

PSALMS 28

EARNEST PETITION TO BE HEARD

{1} To you I call, O LORD my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit. {2} Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.

When we pray, do we really expect to get an answer to our prayers? Is it possible to approach prayer in a mere formality. It is something we think we should do. It is soothing to the one praying and (if we are praying for someone in their hearing) it is soothing to the one for whom we pray. But do we really expect to receive an answer to our prayer? If not, then we are like the yoga practitioner who repeats a mantra because it calms the mind and subdues the will.

How many of us would make a phone call and talk into phone if we never got any response from the person we had called. A child with do this as a game. It's a fun thing to do. How many professing Christian are just playing the "prayer" game? Going through the motions (or even emotions) without any sense of connectivity soon loses its appeal and eventually many will not even play the game. Consequently, we have an epidemic of prayerlessness in our churches.

Did David expect an answer from God? Did he earnestly seek to know that God had (at least) heard him. When we seek Him with all our heart, then we will find Him.

[Jer 29:13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.]

When we come to the point of realizing that we are like dead people unless we are in communion with God - spirit to Spirit - then we will quit playing religious games and seek God with all our hearts.

In our humanity we need feedback on how we are doing. Just as a child will look to his parents for approval, so we must look to God for feedback - answers to prayer. If people are not seeking to be confirmed by God, then they tend to despair and/or search for confirmation from other sources. The problem is that other sources (people, philosophies, drugs, hobbies, work, or even other religions) will not be able to provide the real need of the seeker. That need is for mercy. The only Source for mercy and help is God. David reached out to God as symbolically picture in his hands being lifted toward the Holy of Holies - God's dwelling place.

The way God answers our prayers is not usually not with an audible response. He may "speak" to your heart. He may change your circumstances and He may even use another person. Could it be that each of us is a messenger from God to help encourage another person and to show them the mercy of God. If we fail to encourage others with a word from God, then they may find their solace in other places.

THE PORTION OF THE WICKED

{3} Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts.

When a group of people or an entire society turns toward wickedness and the judgment of God comes upon them, even those who have not engaged in evil are affected by what happens. We should pray that we not get engulfed in the consequences of wrong choices of a nation or even other people around us. The word of God teaches that we are to be in the world but not of the world. C. H. Spurgeon said, "The best of the wicked are dangerous company in time, and would make terrible companions for eternity; we must avoid them in their pleasures, if we would not be confounded with them in their miseries."

{4} Repay them for their deeds and for their evil work; repay them for what their hands have done and bring back upon them what they deserve. {5} Since they show no regard for the works of the LORD and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again.

As we have been and are influenced by the compassion of Christ, we have difficulty with the call for retribution on those who are wicked. If we view verse four as predictive of the consequence of evil, then we see the truth that God WILL repay the wicked for their deeds and for those who do not repent, they will eventually receive what they deserve. It is only by the mercy of God (see verse two) that any of us survive.

The judgment of God **will** come upon those who will not turn from their wickedness and seek mercy from the Lord. However, God is patient and gives everyone more than adequate warning to repent. He even warns of the judgments that will come. The problem with the wicked is that, in their rebellion, they will not call upon God for mercy.

PRAISE FOR GOD'S MERCY

{6} Praise be to the LORD, for he has heard my cry for mercy. {7} The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song. {8} The LORD is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.

David started out with a petition for God to hear him as he cried out for mercy. Now, David offers praise to God because he has the confirmation that God did hear him. How did David know that God heard him? The textbook answer is by faith and by our experience. Faith, being "the evidence of things not seen" sustains us in the interim between petition and experience. We can always praise God for His faithfulness which we have assurance of by faith, but the eruption of spontaneous praise (heart leaping for joy) comes from seeing the evidence of the work of God in our lives and the lives of those around us. Again, the words of Spurgeon captures this reality:

Real praise is established upon sufficient and constraining reasons; it is not irrational emotion, but rises, like a pure spring, from the deeps of experience. Answered prayers should be acknowledged. Do we not often fail in this duty? Would it not greatly encourage others, and strengthen ourselves, if we faithfully recorded divine goodness, and made a point of extolling it with our tongue? God's mercy is not such an inconsiderable thing that we may safely venture to receive it without so much as thanks. We should shun ingratitude, and live daily in the heavenly atmosphere of thankful love.

Notice the sequence of why we can and should praise God. Starting in the second part of verse 6 and continuing through verse 8:

- Cry for mercy (physical/body response)
- Belief that God is the Source of help - he is able (mental/soul)
- Faith that trusts in God to actually do something - (heart/spirit)
- Real results are seen - "I am helped" (physical/body)
- Understanding that God is the cause of the results (mental/soul)
- Spontaneous response of joy - (heart/spirit)
- Produces song (physical/body expression)
- Acknowledge the Lord as the strength of his people (mental/soul)
- Salvation for His anointed (spiritual reality)

PETITION FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

{9} Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.

For those who will acknowledge their need for God and call upon Him, they will receive His blessings of forgiveness and mercy. As we draw near to God, we are strengthened by His presence and enjoy the protection provided from abiding in Him. Like a Good Shepherd, He cares for His flock - body soul and spirit.