

# I Had Fainted Unless I Had Believed To See

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*God is Good*

By David McClelland

**Bible Text:** Psalm 27:13

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We take our Bibles this morning. We are turning to Psalm 27 and we will read the 14 verses of the psalm, Psalm 27.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; 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 enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 27:1-14.

I want to leave with you a verse in our Sunday school time, verse number 13. “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”<sup>2</sup>

David was a man of many troubles especially in the latter part of his life. We expect that as we grow older that the problems will become fewer and fewer and yet experience tells us that often the older we get the more difficulties we face.

David was constantly in the furnace of affliction and he admits that he should have fainted under the weight of the troubles if he had not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

David believed to see the goodness of God not only in the heavenly land yonder, but he believed to see the goodness of God in the very place where he was tried in the land of the living.

As a pilgrim and as a stranger he believed to see the goodness of the Lord during his earthly pilgrimage. He did not always see it, but he believed to see it. He believed in it and he anticipated the goodness of God and by believing it with the eye of faith he actually came to see it with the eye of his mind and to rejoice in it.

This verse underlines one simple truth and it is the absolute necessity of seeing the goodness of God by faith especially when we are enduring trying seasons.

I want to point out just four things regarding this verse. I trust they will be of a blessing to your heart.

When you look at this verse the first thing that you notice is that the goodness of God is sometimes veiled from our eyes. “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”<sup>3</sup>

I think the implication is obvious. Right now David could not see the goodness of God in whatever it was he was facing. And, you know, that reminds us there are times in life when the goodness of God is so obvious to the natural eye and there are times when the goodness of God is hard to see.

I think of the joyous occasions when we do see God’s goodness. Think in the life of David. Remember the day he watched Goliath drop in defeat. That was a day that David saw the goodness of God. It was a day of personal victory and there was no mistake. He knew that the victory he had gotten was not his own, but it was the Lord’s and therefore he could see in a very definite way God’s hand of goodness.

Remember the day they recovered the ark. There was a day of spiritual nearness. Again, there is no way such a thing could have been recovered except it was the mercy of God.

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 27:13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

And David's dance and his praise afterward describes how David knew that this was God's doing and he rejoiced in the goodness of God.

Or remember the day his son Solomon was appointed to the throne. That was a day of family blessing. There is no mistake he could see the goodness of God.

And so there are days, personal victory days, days of spiritual nearness, days of family blessing when the goodness of God is so evident that we can say, "This is the hand of the Lord and, my, he has been good."

But then, on the other hand, there are days when we have a hard time seeing the goodness of God. There are days when we have come to learn the only thing we see is a frowning providence. The horizon is bleak and, in the words of one man who wrote a book by this title, the smile of God is hidden. His goodness is veiled.

David says here, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see..."<sup>4</sup>

What is saying? Right now he wasn't seeing the goodness of God, at least to his eye, the eye of sense it was not immediately apparent.

Why is it God's goodness is at times veiled or how is it?

Notice some of the occasions suggested in this passage. First of all verse 12 tells us of about false witnesses.

"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty."<sup>5</sup>

When we are on the receiving end of those who are accusing us... It is hard to see the goodness of God when you are being implicated or someone is saying something evil of you and you know it is not true. How do you see the goodness of God in that?

Sometimes we have a hard time seeing God's goodness when we are living under his chastening hand. In Psalm 38, just a few chapters over, notice how David begins this psalm.

Psalm 38 verse one, "O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure."<sup>6</sup>

That is interesting because God never chastens in wrath. He is a God of love. He is a father and he is gracious. He does chasten, but he never chastens in wrath. He chastens with fatherly correction. He rebukes his children betimes, but he does not do it in hot displeasure. And, you know, why does David pray this?

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 27:12.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 38:1.

He prayed this because that is how he related to fatherhood. And, fathers, you know there are times when we do chasten our children and it is not always out of a gracious gentle manner. It is out of hot displeasure. They have annoyed or frustrated us until we carry out what we think is justice, but the spirit in which we do it is certainly not according to the God of truth.

But David here is having a hard time seeing that God could be gracious with him, why? He is very conscious of his sin. My, when we fall under God's chastening hand as the result of our own sin, it is hard to see the goodness of God. We feel as if he will come and deal with us in a harsh fashion.

There is another time when we... the goodness of God is veiled from our eyes even under the hand of Satan's temptations. I don't know, but the sin that you struggle with, perhaps there are a few you know and maybe no one else around you, even your closes family members know nothing of it. When Satan sets his guns upon you and he comes with all the assault of hell to discourage you and to tempt you, it is hard in that temptation to see God's goodness.

Then you have something else in the passage here. You have got desertions. That was verse number nine of Psalm 27.

“Hide not thy face far from me.”<sup>7</sup>

Does the verse not suggest that David was going through a time when he thought God had hidden his face.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you know I think by experience what David is saying. There are Sundays when you come into the house of God and you are looking for a word from the Lord and it appears as if everybody else in the church was blessed and yet your soul refuses to be comforted. You know you are encouraged to read the Scriptures and you long to read the Scriptures and yet experience tells us there are times when we read the Word of God and the words are not anything more than words upon a page and our souls are hard and they are dry. And I tell you. It is hard to see the goodness of God when you go through a prolonged period of what the Puritans called desertion where you feel as if God has hidden his face from you.

God sometimes seems to hide his face only to draw us to the point of abandonment and trust which otherwise the soul would never have adopted.

The Psalm... or Isaiah 50 verse 10. “Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 27:9.

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 50:10.

Sometimes in stead of holy meditations our souls or the soul is wracked with blasphemous temptations and evil thoughts instead of clear evidences of salvation. You hare half afraid that God has entirely forsaken you and you say like David, “Be not silent unto me, [LORD].”<sup>9</sup>

“Or here is another Lord’s Day. Don’t be silent unto me today otherwise I be like those that go down even unto the pit.”

And so desertion is a time when the goodness of God is veiled to our sight.

What about dashed expectations, like the two on the road to Emmaus? Their complaint was, “That we had trusted. Oh, how we had trusted that this one who was now in the tomb,” as far as they were concerned, “We trusted that this was the one who would have redeemed Israel.”

And, brethren and sisters in Christ, when we face dashed expectations, whatever they be it is hard to see immediately the goodness of God.

There are other reasons and let me just them briefly. What about unanswered prayer? You have got things you are praying for and as you pray you are looking for the answer and when the answer doesn’t come it is hard to appreciate that God is really for you? What about the deferred promise. Oh, you know God has given you a promise. All week we have been praying as ministers and elders of the gospel that the Lord would come and give us much more than this. And when the much more doesn’t come and the times of refreshing from the hand of God don’t seem to be coming down upon the Church, it is easy to question—at least within our unbelieving hearts—God’s goodness toward his people.

And then there is the lack of life’s necessities, when you are struggling and it is hard to make the next payment, when the things are tight in the home and you need to begin to cut back. It is hard to appreciate that my God is a God of goodness.

And then there is sickness and even bereavement. These are hardships and in these hardships it, the goodness of God, maybe fails from our eyes.

And so the first thing I want to share with you here as I have, I trust, is the goodness of God is sometimes veiled from our eyes.

David said, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”<sup>10</sup>

Notice, secondly, when God’s goodness is veiled from eyes, it is then we tend to faint. “I had fainted... I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 28:1.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 27:13.

Had David not seen God's goodness by faith he would have fainted. What does that mean? That means the fainting could not have been attributed to the false witnesses. The fainting cannot be attributed to the apprehension of God's chastening hand as a result of sin. The chastening cannot be a result of Satan's temptations. The fainting cannot be a result of God's desertion. The fainting cannot be the result of dashed expectations or unanswered prayer or deferred promises or lack of life's necessities, of sickness or bereavement. That is not the reason we faint.

The fainting was not the result of so many of life's trials. It was the result of questioning the goodness of God.

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."<sup>12</sup>

We read in the "Scriptures God is good to Israel."<sup>13</sup>

And in that God is good to his Church. God is good to his people. And it matters not if circumstances around the surrounding circumstances prove contrary. We know that based upon God's nature and God's Word he is good to his people.

The sovereignty of God provokes one of two reasons from us. Either we seek to escape it or we come and we learn to embrace it. Now, why do we try to escape the sovereignty of God? Whatever the circumstance is we trust, Lord, this is your will. And yet there is this desire to escape the sovereignty of God.

We tend to want to escape the sovereignty of God when we fail to see that the sovereignty of God is for us. But when we come to appreciate that God is for his people, his goodness is trained for his people in every instance. It is only when we can trust his goodness can we embrace everything that comes to us because we know that it comes sanctified in the hands of a loving Father.

We have got to be convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that our trials and troubles are overruled by a loving God and he will work our lasting good and he will bless us in spite of appearances. We have got to be firmly convinced that God is good and that he is not only good now, but he will be good, good to the highest possible degree not to some of his children.

Why, I think sometimes we think, well, God is good to them, but he is not being too good to me. He is good to all his children in the worst calamities, in the worst seasons God is still good.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 73:1.

In Psalm 119:75 David came to learn, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.”<sup>14</sup>

And so then, child of God, notwithstanding all that has come upon you in recent times, unless by faith you can say, “The Lord is right and God is good,” you are going to be found fainting by the way because when God’s goodness is veiled from our eyes it is then we do tend to faint.

And notice with me, thirdly, if you will, a face persuaded of God’s goodness even in the land of the living.

David said, “I had fainted...”<sup>15</sup> I had fainted not because I saw the goodness of God. \

“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”<sup>16</sup>

David believed. By faith he laid upon this truth that by providential goodness he would yet see God supplying his needs. He would supply all things that were necessary for life and godliness, not only the providential goodness, but God’s special goodness, that goodness that is laid up in his covenant even through his Son. All the spiritual blessings that are found in Christ, in whom he causes all his goodness to pass before before his people. David believed he was going to see it. “Lord, I am going to see your goodness.”

The psalmist here speaks about seeing this goodness in the land of the living. That is an encouraging statement. At times we think, “Well, we might see the goodness, but it will only be in that yonder land in glory.”

David says, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”<sup>17</sup>

God will yet, then, approve himself and he will give us all good things.

What does that mean? He is going to give us yet all special favors. And in that we can recognize he is going to give us all the support we need under affliction. He will give to us views of pardoning grace under a sense of our sin. He will give strength against Satan’s temptations. He will give us deliverance out of them. He will give us discoveries of his love and he will give us divine refreshment from his house and from his Word and from his ordinances. And yet we can continue on then knowing that if we will have faith in these things it is the best antidote against our fainting.

And God doesn’t always allow us to see the reason for his providential dealings. You know, sometimes he does.

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<sup>14</sup> Psalm 119:75.

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 119:13.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

I am thinking of a case in the life of C H Spurgeon, mighty preacher of God dating back to the last century in England. He was going through a season when many, many people in London were gathering to hear his preaching. They had to move out of the church that they were in, into the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. It was a temporary facility until they had built up the new tabernacle. And in one instance there were 17 people killed in that Surrey Gardens Music Hall as a result of what... well, it was said to be a fire. Was it really a fire, but there was a trampling. People as they tried to leave the facility... And I believe the number is 17, 17 people killed. Can you imagine what that would have done to the church there? There was a tremendous moving of the Lord and yet now they faced this hardship.

Spurgeon is said to have gone into a deep season of depression and couldn't understand why that the Lord would have permitted such a thing. But later on he records these words. He said, "I have no doubt, I have no doubt of God's goodness for every one life lost, a thousand souls have since been saved from going down into the pit."

Spurgeon came to appreciate God's providential dealings and he knew what God had done was right.

And so there are occasions, then, when God does reveal his providences, but if he doesn't, then by faith we must lay hold of God's perfect plan knowing that all things work together for good.

There is an old joke told about a student who took a brick to the market. He took a brick to the market in order to show the people what kind of house he had to sell.

You can appreciate the folly. Who on earth could judge rightly a house by a brick.

A foolish, foolish thing he did and yet it would be less foolish than trying to judge as to the goodness of the Lord by the transaction of a single hour. And sometimes we come just like the man with a brick and we... "Oh, the Lord can't be with me."

If we could stand back and appreciate that what God does is right, it is good and indeed his providences and his special favors will ultimately bring about the believer's greatest blessing.

Will you notice with me finally then this morning as we look at this text briefly, when we believe to see God's goodness we will not faint.

Notice the order of the words. It is believe to see.

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see..."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Faith believes to see. Unbelief sees to believe. And that is what we have got to learn then to believe to see. In the middle of troubles, troubles that will come our way we have got to believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. And if we will do so we will not faint.

And I think there is evidence in this psalm of what will happen when we do by faith get a hold of God's goodness.

Notice the verse following, verse number 14.

“Wait on the LORD.”<sup>19</sup>

Waiting on the Lord is the most demanding of passive activities. Waiting, it seems to be an easy thing. You know that waiting on the Lord is maybe the hardest thing you can do. How do you wait on the Lord? How do you have patience to wait on the Lord?

You can wait on the Lord with patience when you believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. When you trust God you won't faint, but you will have patience to wait upon them and you will know that if the blessing tarries for many days, yet it will still come. And so, therefore, you can wait upon the Lord.

Notice the next statement of verse 14.

“Be of good courage.”<sup>20</sup>

How can I courageously, not only with patience, but how can I courageously step out n trusting?

Oh, we can boldly trust our Lord when we know that he is good and that when he is engaging whatever it is in our lives, it is for his glory and for our goodness.

Notice the last part of verse 14.

“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.”<sup>21</sup>

Greater strength is to be found when by faith we will take the goodness of God as a sure reality. Thank God we don't have to manufacture the strength. Maybe in the situation you are in right now you feel, I just don't have the strength. I just can't go on any longer in this present state.

Thank God you don't have to work this strength up and try to come across as being strong under the affliction that is crushing you.

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<sup>19</sup> Psalm 27:14.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

“Wait on the LORD,”<sup>22</sup> there is the patience. “Be of good courage,”<sup>23</sup> there is the braveness. “And he shall strengthen thine heart.”<sup>24</sup>

It is God’s work. If he doesn’t strengthen our hearts we are all in trouble. But thank God when we trust him and trust in his goodness he will strengthen that heart and he will enable us to go on forward then in great times.

This verse underlines the absolute necessity of seeing the goodness of God by faith, especially when facing challenging seasons. The goodness of God is sometimes veiled from our eyes. When God’s goodness is veiled we tend to faint. Faith is persuaded of God’s goodness even the land of the living when we believe to see God’s goodness we will not faint, but we will be strengthened.

I want to close this morning just by sharing with you the story of Asaph, for there is a man who came close to fainting, Psalm 73. Psalm 73 and the first verse is really a summary verse of the entire psalm.

Notice how to starts in relation to what we are talking about.

“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.”<sup>25</sup>

He acknowledges God’s goodness. Then notice the second verse.

“But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.”<sup>26</sup>

Here is the fainting and why is he fainting? Because, like David—or unlike David—he had failed to see the goodness of God and by faith he could not see, he could not understand why the wicked were prospering. Why were the wicked prospering and the righteous were undergoing tremendous hardships?

Well, you know, verse 17 when he goes into the sanctuary of God, then he understands. And when he understands the goodness of God, notice verse 21, “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.”<sup>27</sup>

He had come to appreciate again that God is good. And why was he almost gone? Why were his feet slipping? Because he failed to see the goodness of God.

May God help us unlike Asaph, rather like David to believe to see the goodness of God and in believing to see that goodness may he strengthen us, may he give us courage and may he give us patience to wait upon him for many days.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Psalm 73:1.

<sup>26</sup> Psalm 73:2.

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 73:21.

The Lord write his Word upon our hearts and may he help us not only to be hearers, but to be doers of his Word as well.

Let's all pray.

*Gracious Father, we are thankful that you are a mighty God. We praise thee today, Father, that you are a faithful Lord and you are near unto your people. And, Lord, your Word has told us. We confess that we do believe that you are a great God and you are a good God. Lord, that as a father pities his children, so the heavenly Father here pities them that fear him. We know, Lord, that thy loving hand are round about us and that all of thy ways towards us are ways of love and gentleness and graciousness. But, Father, at times because of our unbelief we fail to see, whether it be because of hard providences or the days when it seems thy smile is hidden from us, we have a hard time seeing. But, oh God, help us to see. Strengthen our faith that we may trust thee in spite of appearances. Oh God, I pray that you would write this word upon every tried soul. I pray that you would grant, again, strength and courage and patience unto that one who today does not see thy goodness for it is veiled. I ask, oh God, that you might give them grace to see that your ways are right, that we may learn to trust and to live embracing a sovereign God rather than trying to escape. Oh God, help us to embrace thy sovereignty knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God and to them who are the called according to his purpose. Thank you, Lord, that your purpose is unalterable. It cannot be changed and it is for us and you have said, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us?" And we know, Lord, that we cannot even question your being for us, for you have given us your only begotten Son and how shall we not then expect that through him you will also freely give us all things? Lord, help us to trust you. Help us to lay hold upon your promises and to really believe them. Oh God, help the Word of God to be a part of our daily living. Come then today and gird up our minds with strength and with truth for your name's sake that we might be like Abraham strong in faith giving glory to God. Hear our prayer and receive our thanksgiving for it is in your Son's name we ask it. Amen.*