

God's Light is Our Refuge
Psalm 27:1-2
July 9, 2020

The LORD is my light and my salvation.

I fear no one.

The LORD protects my life.

I am afraid of no one.

² *When evil men attack me*

to devour my flesh,

when my adversaries and enemies attack me,

they stumble and fall.

Psalms 27 is written by someone who is in love with God. They are so united with God by this love, that they feel themselves completely protected from evil. In fact, they feel so protected that they believe that when those who dabble in evil, come against them, these evil dabblers are the ones who are going to fall. It is, as if, he is surrounded by an invisible force shield of love, that protects him, but does not do harm to others. The only harm that comes to those that dabble in evil, is the failure to penetrate this invisible force shield that God provides. Therefore, rendering in operative their design to turn God's children of love away from Him.

It is Psalms like this one, that gave rise to mystics throughout the 11th and 12th century; mystics like Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernard gave us sermons, meditations and theological reflections that were all designed to help the lover of God, to grow deeper into their spiritual relationship with God. It was common for these mystics to use the Song of Songs, to express their relationship with God. As you are aware this is the story of two lovers, expressing their love for each other. Bernard sees in this love story, the story of himself and God. While it may seem inappropriate to use the words of lovers to shape a meditation about our relationship with God; Bernard takes delight in using these expressions, being that he believes that love is what binds us to God. In one of his meditations on the Song of Songs, he says, "*If you are holy, you have understood and known. If not, be holy and you will know by experience. Holy affection makes a holy person and it is twofold---holy fear of God and holy love. The soul that is perfectly affected by these two, like twin arms, grasps, embraces, binds, holds fast and says, "I have held him and will not let him go."*

He is describing a marriage experience, which he believes translates to God. But it does have ingredients of the same sentiment that we find in Psalms 27. Both are enraptured by the object of their love, and they feel protected and safe in the arms of their lover. For Bernard, as well as the Psalmist, experience is the source of their knowledge of love. They do not love from a distance, or through some kind of admiration. They love through desire; the desire to know the other in the fullness of all that is in them. Both of these great spiritual giants are contemplative masters, seeking visions of how God walks among God's creation, to establish hope, care and the future of love.

While it is difficult to maintain this kind of intensity; it is reassuring that at times, and especially during these desperate times, that God is waiting with open arms. This is "my light and my salvation." God is my salvation from despair, and my light to see through the distractions of fear. This is open to me when I say, like Bernard, "I have held him and will not let him go."