster never would've come if he had known!*

*The monster, in his consternation,
Demonstrates defenestration,
And runs and runs and runs and runs away.
Rid of the pest,
I now can rest,
Thanks to my best friend, who saved the day.*

- Calvin's monster was totally imaginary, but the drama he faced is exactly the kind of thing that is real.
- Any confidence we have in ourselves or others is bound to eventually be misplaced.
- We have to be filled with an awe of God – one that makes us long to be in his presence – and long to seek his face.
- The bottom line is that he alone in all the universe can be trusted.
 - ... *In a sense, awe is the antithesis of fear. To feel "The Lord is my light and my salvation" is to feel "Whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 27:1)*
 - *Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907 – 1972)*
- In the moment, we may not enjoy danger, drama, the real possibility – and absolute likelihood – of defeat.
- In the end, it turns out to be necessary to develop the kind of trust that this psalm expresses.
- We serve a God who, after the epically tragic fall of the human race, stepped into the story to save us.
- We serve a risen Savior who knows better than we do what it means to struggle and suffer and die.
- The Lord is more reliable than any stuffed tiger and far more powerful than the biggest monster.
- And in the end, you can be confident that your life is going to be a story worth hearing.
- *Be strong, and let your heart take courage.*