

## A CALL TO PRAYER

**Psalm 27:1-4**  
**January 8, 2012**

**INTRODUCTION:** This text was penned by David either during his pursuit by King Saul or his flight from Absalom. In any case, the enemies he is facing are “*evil men*” (wicked v.2), persecuting him for righteousness’ sake, and seeking to harm him by physical violence and by slander. He likens them to wild beasts eager to tear him limb from limb. (v.2).

Yet, in the midst of all that is happening to him, he displays a rather encouraging response. This text is full of David’s *confidence* and *faith* that Almighty God is there for him. (1-3). He then focuses on the awesome privilege of being in **God’s presence** and the **security** he finds there (4-6). However, not unlike you and I, he begins to speak of his **fear** in v.7. John Phillips said, “*We must never forget that fear lives right next door to faith.*” Those who have a problem and who are facing it right now hardly need to be reminded of that. We ride the roller coaster from faith to fear over and over again. One moment we say, “*Everything’s going to work out fine.*” The next moment we are looking at our circumstances in absolute despair. How did David handle the situation when he found himself at the bottom of the mountain?

There is such a great contrast between the two sections of verses 1-6 and 7-14 that some expositors insist that the psalm is the work of two different people. They argue that no person could switch so suddenly from faith to fear, from trust to trembling, from confidence to cowardice. However, we only have to look at our own deceitful hearts to see that such a switch is not only possible, it happens all the time, often within the same prayer. Faith and fear very often fight each other for the mastery of the soul.

The overwhelming challenge to my heart in this passage is *intimacy*.

**Psalms 27:4**

**“One thing I have desired of the Lord,  
That will I seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
All the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the Lord,  
And to inquire in His temple.”**

**Psalms 27:8**

**“When You said, ‘Seek My face,’  
My heart said to You, ‘Your face, Lord, I will seek.’”**

**Psalms 27:14**

**“Wait on the Lord;  
Be of good courage,  
And He shall strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the Lord!”**

**QUESTION: *What is God's greatest desire for you?***

God sees you as a precious treasure and He longs to have a close relationship with you. More than anything He wants you to have an intimate love relationship and friendship with Him. God wants you to spend time with Him and intimately communicate with Him, to enjoy fellowship with Him, to trust and follow Him, and to give your life meaning and purpose by giving you the privilege of joining Him in His work.

Do you desire a deeper and closer relationship and friendship with God? Is your desire to know Him and to please Him growing? Do you know that hearing God's voice is by far the ***most important part*** of your prayer and fellowship time with God? God needs to touch our hearts so that Jesus is our first love and so that we will faithfully and passionately seek Him and follow Him, however and wherever He may lead us.

*"It is a joy to Jesus when a person takes time to walk more intimately with Him. The bearing of fruit is always shown in Scripture to be a visible result of an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ."*

*Oswald Chambers*

*"O, the fullness, the pleasure, the sheer excitement of knowing God here on earth."*

*Jim Elliott*

**"I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things." (Phil 3:8) Paul**

**INTIMACY WITH GOD** – it carries with it the aspects of a relationship with someone when you are vulnerable, loving, trusting, etc. To have an intimate relationship with God means that the deepest part of you is having a relationship with a deep part of God. Of course, we cannot fathom the deepest part of God, but He condescends to our level and reveals a part of Himself that only the Christian (through the cross of Christ) can enjoy.

Intimacy with God is a privilege freely given by Christ in His sacrifice on the cross. He removed our sins so that we might dwell with God. Therefore, if there is sin in your life it will hinder your fellowship, your intimacy with God. Ask Jesus to reveal your sins to you so that you might repent of them and not hinder the fellowship of intimacy that God so lovingly desires with you.

**HE IS CALLING ME TO PRAYER**

The church at Ephesus in **Revelation 2:1-7** came to be referred to as the ***"Loveless Church."***

**Revelation 2:4**, "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

They had left the very thing that Jesus considered most important.

**Matthew 22:35-39**, "Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Would you not agree that when you love someone you so desire to spend quality time and quantity of time with them; **Intimacy!**

**Revelation 2:5, “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent.”**

1. **Remember**
2. **Repent**
3. **Return** – Do the first works
4. **Retribution** – Remove your lampstand (witness)
5. **Repent**

Robert Murry M’Cheyne, “*No amount of activity in the King’s service will make up for neglect of the King Himself...*”

Activity for God cannot make up for the lack of a relationship with Him. I must deal with my distractions. I must eliminate unnecessary clutter, finding a quiet heart, and actively pursuing and protecting intimacy with God.

To desire **intimacy** is to say, “*Lord, I want more of You, more of Your presence, more of your influence in my life. Fill me with more of You.*”

- It’s waiting on Him until I experience His manifest presence.
- Intimacy with God is the single means by which we access living in the miraculous. Spending time in His manifest presence is the discipline we must develop to access all that God has for us.

### **ILLUSTRATE:**

James Ray Oxendine’s Funeral

Intimacy with God helps us to realize afresh and anew that we cannot rely on the natural.

William Gurnall (1617-1679), “*The only work that will abide for eternity is that which is produced in humble dependence upon the power of God’s Holy Spirit.*”

Saul rejected as King, but not before Samuel reminded him of this **Truth.**

**1 Samuel 15:17, “So Samuel said, ‘When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel?’”**

Intimacy with God begins when we radically pursue Him with our whole heart.

**Jeremiah 29:11-13, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.’”**

**James 4:8, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”**

**Note also Ps 27:8**

**“When You said, ‘Seek My face,’  
My heart said to You, ‘Your face, Lord, I will seek.’”**

John Stott, *“True prayer is never a presumptuous approach to God, but rather a response to His gracious initiative.”*

Charles Swindoll, *“Those who desire to commit to intimacy with God find that inner satisfaction is neither complicated nor mystical, but it does call for some radical changes. Difficult changes. Unpopular changes. Lifestyle changes. Essential changes in the secret places of your life. Without them, however, intimacy with the Almighty remains a distant dream. What’s worse, we are left with the frightening alternative: feeling lonely, hollow, shallow, enslaved to a schedule that never lets up.”*

## **TRUTH TO PONDER**

There is nothing like depth to make us dissatisfied with superficial, shallow things.

The Lord reserves the truth of **Romans 11:33** for those that desire intimacy.

**“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”**

Richard Foster’s word penetrates:

*“Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.”*

No one is ready to take on the depths unless he or she is fed up with the superficial.

If you long for intimacy with God, you want to be profoundly aware of His presence, in touch with Him at the deepest possible level, thinking His thoughts, gleaning His wisdom, and living as close to His heart as is humanly possible, operating your life in the nucleus of His will.

I so desire to see Almighty God give the FBCW a ***Prayer Culture***. I am not desirous of an injection of prayer but for it to become our DNA; *cut me and bleed Jesus*.

## CREATING A PRAYER CULTURE

Daniel Henderson – co-founder with Jim Cymbala on the 6:4 Fellowship, tells the story of his pastor friend Woody.

*“Woody’s journey is an inspiring example of how God can change the hearts of leaders and radically reshape their ministry approach.*

*I have heard Woody say on numerous occasions that for many years he made his strategic plans for church ministry, hoping God would bless and join the leaders in what they were trying to accomplish. (By the way, this is the predominant approach to church leadership today.) He describes it as trying to ‘breathe life’ into all the programs he came up with.*

*Woody and his team would attend national conferences to see how everyone else was doing ministry, then try to duplicate those success stories. Soon it seemed he was trying to wear someone else’s ministry clothes. A year later, he would return to the same national conference, only to discover that the ‘model church’ had already discarded the approach Woody’s team was trying to imitate.*

*A few years ago, God spoke to Woody in his industrious, clever, but weary state of being. He challenged Woody to resign as ‘God’ and let God be God. Woody decided that from that time on, he and his leaders would seek the Lord first (and for as long as necessary), until they had clarity about where God wanted the church to go. As he describes it, ‘We had been trying to make Acts 2 happen, but we suddenly realized that Acts 1 comes before Act 2.’”*

*Key principles to creating a prayer culture in a church:*

- ◆ **Is not a prayer program.** *Many leaders wanting a quick fix decide to start some new prayer events. Often these activities simply attract the same praying minority but do not infect the rest of the church. There may be pockets of prayer energy, but not a prayer culture.*
- ◆ **Is always transmitted from the epicenter of church leadership.** *Pastors cannot point the way to a prayer culture; they must lead the way by example, by praying regularly and passionately with their fellow leaders and the congregation. The prayer level of the church never grows beyond the personal example and passion of the senior leaders. These leaders are always characterized by substantive time spend praying together. This pattern sets the culture and transmits a passion for Christ’s presence to every department, ministry, and gathering in the church.*
- ◆ **Is fueled by experience, not explanation.** *One pastor friend preached on prayer every Sunday for a year. Later he confessed that all of those sermons did not ignite a culture of prayer. In fact, this abundance of information without corollary practice probably broadened the gap between knowledge and true obedience. Prayer is more caught than taught. The life-changing prayer virus spreads as leaders and people spend more time together praying, not talking about the idea of prayer.*
- ◆ **Is sustained by the right motive.** *Our motives must not be approval, church growth, or even revival. Ultimately, the only enduring motive for prayer is that God is worthy to be sought. As we seek His face, not just His hand, we experience the power of Scripture-fed, Spirit-led, worship-based prayer that continues to fuel the hearts of a grown army of prayer-energized saints.*
- ◆ **Is ultimately the secret to supernatural mission achievement.** *Prayer is not the only thing we do, it’s just the first thing we do. Prayer leads to the ultimate thing we do, which is making disciples of Jesus Christ for His glory. Real prayer brings us close to the heart of God and transforms us to become world-transformers through the demonstrated and declared gospel message.*