

"How To Wallpaper Your Heart"

Psalms 27:13-14

20 November 2022

So, I decided we'd return to the psalms once again. Next week, is the first Sunday of Advent, so we'll start our Christmas preaching series then. But, I needed one more week in this series. As I said last week, these psalms have been my companions over the past few months. There are a handful of verses that have become close friends as I've prayed them repeatedly.

And, one of those verses comes at the end of Psalm 27. Turn there in your Bibles. What David will teach us is what I've done as we've been in this series. If David summed up Psalm 27, perhaps he'd say-

WALLPAPER YOUR REALITY WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

That's actually something David Powlison said once. I'll read it later. I've quoted David Powlison a lot in this series because he too is one of my companions.

* INSERT POWLISON BOOK PIC

Check out his book *God's Grace in Your Suffering*. It has been a balm to my soul. Let me just share a few quotes to pique your interest:

God's hand is intimately mixed up in our troubles.

The wisdom to suffer well is like manna—you must receive nourishment every day. You can't store it up, though you do become more familiar with how to go out and find what you need for today.

Scripture is custom-designed to engage any and all difficulties we face in life. So put your troubles on the table. Listen to how our Lord invites us to get personal.

A sufferer's primal need is to hear God talking and to experience him purposefully at work.

The Lord knows you. This reality is the single most important thing about you. You are his. This truth makes the decisive difference in how you walk down hard roads.

So, if you're suffering, if your heart is breaking, if you feel like there's no hope, check out this book.

Okay. Let's go back to Psalm 27, where we will learn how to wallpaper our reality with the word of God.

LOOK AT VERSE 13...

I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

If you remember what we saw when we were in this psalm way back in June, David is surrounded by enemies. People want to kill him. He's under pressure. Life is hard. And, he feels forsaken. So, he turns to the Lord. And, after 12 verses detailing all the drama in his life, David says that he is full of faith. He believes that in spite of all the drama in his life, he will see the Lord's goodness in his life.

His faith- which is fully aware of his enemies, and his adversaries, and his troubles, and all the drama- *his faith-* which is fully aware of the character, ways, and promises of the Lord- *his faith* speaks that he will see the goodness of God in his life. No matter what happens, David knows that God is good and God does good. All the time!

David's heart is all over the map, like in most of the psalms. And, David's feelings are all over the map. He feels abandoned by God. He feels forsaken. He feels like he might be cut off for good. He feels like God is not listening to his prayers. He feels like God has turned away from him. He feels like God is far away. That's why he prays about these things.

Maybe you can relate to David? Have you ever had a dark night of your soul like this? I'm willing to bet you have. We all have. We're sinners. We live in a broken world. We're not always "on" in spite of what we think. We're up. We're down. We're all over the map. We've all been at that place where we're crying out to God and it just seems like He's not listening. We've all been at that place where our feelings dominate our lives; that place where what we *feel* carries the day.

And that's the problem: *our feelings*. Listen, our feelings cannot be trusted. Our feelings are not necessarily an indicator of truth and reality. Of course, I'm not saying that you should not express your feelings to God. You should! You should tell God how you feel. That's exactly what David is doing.

Telling God how you feel *is* faith! Expressing your feelings to God in prayer is faith! Expressing how you feel to God is an act of faith.

So, when David prays like this, he hasn't completely emptied his faith tank. David still has some faith *because* he keeps on praying! He cries out to the Lord because he feels like God has abandoned him. Do you know what that kind of praying is? It's faith. Faith can pray that way. Faith can pray, "*Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away. Don't cast me off. Don't forsake me!*"

It may not look like it on the surface, it may not be a polished and shiny faith, it may not be a squeaky clean faith, but it's still faith. Faith keeps crying out even when you *feel* like God is not listening. Faith keeps talking. Faith keeps on praying even when it seems like God is nowhere to be found. Faith says, "*I believe, help my unbelief.*"

So our feelings cannot be trusted. At the end of the day it's only God's word that we can trust, not our fickle hearts. Listen, we're just not that smart enough to try and figure it out. Although we all want to be God, frankly, every one of us would stink at it! Only God and His word can be trusted- not our hearts and feelings.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "*Oh the havoc that is wrought and the tragedy, the misery and the wretchedness that are to be found in the world simply because people do not know how to handle their own feelings!*"

I'm not sure we would want to live in a society where everyone acted on every one of their *feelings*. That would be scary. Actually, I think we are living in a society where everyone acts on their feelings! Lord, have mercy!

So, we can't rely on what we *feel*. We have to trust in God's word. We have to believe His promises. We have to have faith that He is who He says He is and He will do what He says He will do in this world. We have to believe that He really is working all things out for our good.

But, will there be times in our lives when struggle to believe this? Times when we struggle to believe that Jesus is present and is working things out for our good? Absolutely! Of course, we struggle to believe this sometimes. And it's okay in those moments if all that you can pray is like the father in Mark's gospel who said to Jesus, "*I believe; help my unbelief!*" Sometimes that's the most spiritual prayer that you can pray!

And, sometimes you have to join that with what David says here:

"*I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living...Help my unbelief!*"

That might be the thing that keeps you from going crazy when your life is spinning out of control.

And, we need the Holy Spirit's help to believe. To believe that God is doing more in our suffering than we can see with our eyes. We need the Holy Spirit to help us grasp the truth that God may take us into the storm. That He may take us into the darkness. But, you must remember that He has purposes for you that sometimes can't be seen. And in those times, you have to see Him with the eyes of faith.

Now, sometimes you'll hear people say this: "*God will never give you more than you can bear*"? To that I say, "*Huh? Really? Do you really believe that?*" I don't believe that, because there have been numerous times when I felt like I had been given more than I could bear. If God only gives us what we can handle, if He only gives us what we can bear, then why do we need Him? In my experience, God *will give you* more than you can bear. God often gives us more than we can bear so that we will trust in Him and not in our own resources.

Sometimes when you are so overwhelmed with suffering and pain and sorrow and sadness you feel like God has let you go. And there may be more truth to that than you realize. Sometimes God just might let us go. Sometimes God might let you go into the darkness, into the night, into the storm. But He is with you and that makes all the difference. He may let you go into the darkness, but He will not *let you go*.

Matt Smethurst says, "*Sometimes Christ calms the storm. And sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms his child.*" He is with you even when you feel like He has let you go. Sometimes God will let you go into some darkness, into some storm. Of course, He does not "let you go" in the sense that He abandons you and leaves you to yourself. That's what David fears in Psalm 25, but that's blasphemy! God never forsakes His children! God never leaves His children! Jesus will never leave us or forsake us! He has promised that to us!

But, sometimes God will let us go down a path of pain and suffering that we would not choose ourselves. Sometimes God leads us down a path of sorrow and sadness that we wouldn't choose to walk down. Sometimes He might let us go down a hard path, into some storm, so that He will be glorified and our faith will blossom.

In His sovereign wisdom, He may take you somewhere you don't want to go or would never plan to go. I struggle with that. I'll be honest. I struggle with that. That kind of thinking does not come naturally to me. But I believe that the Bible teaches it. But I struggle with it.

This is "honest faith." And honest faith admits that there is a struggle. Honest faith says like David in verse 12, *"Don't give me up to my adversaries,"* but then says, *"I believe that I shall look..."*

Faith has to be honest, if it is to be anything. And, Jesus likes honesty. Jesus can handle you telling Him that you're struggling. Jesus can handle you telling Him exactly what you're feeling and thinking. PS. He already knows! You're not going to surprise Jesus by being honest with Him! He already knows.

Jesus is okay with us honestly confessing that we're struggling to believe Him. And I think that's how faith comes: *when we get honest with Jesus*. When we get honest about our fears, that's when faith comes. When we get honest about our struggles, that's when faith comes. When we get honest about everything going on in our hearts- Jesus can work with that. All things are possible when we get real with Jesus. He'll have it no other way. Jesus can do some incredible, over-the-top, out-of-this- world things in your life, but you have to be honest with Him. You gotta keep it real with Him.

So, faith is simply turning to Jesus, honestly, with all of your need. Faith is turning to Jesus with all of your mess, all of your baggage, all of your jealousy, all of your hatred, all of your bitterness, all your family drama, all of your questions, all of your sins, and saying to Him, *"I don't know how you can pick up the pieces and make something of this, but I believe that you can. I just don't know how you'll do it. But I totally believe that you can because you are good, you are kind, you are merciful, you are gracious. So, please help."*

Faith is you, with all of your weakness and need, turning to Jesus with all of His self-sufficiency. Faith is your desperate need turning to Jesus, the most merciful Person in the universe. It's you not knowing how Jesus will help, but believing that He can.

Faith is simply crying out to Jesus. And faith has nothing to do with you. But faith has everything to do with God. Faith, and belief, is you acknowledging you can't be small enough, that you can't be needy enough, that you can't bow down on the ground low enough, that you can't be alive enough, that you can't be good enough to live up to the righteousness of the Law. Faith is turning away from everything in ourselves to cast ourselves upon all that Christ has done. Faith is simply getting up and going to Jesus. Faith is simply crying out to Jesus and getting up and going to Jesus when you can't see. When you can't see what's happening in your life. Let me say that again: *Faith is simply crying out to Jesus and getting up and going to Jesus when you can't see. When you can't see what's happening in your life.*

How do you get that faith? By hearing the word of God, by hearing the Gospel. What does Paul say in Romans?

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

You get faith when you-

WALLPAPER YOUR REALITY WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

So, dig into this Book. Find a verse or two and rub them into your pores. That's what I've done as we've been in this series. And, there were days when I just rubbed and rubbed and rubbed God's word in my pores, and even then I barely hung on! What would my life look like if I didn't have these friends, these verses that I found? It would not have been pretty.

So, find a promise and hang on. Don't let it go. Let it wallpaper your reality. Let it be the dominant voice in your head. Preach that verse to your heart. Why? Because sometimes life is so dark, you can't see, and you don't know why things are the way they are, and all you can hear is Jesus' voice, in His word. But that's all you need. His word. His promises. His Gospel. In faith, you collapse on His word, His promises, His Gospel. That's how faith, belief, and trust comes.

This Book is full of promises that you can rub into your pores. It's how faith stays alive. Faith is a hungry business! Faith is always hungry. Faith is like a teenager. Faith needs to eat every few hours. Faith can eat a whole "pizza of promises" and still be hungry, just like a teenager! Faith is like a teenager. It needs to be fed. Faith is a hungry business. And the Bible is full of promises that you can feed faith with.

Ray Ortlund says, *"God looks us right in the eye and claims that he can and will deliver on every single promise in the gospel. Do we believe him? Does Jesus rule over the mess called my life, or in unsparing realism must I despair? May I expect a new work of the Holy Spirit in my experience, or is my past the measure of my future?... If no one ever thinks we're crazy for the way we stick our necks out in trusting the promises of God, are we really living by faith?"*

Are we really living by faith if we're not staking our lives on these wild, crazy, out-of-this-world, too-good-to-be-true, hard-to-believe promises? If no one thinks we're crazy for sticking our necks out in trusting God's promises, are we really living by faith?

Let me ask you this morning: Where in your life do you need a promise from God? What's happening in your life where you need a crazy promise, and if you believed it, people would think you're crazy? What crazy promise do you need to believe with the result that people think you're crazy? Find one in God's word, stick your neck out, believe it, and watch people scratch their heads and wonder if you have lost your mind!

If no one ever thinks we're crazy for the way we stick our necks out in trusting the promises of God, are we really living by faith? Something to wrestle with. Something to consider. Something to pray about. What crazy promise of God do you need to turn into a prayer?

And it doesn't matter what the *size* of your faith is, so long as that faith is in Jesus. It's the *Person* you trust in that matters, not the *size* of the faith of the person who is doing the trusting. It's Jesus that is crucial. It's *Who* you are trusting in that makes all the difference in the world. So, it doesn't matter how intense your faith is. It can be small. It can be weak. It can be as small as a mustard seed (Somebody said that!). As long as it's placed in Jesus. Listen, it's not the intensity of your faith that saves you. *Jesus* is who saves you. *Jesus* is who delivers you. *Jesus* is who we wait for. And, because it's Jesus we wait for, our hearts can take courage.

LOOK AT VERSE 14...

Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

It's worth pointing out again that the word for "wait" is the one we've seen in this series. The Hebrew word used here for "wait" (*qavah*) captures something of the "tension" of waiting. It suggests relentlessness, tension, or twisting- like twisting in knots. And, that's exactly what it feels like when you have to wait on the Lord!

So, as David closes out Psalm 27, he preaches to himself to wait for the Lord- to live with the restlessness, the tension, the twisting up in knots as he waits. He's wallpapering his reality in verse 14. Interestingly, the words for "wait" and "be strong" and "take courage" are singular verbs in the Hebrew. So, David is talking to himself, preaching to himself, telling himself to be strong and wait on the Lord and take courage. He's wallpapering his own heart.

And, a few of these words in verse 14 are actually imperatives, they are commandments, so it's as if David is looking at himself in the mirror and saying, "Hey, you! Yes, you. Get it together, bro! Stop squirming and freaking out. Be courageous, son. Man up and wait on Yahweh!"

Sometimes you have to do that. You just have to preach to your own heart. You wallpaper your reality, you wallpaper your heart by *preaching* to your own heart.

What did it mean for David to have to wait? The same for us! God gives us promises, and we have to preach to our hearts, and then we wait with expectation, believing that we will see His goodness in the land of the living. We wait believing. We don't wait biting our nails, *hoping* He comes through for us. We don't wait pacing the floor. We wait in faith because we know what kind of God He is. We know Him. He's faithful. He keeps covenant. Listen, God is not toying with us. He's not playing games. He's not getting some weird kick out of watching us squirm as we wait. That's not who He is.

Waiting is faith doing what faith does- *which is waiting!* Faith waits until the promise is fulfilled. Faith has to be comfortable with waiting. Faith waits because faith knows who God is and faith knows that what God says He will do, He will do. Faith believes that the fulfillment is certain, even though you can't see it or even if it "seems" hopeless.

Faith is not fazed. Faith is not fazed, not because our faith is so special. Faith is not fazed because faith knows who God is. Faith knows God's character. And knowing who God is enables faith to be patient as it waits and gets all twisted up in knots. So, faith waits patiently until God finally shows up.

But, here are some questions that we must wrestle with as we wait: *Are we willing to go at God's pace? Are we willing to go by His calendar? Are we willing to trust God with everything? Are we willing to leave every detail with Jesus, down to the smallest of details, and trust that He knows what He's doing?*

Faith is comfortable with God's pace. So, faith waits. And while it waits, it keeps rubbing God's promises into its pores. That's how faith stays alive.

Okay. I told you that I would explain where I got today's big idea. It came out of something that Ray and Jani Ortlund experienced. They endured a very difficult ministry at a church that they pastored before planting

Immanuel Church in Nashville, TN. They were so wounded, so hurt that they didn't think they could go on in ministry. And then David Powlison passed on some wisdom and comfort to them. Here's what Ray said about David Powlison shortly after David died:

Remembering David Powlison moves me deeply. When everything was on the line for Jani and me, David and Nan were there for us.

We spent a day together in 2007— for Jani and me, a catastrophic disaster of a year. David was an oasis of calm, gentleness, and reasonableness amid a swirl of accusations, loss, and heartbreak. David, with Nan, kept our hope alive.

One suggestion David made became so significant that I have passed it along to many others since then. I can't remember his exact words. But it went something like this: "Ray and Jani, you are suffering. And it isn't going to get better any time soon. So here is an idea. Ask the Lord for a verse of Scripture, a promise in the Bible, to help you get through this. And when that verse jumps off the page into your heart, make it the theme of your life while you slog your way forward. However dark the nighttime sky might be, you can always look up at that North Star promise, get your bearings again, and keep going. But wallpaper your reality with the Word of God."

So we did. We asked the Lord to personalize to us some biblical encouragement of his own choosing. And he did. Jani was reading 1 Peter 5 soon thereafter, and verse 10 was a direct hit— in the best of ways: "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." We seized that verse.

We memorized 1 Peter 5:10, discussed it, prayed over it. Jani wrote it out on 3x5 cards and taped them to the inside of the kitchen cupboards, so that every time she went to get a glass or a plate, there was 1 Peter 5:10. I wrote it out and stuck it to the visor in my truck so that, at a red light, I could look up and be strengthened by 1 Peter 5:10. We never let that verse out of our sight. And in ways we could not have imagined, God has proved faithful to his promise. To this day, whenever Jani and I experience some restoring, confirming, strengthening, or establishing mercy, we look at one another and say, "1 Peter 5:10!" In fact, we did so just yesterday. That word from above didn't merely help us cope. It redefined how we experience reality. It kept me in the ministry.

David Powlison understood human despair. He understood how God helps sufferers. He understood that what we need is a hope dependent on nothing in this world but grounded in God alone. The word himself in 1 Peter 5:10 has become, to me, one of the most precious words in all the Bible— God, not delegating the task to any angel, but God himself getting personally and directly involved with us in our real need. How glorious.

At the time, I have to admit that, though my heart resonated with 1 Peter 5:10, I struggled to believe it. Jani believed it more than I could. But David was right. And thanks to his wise counsel, I turned toward the Lord with the weak faith I had. And gradually I was enabled to believe it more and more. And now I know, at a deep and personal level, that God himself restores, confirms, strengthens, and establishes us, when we have nothing to offer him but our sorrow and need.

Thank you, David. Thank you.

Isn't that a great story? And, it's great advice that David Powlison gave them. Let me remind you about it again:

WALLPAPER YOUR REALITY WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

And when you do, you'll be able to say with David-

I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

You might even get crazy and add an exclamation point on the end too! Knowing Jesus can make you do that.

Let's pray...

"How To Wallpaper Your Heart"

Psalm 27:13-14

Sermon Study Questions

1. READ Psalm 27:13-14. How can David say this? How does he know that he will see God's goodness? What New Testament verse backs this truth up?

2. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Oh, the havoc that is wrought and the tragedy, the misery and the wretchedness that are to be found in the world simply because people do not know how to handle their own feelings!"

Can we trust our feelings? What role do feelings play in the Christian life?

3. Discuss this thought from the sermon: "If God only gives us what we can handle, if He only gives us what we can bear, then why do we need Him? In my experience, God will give you more than you can bear. God often gives us more than we can bear so that we will trust in Him and not in our own resources... Sometimes God will let us go down a path of pain and suffering that we would not choose ourselves. Sometimes God leads us down a path of sorrow and sadness that we wouldn't choose to walk down. Sometimes He might let us go down a hard path, into some storm, so that He will be glorified and our faith will blossom. In His sovereign wisdom, He may take you somewhere you don't want to go or would never plan to go."

4. Matt Smethurst says, "Sometimes Christ calms the storm. And sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms his child."

Have you ever experienced this "calming peace" while a storm was raging around you? Describe a time when this was true for you.

5. READ Psalm 27:14. In the sermon, Pastor Benji said, "The words for 'wait' and 'be strong' and 'take courage' are singular verbs in the Hebrew." So, who is David talking to?

6. Discuss what David Powlison said to Ray and Jani Ortlund during a difficult season in their ministry:

"Ray and Jani, you are suffering. And it isn't going to get better any time soon. So here is an idea. Ask the Lord for a verse of Scripture, a promise in the Bible, to help you get through this. And when that verse jumps off the page into your heart, make it the theme of your life while you slog your way forward. However dark the nighttime sky might be, you can always look up at that North Star promise, get your bearings again, and keep going. But wallpaper your reality with the Word of God."

Do you need a verse like this? What promise do you need to wallpaper your reality with?

7. Discuss these quotes by David Powlison from his book *God's Grace in Your Suffering*:

God's hand is intimately mixed up in our troubles.

The wisdom to suffer well is like manna—you must receive nourishment every day. You can't store it up, though you do become more familiar with how to go out and find what you need for today.

Scripture is custom-designed to engage any and all difficulties we face in life. So put your troubles on the table. Listen to how our Lord invites us to get personal.

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