

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 28

Opening Prayer

Read Psalm 28

Overview

Psalm 28 starts off as a personal prayer almost of despair, but ends in reassurance and song, not only for the psalmist but for the community. The psalm begins in the despair of God's seeming "silence" and what that means for the psalmist. Yet by the end of the psalm, as the psalmist has been reminded of the "strength" and "shield" of the Lord, he is moved to song and to hope not only in the present but in the time to come.

Structure/Outline

- I. Is God silent to my cries? – 28:1-2
- II. Am I then to be counted among the wicked? – 28:3-5
- III. God has heard me – 28:6-7
- IV. God's promises are for all and forever – 28:8-9

Is God silent to my cries? – 28:1-2

:1 - God's seeming silence as expressed here in verse 1 is never passive. The psalmist's fear, and probably ours when we don't seem to get an immediate answer to prayer, is that if God is not working for us then He must have decided against us. *"In the speaker's mind, God is never passive in the sense that He just sits back and lets things happen, deciding whether or not to intervene. No, the omnipotent God of creation is always actively working, either for the speaker, or maybe against him."*¹ We also find a similar sentiment in ***Isaiah 64:12***.

¹ Timothy Saleska, Concordia Commentary, Psalms 1-50, page 471. Additionally it should be noted that the notion that God sits back and just lets things happen is a hallmark of Deist theology. That belief is that God has made the world and set it in motion and now does not intervene or intervenes very little. Of course, such a theology completely guts Christianity where God intervenes in a most decisive way through Jesus Christ.

- God's seeming silence is painful for the psalmist and frightening. He expresses his despair most emphatically in the comparison with those who go "down to the pit".

Why do we call it God's "seeming" silence?

*What might the reasons for God's silence be? **Read Matthew 5:6;***

Luke 11:9

- :2 - "Your holy sanctuary" – Here the Hebrew is not just the temple in general, but specifically the "holy of holies", the innermost place of the temple where God dwells. **Read 1 Kings 8:28-30**

Who told Israel where God was to be found?

*Where is God to be found today? **Read Hebrews 1:1-2***

Am I then to be counted among the wicked? – 28:3-5

Recall that in verse 1 the psalmist feared that God's silence was not passive but active. The psalmist now reaches the real depth of his despair: if God is not answering has the psalmist then be lumped in with the unfaithful and therefore is doomed?

- :3 - David argues his case that he doesn't deserve to be "dragged with the wicked". He cites their particular sins and evaluates himself as innocent of them. There is the particular sin of hypocrisy among them. They speak peace with their lips, but have evil within their hearts.

*Where is real peace? **Read Zechariah 9:9-10; Isaiah 9:6***

What does the peace that passes all understanding mean?

How does our current world hold out a fake or faulty peace?

- :4 - David wants the wicked to receive the penalty due for their wickedness. Perhaps he believes that as the penalties are given, he will stand apart from them because he has not committed these sins. His standing apart may bring God to answer.

- :5 - Here the primary issue of the wicked is exposed: a failure to see the works and deeds of God, including creation. The most basic sin and the only one that is unforgivable is confirmed unbelief. All other sins can be forgiven because by faith we know the one who forgives, but if we don't have faith in Jesus and the works of his crucified hands and feet, we cannot be forgiven.

What is the danger of theistic evolution?

God has heard me -28:6-7

Between verses 5 and 6 some change has happened to the psalmist. Some scholars believe that there was some historical change of circumstance that moved David from the despair of verses 1-5 to the trust and confession of verses 6-9. Yet it is also possible that the change happened internally for David.

:6 - David has changed from worry that he isn't being heard to declaration that God has heard his cries for supplication.

How does this often take place within each one of us?

What is the change that moves us in that direction?

:7 – This is the primary verse that explains the change in David from despair to hope. He remembers and sees God as his “strength” and “shield”. Rather than focusing on his despair and God’s seeming silence, he focus on who God truly is objectively for him. This makes all the difference.

How can we be moved from despair to hope as we contemplate God?

Read Colossians 1:13-20

What are the objective things that God has done in Christ?

How does a remembrance and reflection on the objective things that God has done move us from despair to hope?

- David is moved to thankfulness and song as he remembers the deliverance given by God. All true worship of God begins with a focus on His works and deeds. Our worship proceeds as an act of thankfulness because of them.

God's promises are for all and forever – 28:8-9

:8 – David now moves from a focus on the hope that he himself has found to a focus on the hope for all God's people.

How is this move reflective of a missionary heart?

- “His anointed” – here this is probably a reference to David, the king, since kings were anointed. Anointing in the Old Testament were to specific offices and not to people in general. Yet as God saves His anointed king, He is also acting on behalf of His people, Israel.

:9 – David now moves from merely a present saving to a future and forever hope. We have already seen the image of shepherd as a conveyance of the love of God in *Psalms 23*. Yet this image will carry throughout the Scriptures and be applied to Jesus in *John 10*. The Shepherd who will ultimately save God's people “forever” is the Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. It is also this Shepherd who will return and usher in the eternalness of the new heavens and the new earth.

Summary

Psalm 28 provides not only a helpful prayer to the one who feels God is silent, but it offers a profound hope to the community. The God whose deeds they are called to remember is the God who returns to shepherd them home.

Closing prayer