

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 12, 2010**

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Hymns: 433, 196:4, 399, 398, 53

Lessons: Psalm 28, 1 Corinthians 12: 7-10, Matthew 5: 14-16.

Sermon Text: Psalm 27.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This Psalm of David contains words of hope and confidence and encouragement probably written at a time when he was besieged by enemies, both physical and spiritual. There was a time when King Saul, some time after being comforted by David's harp-playing, tried to kill him out of jealousy. David often needed comfort. He often needed encouragement, and this Psalm tells us where he got his comfort and encouragement and hope: From the Lord God.

Today let's talk about

**LIGHT, STRENGTH, AND SALVATION**

- 1. Where can you find light?**
- 2. Where can you find strength?**
- 3. Where can you find salvation?**

Light is warming, comforting, and suggests joy and happiness. Darkness is scary, suggesting cold, and fear, and things evil. Like David, who later became king, we need light in our lives – physical and especially spiritual light. We have troubles, pains, anxieties. We have enemies like the devil, and the world and even our sinful flesh within us that troubles us and wants to lead us into darkness and all the things that happen in darkness, away from light.

But light is a very positive, encouraging thing. In the light there is no reason to be afraid, not like the darkness, where we just don't know what is out there. We have natural light from the sun and when it is gloomy, cloudy or rainy for several days, our mood and spirits sag. We get grumpy, unhappy, easily irritated, and even clinically depressed.

We take light for granted. We even have lots of places and ways today where you can find light. I can flip a switch, I can light a fire or a candle, I can turn on a flashlight and there are other ways I can "create" light. But I am not creating light like God created it in the beginning. ***"And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light."*** Genesis 1:3.

At the time David wrote this, there were few sources of what we call artificial light. The natural sources were the sun, moon, and stars. Artificial lights included fires and oil lamps and candles. Imagine a society where artificial light came from flickering oil lamps, and you did your activities during daylight. We today no longer really depend on just daylight to get things done. Probably most of our activities could be completed even when the sun is not shining.

But David is speaking of more than just the light of the sun, moon, and stars. He is talking about that which guides him, that which is his joy, his life, and his hope. He is talking about what the psalmist wrote of in Psalm 97:11-12: ***"Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart. Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name."*** That reminds us that "the righteous" are those who are justified by God because of the works of Jesus Christ.

If an individual's heart is truly established in God, what or whom could he fear? If one continually takes refuge in God as the 'refuge of one's life', what reason is there for ever being afraid of anything?

David writes: ***“One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.”*** We could think of actually living in the tabernacle, the “house of the Lord”, but let’s instead think of it in figurative or symbolic terms. He is seeking close presence with and fellowship of God. And how does God draw close to us? How do we draw close to him? It is through his Word. It is through “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”. ***“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*** Hebrews 10:25.

David speaks of a place of refuge. Think of the picture of God hiding a person in a shelter or in a mountain-top fortress in the time of trouble until the danger is past, as though God hides His child so that the adversary could not find him.

Then we offer thanks! Just as when we come out of the tornado shelter after the danger is past, we thank God for preserving our lives.

Think of how we just can’t do things in the dark. We can’t see to do anything. But we could also think of some other uses of light. We might think of a lighthouse or a beacon. Seagoing ships depended on lighthouses or beacons to help tell them where they are and what’s in the way. Airplanes depend partly on beacons and other lights to help them find the runway.

In one of my secular jobs I sometimes flew in the six-passenger corporate plane with Dan Greve as pilot. One winter night we took off from Eau Claire, WI and intended to land at a smaller airport to pick up another employee. Dan contacted the small airport by radio and was told “Well, I’ll see if I can get the beacon on. It wasn’t working earlier tonight.” In addition, the airport operator told us that the lights along the runway were covered by snowbanks from a freshly plowed snowfall. That’s the kind of thing that is really scary to a novice flyer like me. I was depending on the beacon light to guide us to the airport. Well, he did get it working. And he parked his pickup truck at the end of the runway with his headlights shining down the runway to help guide us down. But God is a much more reliable beacon. His Word ***“is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”*** Psalm 119:105. David knew that. We know that from God’s Word.

Where do you find your light? Is it anyplace other than the Word of God? The temptation is there every day, with so many influences on us. Other humans are telling us “do this”, “think this way”, “this is right”, “there is nothing wrong if you feel it is right”, and their advice doesn’t always agree with what God tells us. People look to other humans for advice, often to people who have no use for, no respect for, and even no knowledge of the Word of God. So we must be daily reminded that His Word ***“is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”*** Psalm 119:105 and continue to search the scriptures to find what we need for our lives.

When we think of God being our light, we must think of the promise given to the Jews in Isaiah 60:3: ***“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”*** Do you remember Simeon’s words after the birth of Christ, when he held the baby Jesus and called him ***“A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel”***? Luke 2:32. That, too, is the picture of the light, the light we celebrate especially at Christmas and Epiphany. In God even we Gentiles find light. He has revealed it to us.

Then we ask **Where can you find strength?** God speaking through David tells us that, too: ***“The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?” “The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”*** (KJV) Where do you get your strength? What do you rely on? There are people who rely on superstitions and fortunetellers, horoscopes, lucky charms, praying to “saints”, and all sorts of things that are not God. Or they rely on earthly power, on money and wealth, on their good looks and their physical strength or their bodies.

The Lord who sent his Son to suffer for our sins, the Lord Jesus who suffered for our sins and bore up under them until he decided it was time to give up the ghost and die, the Lord Jesus who rose from the dead is our strength. If we consider some of the things which humans rely on for strength, we can see that humans will be disappointed. We can’t rely on human leaders to give us strength. They are only human and make poor judgments and mistakes. We can’t rely on human traditions or customs for strength. We can’t rely on foods, or medicines, or food supplements. From birth we are constantly approaching death. It doesn’t take too many years before the human body begins to lose its strength. The older you get, the more you realize that you are

losing strength. We can't even rely on institutions for strength. Maybe it is a good thing in one way that we have such a tiny, weak church body. Look at the large church bodies, and how often and how far they stray from the truth and purity of the Word of God. People think that even in visible churches there is strength in numbers, even if you have to compromise doctrine to get the large numbers. We could think of the largest so-called "Christian" church on earth, the Roman Catholic Church. That organization teaches that salvation is found only in the church that the Pope guides by what he claims as apostolic succession. The Roman Catholic Church has a history of corruption and evil, for it has strayed from the Bible, the true Word of God and added layers of human teaching to what God tells us in the Bible. Official Catholic statements claim that "those Christian Communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century" – that includes us Lutherans – "cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called "Churches" in the proper sense". So Roman Catholic teaching surely does not give us any strength for our doctrinal positions or for "salvation" as the Pope thinks of it. His claim is that salvation can be found only as a member of the Roman Catholic Church. (SOURCE:[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20070629\\_responsa-quaestiones\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html) )

So, according to the power and authority of the Pope, we have no salvation. But we know differently. Where can you find salvation?

Notice that David pairs the word "salvation" with light. Light, of course, is the opposite of darkness, and salvation is the opposite of damnation. With this word David is pointing to the Savior. He, just like us, knows about sin. He, like us, had learned it from the Law of God. He had seen it everywhere – even in himself. These words were written before his public offense with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. But he knew about sin and sinfulness. That is plain from the verses where we read "***My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence.***" David knew what his sins deserved: rejection from God. We know what our sins deserve. Yet he confesses his sins and pleads with God to not reject or forsake him. He realizes that there is no one who will stand by him more firmly than the Lord. We must confess the same thing with David. David – and every believer – looks to the Lord to teach him the Lord's way. He knows the Lord will guide him in a straight, level path because that is what the Lord promises again and again in the scriptures.

The words remind us of Jesus Christ, our salvation, that is, the only one who can win salvation for us, and in fact, did earn salvation for us. "***False witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence.***" Think of the false witnesses who attacked Jesus at his trials. Yet Jesus remained faithful to his Father, knowing that no matter what happened, his Father will stand with him, and was still his Light and his Strength.

WE have no light, no strength, no salvation in ourselves. We must rely upon God to provide those things, particularly salvation. What do we have to be afraid of? God is with us! God is with all who believe in him and trust in him!

The Lord will direct me. He will give me light. And because he gives me light, I want to reflect that light, like the moon reflects the sun. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:14-16: "***You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.***"

May God guide us every day to be lights in this world, sharing his light, looking and pointing others to God's strength, and pointing only to Jesus Christ as the only hope of salvation for sinful man. Amen.