



STUDENT

Image:YouTube

**Psalm 27:1, 4-9**

1 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?

4 One thing I asked of the Lord,  
that will I seek after:

to live in the house of the Lord

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all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the Lord,  
and to inquire in his temple.

5 For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble;

he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;

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he will set me high on a rock.

6 Now my head is lifted up  
above my enemies all around me,  
and I will offer in his tent  
sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,  
be gracious to me and answer me!

8 “Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!”  
Your face, Lord, do I seek.

9 Do not hide your face from me.  
Do not turn your servant away in anger,  
you who have been my help.  
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,  
O God of my salvation!

### **Background**

We continue with our journey through the Psalms this week. It is no accident that this psalm has been turned into songs, meditations and even tee-shirts. This psalm’s popularity (even among non-Christians) is largely due to its ability to speak to people over time. As we are reading, we can think about why the writer might have felt the need to praise God, even with such vivid detail. What can we infer about this writer and the purpose of this psalm?

**Today’s lesson will focus on the God who protects.**

**Read the scripture out loud together.**

**Discuss with a partner. Do you have a phobia? Spiders? The dark? Public speaking?**

**What’s happening during this passage?**

The writer pens a hymn of confidence in God in spite of the scary things. If the Lord is “my light and my salvation,” why should the writer be afraid of anyone else?

Here in the temple, one can behold the Lord's beauty and take shelter in "the day of trouble."

We are reminded of last week's passage in Psalm 40. In today's passage, the author again describes God as the one who will set them "high on a rock." Following a nearly identical structure in argument, the writer praises God, tells of God's goodness, and begs that God maintains this level of mercy. Again, the writer says, "Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. DO not cast me off, do not forsake me..."

### **What have we inherited in our tradition from this passage?**

We, of course, get many songs from this psalm. Taken directly from this psalm are the lyrics for "The Lord is My Light."

Even further, though, we inherit a distinct posture towards God. This is the second time in as many weeks where we have noticed that the author makes a firm demand to God. "Do not turn your servant away in anger" and "Do not forsake me" are not questions. They're not requests. These are declarative statements that end with a period. A song that captures this mood is one of the Concord Sanctuary Choir's favorites, "*Standing in the Need of a Blessing*" by Rev. James Cleveland.

*"You said I could call you when I need you.*

*You said you would answer when I called you.*

*You said you would supply all my needs,*

*According to your riches in glory*

*Lord I'm standing in the need of a blessing."*

A faithful prayer can be earnest *and* urgent. It can be honest and transparent. We can infer that the writer may have had negative experiences in the past. Perhaps the writer has felt forsaken by others, or maybe someone has dropped a promise. The writer, using that experience, asks God to honor the relationship by continuing to be a personal "help."

### **How does the writer know that God will do good things?**

The best way to know what someone in leadership will do is to look at their track record. Senators and Congresspeople are held accountable by their public voting record. Presidents of institutions are often given a "vote of confidence." Employees at companies are given a "performance review" with an opportunity for feedback. We look at what has happened already to give us a general sense of what might happen in

the future. (This is why so many of us were never excited about President Trump; we remember his treatment of the “Central Park 5”).

Perhaps the writer can predict that God “will hide me in his shelter” because the writer can recollect a memory when this has happened before. We know that God *will* hide us because God *has hidden* us before.

### **Why does the lectionary passage look this way? Why skip verses 2 and 3?**

*When evildoers assail me  
to devour my flesh—  
my adversaries and foes—  
they shall stumble and fall.*

*Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war rise up against me,  
yet I will be confident.*

These verses are vivid. They do not mask the fact that violence does indeed befall God’s children. Words like “devour my flesh” and “an army” give us a much more graphic image than the rest of the passage for today. Why do you think this piece has been omitted?

### **What questions do you still have of this scripture? How will you commit to journeying with this text this week?**



#### **Connection to Today’s World**

Almost four years ago, Josette Duran received a strange ask from her young son. He asked her to pack extra food. She assumed that he was unusually hungry. Eventually, she asked why, and he replied “it’s for my classmate. He only brings a fruit cup for lunch.” Ms. Duran investigated and learned that the boy’s mom had just lost her job. School lunch was another expense that she couldn’t handle. Even more, Josette could relate to this family’s circumstance. At one point, she and her son were living in their car and getting ready for the day in public bathrooms. When the boy’s mom heard how her son was being cared for, she offered to pay. Of course, Ms. Duran declined.

It gets deeper. The volleyball team at the school raised over \$400 to subsidize all the extra lunches Ms. Duran had prepared. Again, Ms. Duran declined. Because she knew what it was like to go hungry and be in need, she instead donated the money to the school. That money covered other students whose accounts were in the red. All because a pre-teen boy was generous to share, a mom was loving enough to oblige, and the community was encouraged to increase the blessing.

We have left Advent and are heading to Lent. We stand right between the story of our God becoming human through Jesus Christ and that same Jesus who will become the sacrifice for us. As Christians, we remember that God not only notices our pain, but steps in to make it right. God sacrifices for us because God knows what it is like to be where we are.

**Journal:** What evidence do you have that God has protected you?

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Closing: Sing “The Lord Is My Light”

The Lord is my light, and my salvation. (x3)

Whom shall I fear?

**Prayer:**

Dear God,

You not only take notice of our condition; you intervene. You have hidden us, concealed us, set us high, lifted up our heads. You give us a reason to sing and make music.

We thank you for the record of Good News we have. Thank you for the testimonies that surround us. Teach us to be grateful for what is while we assert our needs. Help us to advocate for ourselves and others in our daily lives. Show us to be the kind of Friend that Christ has been to us.

In Jesus’ name we pray,

Amen

### **Works Cited**

[https://mymodernmet.com/mom-packs-two-lunches-josette-duran/?fbclid=IwAR3MQujqw2UDEFSLqVIHOQrrCYLOyinv\\_c1S7vgphJ7SmAFUeYNvvh7KBIU](https://mymodernmet.com/mom-packs-two-lunches-josette-duran/?fbclid=IwAR3MQujqw2UDEFSLqVIHOQrrCYLOyinv_c1S7vgphJ7SmAFUeYNvvh7KBIU)

