

The Lord is My Strength

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[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. It is always God's way to bring life out of death.

And he continually surprises us by reversing our expectations. If you remember after Abraham and Sarah had lost all their physical capabilities of producing a son and heir, Isaac was born.

After Joseph was sold into Egypt as a slave, he was lifted up to a position next to Pharaoh himself. Moses was a fugitive, a murderer. But he brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt.

David was the youngest of eight sons. But he was anointed king of Israel. Saul was the persecutor of the church.

[1 : 19] But he became Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. And it was only through death that Jesus was raised to life.

And as we die to ourselves, God brings us to life. And in a similar way, our psalm today, Psalm 28, teaches us this truth about God.

The overwhelming emotion in the first half of this psalm is that of fear. Fear of judgment, fear of death, fear of God not hearing, fear of God not answering David's prayer.

In God's silence, David fears being lost with those who are evil. And then suddenly, his mood changes.

And in verses 6 and 7, the presence and the power of God rush in. And that leads to a bold prayer to finish.

[2 : 41] Psalm 28. As well as last week's psalm, 27, were written at a very difficult time for David.

I'll just refresh your memory from last week. David was a king of Israel at the time. And we can read about this time in his life in 2 Samuel, chapters 15 to 17.

He was having difficulties with his son Absalom. Absalom wanted power. And Absalom outwardly seemed to care for the people.

But inwardly, he was manipulating the situation to his own advantage by questioning the leadership of David. He stole the hearts of the people of Israel by going to extremes to help them.

While all the while, his motives was to build up a following for himself. David had heard that not only had many risen against him, but that they were mocking him.

[3 : 56] And these words of mocking were calculated to demoralize David. So that he would give up all effort to fight against Absalom.

And after many months of this, Absalom mounted his challenge. And David had to flee for his life. But David, as we know, knew what difficulty was all about. One important lesson that he had learned early in his life was he didn't have to carry these burdens alone.

He could bring his needs to God in prayer. David was suffering. Suffering physically. He was in emotional pain.

And there was persecution. But instead of dwelling on these, as we are tempted to do, he comes back.

[5 : 06] And he reflects on God's character as he had come to know him. As David's rock, God is his security.

God is his fortress in battle. And when doubts attack him, God is his stronghold. David's request, as he began to pray, is simple.

If God will speak to him once again, he will know that he is the living and true God. But if God remains silent, David will become like those who go down to the pit.

Destined to go down. Like the heathen who have no word from God. Destined to death. So when David cries out to God, he expects that God will speak.

He expects that God will speak to him. As I mentioned last week, only in the past few years have I had similar experience of God speaking to me when I pray.

[6 : 33] And as I reflected on it, I realized, in the past, I looked for God's answers in events. In events that happened.

I'd not really expected God to answer me in his own voice or in other ways. But now as I pray, I wait.

I wait in the silence for God's answer. And I'm beginning to hear him speak. It's not audible, though some people do hear God audibly.

But as I listen, he does answer. His answers come across my mind, maybe. He comes in a form of speech, perhaps in a way that is a verse from scripture.

Perhaps it's just an impression, perhaps a thought, perhaps a picture. But David expected God to answer.

[7 : 41] And we too can pray as David prayed. Do not be silent to me. Do not be silent to me.

And God will answer us too. And then we go on and David continues to cry out to the Lord.

He cries out to the Lord. And we can see that there is added emotional intensity here. He asks God to hear his voice.

He asks him to hear his voice. So therefore, he is praying aloud. He is speaking aloud to God. He's speaking.

He brings his requests and his supplications to him. And he repeats that sort of crying by bringing his whole body to the Lord in worship.

[8 : 46] When I lift up my hands towards your holy sanctuary, says David, David prays in body language.

His uplifted hands are a universal sign of surrender, showing his readiness to receive from God.

And as he prays, he also faces the place where God's presence dwells.

So David throws his whole self into his prayer. David does not know much about silent prayer.

David's voice, David's hands, David's body are all engaged before the Lord. And maybe we too can learn from David.

Maybe we too can expend some real energy when we pray. One of the great secrets secrets of the effectiveness of Charles Finney's evangelism in the revivals of the 19th century was the prayers of Father Nash.

[10 : 12] He was a great and gifted intercessor. And at times people were offended when they passed by the house in which he was laboring in prayer because he shouted to the Lord.

But I think David would have fully understood. They both know, knew how to pray through to God. God hears the cry of those who cry out to him in their need.

David's prayer wasn't just a silent wish that God would intervene. Rather, it was a loud cry, not because God is deaf, but because it helps us to express the deep desires of our hearts.

It helps us to express the deep desires of our hearts. Speaking out our prayers helps us recognize what is in our hearts when we pray.

And then in verse four, with a sense of righteous indignation, David prays for judgment upon the wicked people.

[11 : 42] Repay them according to their work, render them their due reward. The wickedness of their deeds deserves God's wrath. And the grounds for their judgment include both their evil actions and they disregard for the works of the Lord, the works of his hands.

They deny the work of God's hands. They had left God out of their thinking. And the outcome is clear.

prayer. He will break them down and build them up no more. Some time may have elapsed between the first part of this psalm, which is one to five.

This part is a petition. And the second part, which is praise. And that's verses six to nine. Our psalm was prayer up to this point.

And now it turns to praise. And I think you will find that those who pray well will soon praise well.

[13 : 01] Because God has heard the sound of our supplications, the sound of our pleadings. real praise is not an irrational emotion.

It rises from a deep experience of God who answers prayer. And answered prayer should always be acknowledged.

And so for David, now all his misgivings are at an end.

All his fears are conquered. And David can praise the Lord again. And he does it with real vigour, as we can imagine.

And he knows that his change of attitude is due to answered prayer. He has heard the sound of my pleadings, he says.

[14:06] He has heard the sound of my pleadings. And so we see in Psalm 28, out of conflict comes resolution.

Out of conflict comes the resolution. In the darkness of God's silence, David cries to the Lord. Then the Lord speaks and joy returns. So it's when we die to ourselves that we can live to God. Because we know if there were no cross, there would be no Easter. This is God's way. God's love. I asked you last week, but I think it's worth repeating. Do you feel that you are surrounded by problems and you can see no way ahead?

[15:09] We need to remember that David could have felt like that. But he knew that God cared. He knew that he was the God of the impossible.

And so he affirmed not the difficulty, but the ability of God to overcome the difficulty. He affirmed not the difficulty, but the ability of God to overcome the difficulty.

David was confident that God would act on his behalf. He expected that God would bring him deliverance, and so he affirms it in his prayer.

He believed God would vindicate him and restore him to be leader of the nation once again. So what are you focusing on today?

Is it the problem you have? Or is it the Lord for whom no problem is too great?

[16:26] The more we focus on the problem, the more power we give to it. The more we bring to the Lord the situation, the more we allow him to bring his power into that situation.

when we know that we are walking in the way of the Lord, we can all expect that God will work and act on our behalf.

And that's why he tells us not to try and vindicate ourselves, not to try and seek revenge, but to leave it to the Lord himself.

Leave it to the Lord who can be trusted to act appropriately. So for David, his whole mood had changed.

And we notice that David uses these new words, words like blessed, like strength, shield, trusted, helped, rejoices, song, and prays.

[17:43] David now praises God. His prayer had gotten through. God is not silent, but has spoken. And David blesses him.

A strong confidence steals over him. The Lord is my strength, he says, which usually means the source of my strength. love. And a feeling of invulnerability becomes his, as he says, the Lord is my shield.

But much of this is in line with his past experience. This is not a new experience for David. He says, in him my heart trusts.

My heart has always trusted him. I have received his help. David is helped, and joy now comes in a flood. If you pray to the Lord, if you pray and he answers in a wonderful way, we need to remember that it is because God is faithful.

He is faithful. it is not because you or I are a paragon of virtue or the epitome of faithfulness.

[19:14] But the closer you try to live to the Lord, the more you know his will, the more your prayers will be in accordance to his will, and will be answered.

But behind all those other factors, the main reason prayer is answered is because of the faithfulness of God.

God can be trusted to hear and to answer the prayers of his people. God can be trusted to hear and to answer the prayers of his people.

God hasn't finished with you and me yet, and as long as we live, he will be working with us, working on us in his grace and his love.

He'll be working on us to heal us, to grow us in body, mind, and spirit. it. We can cooperate with his grace or we can reject it.

[20:32] We can accelerate our growth, we can accelerate our healing, or we can hinder it by not cooperating with him.

so, are you focusing on the trouble that your life may be in?

Are you trying to work out and plan the next step? are you trying to do this without really inviting the Lord to work in the mess?

We need to be able to pray as Jesus did right throughout his life and even in the last moments of his life. He said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

we need to trust God, to trust him to protect us and to guide us as we hand our lives over to his care.

[21 : 47] David had committed his life to God and he knew that God had committed his life to him.

So, he expressed his confidence in verses 8 and 9 that God will always care for him and for his people.

And resolution for David also brings resolution for Israel. When God touches the king, he touches the nation. A renewed David now prays for Israel for it is God who is the real king of his people.

Save your people, he prays, and bless your inheritance. And it is God who will guard them. It is God who will guard them.

He, be they shepherd, David prays, be they shepherd and carry them forever. God's care is for all time, for eternity.

[23 : 04] And God is often called shepherd in the Old Testament. Israel's kings too are also called shepherds. And Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd and he gave his life for his sheep.

for David to call God shepherd therefore is to acknowledge God as his king, as his savior, as the one who meets all of his needs.

And in verse nine, David prays a prayer for the nation. David prays a prayer for the church.

And this morning I would like to conclude by praying David's prayer, praying his prayer for you.

Let us pray. Lord, save your people. Deliver them from their enemies.

[24 : 21] preserve them from their sins. Comfort them in their troubles. Rescue them from their temptations.

Lord, save your people. Bless your inheritance. Grant your blessings of peace, happiness, comfort. love, comfort. Bless your precious heritage by your spirit. Revive, refresh, enlarge, and sanctify your church.

Feed them and be a shepherd to your flock. And lift them up forever. carry them in your arms on earth and lift them into your arms in heaven.

Lift their minds, Lord, lift their thoughts. Make them Christ-like. Make them full of you. Make them full of God.

[25 : 40] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.