

PSALMS 36

DESCRIPTION OF THE REBELLIOUS (Verses 1-4)

{36:1} An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. {2} For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin. {3} The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. {4} Even on his bed he plots evil; he commits himself to a sinful course and does not reject what is wrong.

Unless we are totally unaware of what is going on around us, we have all seen the breakdown of moral purity and the open display of immorality in our culture. The lack of morality may have always been present but it was not out in the open. Such demonstrations are clear evidence of something that is changed in the minds and hearts of many people. About the only thing that is not openly practiced now-a-days is that which is blatantly illegal. There is fear of (respect for) the consequences of the penalty of civil and criminal law. Several decades ago, there was a concern about one's reputation in the community in which people lived. Immorality may have been practiced, but it was hidden because there was fear of (respect for) the opinions of people who might know us. However, the fear of people or the fear of civil and criminal penalties does not change one's potential for participation in questionable (immoral) activities. If the underlying potential is present, then the practice will be manifested sooner or later. As we observe such things we can know that the basic problem is a lack of fear (respect or reverence) for God.

Unless we have the intervention of God in our lives, we will be ruled by our sinful nature. If we allow that natural tendency to go unchecked, then we become worse with the passing of time. Our conscience becomes deadened and we lose the ability to know just how evil we have become. The basic nature of unregenerated man is characterized by pride in what he can do and who he is. It is the same characteristic that caused Lucifer to rebel against God. Pride causes us to be blind to the possibility that we are wrong. If I am as capable and smart as I think I am, then how could I possibly be wrong? If I cannot detect the sin in my life, then how could I ever repent of it?

EXTOLLING GOD'S ATTRIBUTES (Verses 5-9)

{5} Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. {6} Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O LORD, you preserve both man and beast.

The greatness of God's love is shown in the fact that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Though our lives are ruined and we have nothing to commend us to God, He loved us anyway and made a way for our salvation.

David was experiencing the thought captured in the question from Isaiah 40:18: "To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to?" There are no superlatives great enough to put a measure to the attributes of God. They are higher than you can imagine, they are deeper than you can fathom, they are more powerful than anything you know, they encompass all creature and all of life.

{7} How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. {8} They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.

The love and forgiveness of God that results in our salvation cannot be bought because its value is beyond comprehension. This is **grace**. Since God is not a **respector of persons**, our position in society or our wealth has no influence on the availability of this grace. When we respond to God's love and accept His provision of salvation, then we experience the infinite riches

of His glory and the joy of being in right relationship with our Creator.

We see also that Jehovah is the God of Providence: He provides all we need from His abundance. (See also, Phil 4:13)

{9} For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see (*experience*) light.

Not only does God have these great attributes of love, faithfulness, righteousness, justice, and salvation, but He also is Source of life itself for all living creatures. Beyond that, God is also the originator, provider and author of the spiritual cognizance we have as human beings. David had discovered what John wrote about Christ Jesus centuries later. In Him was life and that life was the light of men. Through the work of Jesus we can be born of the Spirit and it is only with our spirit we can discern and know spiritual truth.

PRAYER TO THE LORD (Verses 10-11)

{10} Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart.

In the previous five verses, David mentioned many of God's immeasurable attributes and here he enters a plea for the benefits of God's attributes to continue. There were seven items mentioned previously and here he does not repeat the entire list but mentions only two. We would certainly want all these to continue in our life and experience.

The benefits of these mentioned attributes of God (love, faithfulness, righteousness, justice, salvation, life, spiritual light) are available to those who "know God" and those who are "upright in heart." We could make an argument that David is contrasting the righteous with the wicked or the transgressors that are mentioned in the very first verse of this Psalm. If we really know God, then we will have a reverence and awe of and for Him ever before us. We will not be as the persons described earlier who think they can do no wrong and have no consciousness of sin or of the need to repent. It is in knowing God that we come to know our own inadequacy of virtue and that leads to humility rather than pride. In humility we gladly accept the grace gift of His righteousness in exchange for our sinfulness. We are "upright in heart" only by His decree and we are upright in our lives only as we follow the leading of His Spirit.

The salvation we experience is not just a one time event but continues throughout this present life and goes with us into eternity. This benefit of being preserved (saved) leads David to pray specifically regarding those who were attempting to harm him.

{11} May the foot of the proud not come against me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.

Sometimes we tend to think of God's salvation as where we will spend eternity and forget that God is powerful to save (preserve) in our present situation in the ordinary ups and downs of life. Not only did David have a respect for God as part of his cognizance, he also recognized the existing and activity of the enemy. If there is an enemy and we are not self-sufficient but are dependent upon God, then we should pray for protection from those who are enemies of the Kingdom of God. We must not be discouraged from following God's ways. Those of the world will criticize and ridicule and sometimes do physical violence to those who put their trust in God.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S ULTIMATE VICTORY

{12} See how the evildoers lie fallen-- thrown down, not able to rise!

We must always remember that God will have the ultimate victory and we will participate in that victory as we are in Christ. We may sing "Victory in Jesus" but sometime we feel defeated. David had a vision of the forces of evil overthrown and powerless. We can have that same vision. The promises of God are the things "hoped for" and are the "evidence" we have that

allow us to function by faith and not by feeling.