

# When God Seems Silent

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[ 0 : 00 ] You, my rock, do not be deaf to me. If you remain silent to me, I will be like those going down to the pit. Listen to the sound of my pleading when I cry for help,! When I lift up my hands towards your holy sanctuary.

Do not drag me along with the wicked, with the evildoers, who speak in friendly ways with their neighbors, while malice is in their hearts. Repay them according to what they have done, according to the evil of their deeds.

Repay them according to the work of their hands. Give them back what they deserve. Because they do not consider what the Lord has done or the work of his hands, he will tear them down and not rebuild them.

Blessed be the Lord, for he has heard the sound of my pleading. The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trusts in him and I am helped. Therefore, my heart celebrates and I give thanks to him with my song.

The Lord is the strength of his people. He is a stronghold of salvation for his anointed. Save your people, bless your possession, shepherd them and carry them forever.

[ 1 : 12 ] The word of God for the people of God. You may be seated. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of God remains forever. There are seasons in every believer's life when God seems silent.

Your prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling. Scripture reading is as dry as dust. Worship songs that once stirred your heart now leave you numb. On Sunday morning, you might be tempted to stay home and skip the worship gathering.

You wonder if God is listening at all. If you've ever felt that way, you're not alone. David knew this experience intimately. Several phrases in verses 1 and 2 revealed David's fear that God had become silent towards him.

Look at verses 1 and 2. Do not be deaf to me if you remain silent to me. Listen to the sound of my pleading. I cry to you for help.

Sometimes God's silence is connected to unrepentant sin. At other times, he deepens our faith through waiting. The first calls for repentance, the second for perseverance.

[ 2 : 28 ] When God seems silent, our initial response should be to examine our hearts. The second London Baptist Confession of Faith, chapter 11 on justification, reminds us, God continues to forgive the sins of all who are justified.

Even though they can never fall from a state of justification, they may fall under God's fatherly displeasure because of their sins. In that condition, they will not usually have the light of his face restored to them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, plead for pardon, and renew their faith in repentance.

If you're in known sin, the first step is to repent. But in Psalm 28, David gives no indication that the silence resulted from sin.

The Psalm is about the believer waiting on God without knowing the reason for the delay. Scripture doesn't always tell us why God appears silent. Sometimes it's discipline, sometimes testing, and sometimes, as with Job, the reason remains hidden.

John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace, assures us, everything is needful that he sends. Nothing can be needful that he withholds. Lamentations 3 tells us the Lord is good for those who wait for him.

[ 3 : 50 ] To the person who seeks him, it's good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord. For those seasons where God seems silent, Psalm 28 gives us five anchors to hold on to while we wait, and we'll also see those echoed in our confession.

The first anchor, when God seems silent, trust that he is your rock. When God seems silent, trust that he is your rock. Look at verse 1.

Lord, I call to you, my rock, do not be deaf to me. If you remain silent to me, I will be like those going down to the pit. David begins by appealing to God's character, my rock.

Not just a rock, but my rock. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my rock where I seek refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold, from Psalm 18.

Psalm 71, be a rock of refuge for me where I can always go. Give the command to save me, for you are my rock and fortress. The rock is a firm foundation beneath our feet.

[ 4 : 59 ] As the hymn proclaims, on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. When darkness seems to hide his face, I rest on his unchanging grace.

Yet David is completely honest about his fear. If you remain silent to me, I will be like those going down to the pit. Pastor James Boyce observed, if he's appealing to God not to remain silent, it must have been because God has been silent for a while.

He has not been answering and David is appealing to him to break silence and speak to him at last. So what did David mean by the pit in verse one? The pit refers to Sheol, the world of the dead.

David cries out with the same desperation that Jonah had in the belly of the great fish. Jonah said, I called the Lord in my distress and he answered me. I cried out for help from deep inside Sheol.

You heard my voice. And David often prayed that way. Psalm 94, If the Lord had not been my helper, I would soon rest in the silence of death.

[ 6 : 08 ] Psalm 143, Answer me quickly, Lord. My spirit fails. Don't hide your face from me or I'll be like those going down to the pit.

And Christopher Ash in his commentary in the Psalms said, The pit here means not just dying, but dying without hope. Falling to the place where no words are spoken to God.

And no words are heard from God. And again, this cry for help echoes throughout the Psalms. Hear my prayer, O Lord. Listen to my cry for help.

Do not be silent at my tears. God, do not keep silent. Do not be deaf. Do not be quiet. I will say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about sorrow because of the enemy's oppression?

Although David's soul is troubled, he still rests on God, his rock. Our confession beautifully summarizes this anchor in chapter 17 on perseverance of the saints.

[ 7 : 11 ] Even though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet these things will never be able to move the elect from the foundation and rock to which they are anchored by faith.

The felt sight of the light and love of God may be clouded and obscured from them for a time through their unbelief in the temptations of Satan. Yet God is still the same.

They will certainly be kept by the power of God for salvation where they'll enjoy their purchased possession for they're engraved on the palms of his hands and their names have been written in the book of life from all eternity.

That last line is from Isaiah 49 where the Lord gives us comfort. Can a woman forget her nursing child or lack compassion for the child of her womb? Even if these forget, yet I will not forget you.

Look, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands. When you can't feel God, cling to what you know about God.

[ 8 : 15 ] When you can't feel Him, cling to what you know about Him. God's silence is not abandonment. He is still the unchanging rock. But trusting that God is the rock doesn't remove the waiting.

So what do we do in that silence? David's answer is simple. We keep praying. Our second anchor. When God seems silent, keep praying.

When God seems silent, keep praying. Again, verse 2. Listen to the sound of my pleading when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your holy sanctuary.

Now, in verse 1, David calls to the Lord. In verse 2, he cries out with a stronger word used for desperate pleading. Your translation might say supplications or pleas.

But in verse 1, David cries, hear me. In verse 2, David pleads, help me. The word translated pleadings or supplications is plural, suggesting repeated cries for mercy rather than a single request.

[ 9 : 27 ] David doesn't pray once. He keeps praying. He keeps pleading. That principle is echoed in the New Testament. In Luke 18, Jesus told a parable on the need for them to pray always and not

give up.

And in Romans 12, 12, Paul reminds us, rejoice in hope, be patient in affliction, be persistent in prayer. Now, we see also that David prayed lifting up his hands towards God's sanctuary. He lifted up his hands towards the place of God's presence. Sanctuary is a word referring to the innermost part of the sanctuary, the most holy place. This is the place where the Ark of the Covenant resided, but more important, it was the place of the mercy seat, the place from which the Lord dispensed mercy to his people.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, we stretch out empty hands for we are beggars. We lift them up for we seek heavenly supplies.

We lift them towards the mercy seat of Jesus for there our expectation dwells. Today, we no longer look to a physical temple. We look to Christ, our true mercy seat.

[ 10 : 41 ] The confession reminds us in chapter 22 in religious worship. Under the gospel, neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship is now restricted to or made more acceptable by the place where riches is done or towards which it is directed.

Instead, God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth, daily in each family and privately by individual. And Christopher Ash again points us to Christ.

So now Christ has become for us the most holy sanctuary, the place where God makes covenant with those in Christ. Although sometimes God seems silent to us, God isn't silent.

God speaks through his written word by his spirit centered on his son. Hebrews 1-2 tells us in the last days he's spoken to us by his son. And the confession confirms the sufficiency of scripture.

The whole counsel of God concerning everything essential for his own glory in man's salvation, faith, and life is either explicitly stated or by necessary inference contained in the holy scriptures.

[ 11 : 59 ] In the words of H.A.W. Tozer, now the blessed fact is that God is not silent and has never been silent but is speaking in his universe. the written word is effective because and only because the living word is speaking in heaven and the living voice is sounding throughout the earth.

Because God has spoken decisively in Christ and continues to speak through his word, his apparent silence is never absolute silence. And because God has spoken decisively in Christ and continues to speak through his word, his apparent silence is never absolute silence.

David keeps praying. God's apparent silence doesn't stop his prayers. He lifts his hands towards the sanctuary and today we lift our eyes to Christ, our true mercy seat.

Don't stop praying when God seems silent. Even when your words fail, the Holy Spirit intercedes for you. In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings.

God hears your pleading even when his answer has not yet come. Sometimes he teaches us to trust his promises rather than our feelings. Sometimes he never tells us why.

[ 13 : 31 ] Yet persistent prayer raises another question. If God still seems silent, how do I know he hasn't rejected me? David answers that fear in verses 3-5.

His greatest concern is not merely escaping danger, but belonging to the people of God. So our third anger, when God seems silent, remember that you belong to him.

When God seems silent, remember that you belong to him. David now turns to one of the hardest realities of a waiting season, the wicked. He doesn't want to be counted among the wicked.

Do not drag me away from the wicked, the evildoers, who speak in friendly ways to their neighbors while malice is in their hearts. Repay them according to what they've done, according to the evil of their deeds.

Repay them according to the work of their hands. Give them back what they deserve because they do not consider what the Lord has done or the work of his hands. He will tear them down and rebuild them.

[ 14 : 34 ] That word of drag me away is like being dragged away for execution. The wicked person David describes as friendly to your face while harboring malice in their heart.

We can't really know for certain when David wrote this psalm. Some think it was when he was fleeing from Saul. Some think it was when he was sick. Some think it was when he had a temptation that he had to flee and not be called with the wicked.

Many commentators think this fits with the rebellion of Absalom. I kind of feel that too. John Phillips, commentator, connects this psalm with David's pain. David's world was falling apart.

His own son, his beloved, handsome Absalom, had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel. David's throne, which had seemed so strong and invincible, had been snatched from him.

The nation had turned against him. The fickle crowd had hailed Absalom as though he were the Messiah. David's world collapsed and he turned to Jehovah, the one who is that which his people need.

[15:46] He appeals to him as my rock. Now David wasn't seeking personal vengeance. He's entrusting justice to God. Rather than taking matters into his own hands, he asked the righteous judge to do what is right.

The wicked ignore the work of the Lord's hands so the Lord will tear them down. As Romans 120 says, the wicked have no excuse since God's invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world.

And Psalm 19 tells us, the heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech and night to night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech nor are there words whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. David fears being swept away with the wicked since it seems like God is silent.

But David's deepest fear is not dying, but sharing in the judgment reserved for those who reject God. David's not claiming he's sinless. He's appealing as one who belongs to the covenant Lord rather than the company of the wicked.

[17:09] As believers, we have an anchor. We are God's adopted children. Because we are united to Christ, we will never be swept away with the wicked.

Our comfort is we belong to God. Our confession reassures the believer in the chapter on adoption. God has granted that all those who are justified would receive the grace of adoption in and for the sake of his only son Jesus Christ.

by this they are counted among the children of God and enjoy the freedom and privileges of that relationship. They inherit his name, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, and are enabled to cry, Abba, Father.

They are given compassion, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as a father. Yet, they are never cast off, but are sealed for the day of redemption and inherit the promises of heirs of everlasting salvation.

No matter how dark the season seems, if you belong to Christ, you will always remain God's child. His silence does not cancel your adoption.

[18:28] The psalm also points forward to Christ. James Johnston writes in his commentary, When we look forward to Christ, though, we can see clearly how the psalm points to him.

As a human being, Jesus had a good reason to plead with God, do not drag me off with the wicked. Jesus was publicly accused of being evil himself. Many lumped him together with the wicked.

Jesus counted on God, Caesar to spin, and the smears to judge rightly, to clear his name, and to show the difference between him and the wicked.

Think of the false accusations that were leveled against Jesus during his life. He was accused of being a glutton and an alcoholic, a friend of tax collectors and prostitutes. The Pharisees accused him of being demon possessed.

When he was arrested, they came looking for him with swords and clubs as if he were a robber. At his trial, they accused him of blasphemy and beat him as a heretic. When they turned him over to Pilate, they charged him with a rebellion.

[19:36] These false accusations came to head at the cross. Waiting is even harder when evil seems to flourish. David saw that with Absalom's rebellion.

Jesus endured it perfectly as sinful people mocked and crucified him. but because of adoption, we are counted among the children of God. That assurance affects everything.

David's circumstances have not changed, but his confidence has. The man who began with desperation now begins to praise. David moves from remembering that he belongs to God to praising the God who has heard him.

Our fourth thanksgiving, when God seems silent, praise him that he hears your plea. When God seems silent, praise him that he hears your plea.

Now something remarkable happens in verse 6. Nothing in the psalm indicates David's situation is any different. David's enemies are still there. His throne has not been restored.

[ 20 : 44 ] Nothing visible has changed. But what has changed is David and worship breaks out. Spurgeon observed, Lord, our psalm has been prayer up to this point, but now it turns to praise.

Those who pray well will soon praise well. Notice the shift in verse 6. The psalm has moved from second person plea, you, O Lord, to third person praise, blessed be the Lord.

Verse 6 is the answer to verse 2. Verse 2 said, listen to the sound of my pleading when I cry to you for help. But in verses 6 and 7, the plea becomes trust.

Blessed be the Lord, for he has heard the sound of my pleading. The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trusts in him and I am helped. Therefore, my heart celebrates and I give thanks to him with my song.

The greatest evidence that God's silence is not rejection, is that David moves from do not be deaf to me to he has heard the sound of my pleading.

[ 21 : 51 ] The turning point of this psalm is not a change in David's circumstances, but a change in David's confidence. Again, the turning point is not a change in David's circumstances, but a change in David's confidence.

David's praise is not based on visible deliverance, but on faith that God has heard. Often, the first answer God gives is not a change in our situation, but renewed trust in his character.

Isaiah 50 says, Who among you fears the Lord and listens to his servant? Who among you walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord.

Let him lean on his God. And Psalm 13, but I have trusted in your faithful love. My heart will rejoice in your deliverance. I will sing to the Lord because he has treated me generously.

Our confession says in chapter 22, prayer with thanksgiving is an element of natural worship and is so required by God of everyone. God's silence is often not refusal, but delay.

[ 23 : 04 ] scripture repeatedly shows God answering in his timing rather than ours. David learned that the God who seemed silent was actually working. Even when we don't have the feeling, we still have the fact and we respond with praise.

Once David is convinced God has heard him, his focus shifts from himself to God's people. David's confidence overflows into intercession.

His prayer for God's people ultimately points us to the greater king whose intercession never ceases. Our fifth anchor, when God seems silent, know that Christ is praying for you.

When God seems silent, know that Christ is praying for you. Look at David's prayer in verses 8 and 9. The Lord is the strength of his people. He is a stronghold of salvation for this anointed.

Save your people, bless your possession, shepherd them, and carry them forever. Having been assured that God hears him, David now prays for others.

[ 24 : 16 ] He turns from praying for himself to praying for his people. David ends not with save me, but save your people. Now one of Satan's strategies during these periods of waiting and darkness is to convince believers to withdraw from God's people.

But David finishes by identifying himself with the flock. The shepherd often carries struggling sheep through the ministry of the church.

Don't mistake spiritual dryness for permission to neglect scripture, prayer, gathered worship, or the Lord's table.

Those are actually often the very means God uses to sustain his people while they wait. The confession reminds us of the means of grace that God has provided to help us in the times of waiting.

the elements of religious worship of God include reading the scriptures, preaching and hearing the word of God, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord, as well as the ministration of baptism and the Lord's supper.

[ 25 : 37 ] Eric Lane helps us look forward to Christ in this psalm when he writes, If the Lord were David's strength, my rock, verse 1, he would be the strength of his people.

So he ends by praying for them, for God to save and bless and carry them as a shepherd. Here the psalm becomes messianic, for the anointed one is literally Messiah, the one whose office was to save and bless those who God gave him as his inheritance, the good shepherd who would give his life for the sheep.

In verses 8 and 9, David is praying for his people, and as he does, the language of anointed one and shepherd begins to point us, on David, to Christ.

David's speaking first of the Lord's anointed king, but these words find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ, God's true anointed one and good shepherd. Jesus said in John 10, I am the good shepherd.

Isaiah 40, he protects his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in the fold of his garment. He gently leads those who are nursing.

[ 26 : 57 ] Even when our prayers falter, even when God seems silent, the Messiah and shepherd prays perfectly for us. Romans 8, verse 34 reminds us, who's the one who condemns?

Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised. He also is the right hand of God and intercedes for us. And Hebrews 7, 25 said, therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, since he always lives to intercede for them.

Our confession has a chapter on Christ's intercession, Christ the mediator. To all those whom Christ has obtained eternal redemption, he certainly and effectively applies and imparts it.

He intercedes for them, unites them to himself by his spirit, and reveals to them in and by his word the mystery of salvation. He persuades them to believe and obey and governs their heart by his word and spirit.

And Jesus declared in John 17, I pray not only for these, the disciples around him, but also for those who believe in me through their word. Louis Burkups observed, it is a consoling thought that Christ is praying for us, even when we are negligent in our prayer life, that he is presenting to the Father those spiritual needs which were not present to our minds, and which we often neglect to include in our prayers, and that he prays for our protection against the dangers of which we are not even conscious, against the enemies which threaten us, though we don't even notice it.

[ 28 : 44 ] He is praying that our faith may not cease, that we may come out victoriously in the end. I love how Robert Murray McShane put it, but if I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies, yet distance makes no difference.

He is praying for me. If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies, yet distance makes no difference.

He is praying for me. what comfort for the believer the savior who died for us now lives to intercede for us ultimately David's distress foreshadows the stress of the Lord Jesus Christ to cry my God my God why have you abandoned me Hebrews tells us that Jesus was heard because of his reverence Jesus was not spared the cross but was delivered through death in the resurrection Hebrews 5 7 during his thirsty life he offered prayers and appeals with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his reverence again Christopher Ash helps us see Jesus therefore we must meditate on what it means for Jesus of Nazareth to pray with loud cries and tears in Psalm 28 1 and 2 to speak in 28 3 through 5 with horror yet confidence and to exalt with the resurrection joy that was set before him in 28 6 and 7 it is a healthy discipline quietly to walk with our savior in his trials in the eyes of our mind and in the affections of our hearts on the cross

Jesus truly experienced the horror of bearing our sin and expressed the abandonment of Psalm 22 yet the eternal unity of the Father and the Son was never broken Jesus endured the curse we deserve so that we would never finally be persecuted so what do believers do when God seems silent?

they trust the rock beneath them they keep praying they remember that they belong to God they praise God before they see God's answer and they rest in Christ's intercession the silence may last longer than your hope but it will not last forever one day our faith will be sight Psalm 28 begins with a cry do not be deaf to me it ends with confidence save your people bless your possessions shepherd them and carry them forever David begins fearing the pit and ends up resting in the shepherd that's what God does for his people not always quickly not always visibly but always faithfully again look at verse 6 and 7 blessed be the Lord for he has heard the sound of my pleading the Lord is my strength and my shield my heart trusts in him and I am help he has heard and I am helped he has heard and I am helped beloved perhaps today you can't say

[ 32 : 13 ] I am helped maybe all you can say is hey Lord I still call to you hold fast Christ will hold you fast he is your stronghold and your shepherd the father who adopted you has not abandoned you he will carry you forever the shepherd who died for you still intercedes for you the rock beneath you is firmer than your feelings and one day by God's grace you will say with David he has heard and I am helped as Psalm 27 ended it said I am certain that I will see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living wait for the Lord be strong and let your heart be courageous wait for the Lord let's

pray Father thank you that even when you seem silent you are never absent be our rock when we feel like we are sinking teach us to pray with believing hands lifted to Jesus our mercy seat remind us daily that we are your children strengthen us by your spirit and when the silence breaks may our hearts overflow with fresh praise in the name of Jesus our intercession and shepherd we pray amen amen amen amen amen

Thank you.