

Confident in a Crisis

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That's a perfect hymn, really, to bring us into Psalm 28 this evening as we have sung about the victory and the conquering of our Lord Jesus Christ risen from the dead, conquering in life, conquering in death, conquering over Satan, conquering over all of his adversaries. Those of us who belong to him should have a sense of settled confidence and trust about what the future holds for us and I'm delighted to have you back with us again here this evening. As we go through these Psalms week by week, we just have our sense of trust and confident in the Lord strengthened and deepened each time we go through these things together. The Lord uses the cumulative impact of that to shape us and to make us into what he would have us to be and, beloved, he would have you to be a disciple who trusts him. Regardless of what you look out and see and no matter what's happening in your personal life or in the world around us, it is fitting for us to be disciples who trust our Lord, who trusts our King. If we have trusted him with our eternal soul, how much more should we trust him with our earthly life and Psalm 28 illustrates the transforming effect that confidence in God can have in the midst of a crisis that is caused by human opposition.

As you go through this Psalm, in the first half of it you see David in the midst of a crisis brought on by enemies of an uncertain origin as we know the Psalm today, but by the end, after he has walked through his trust in God and he has rehearsed these things in his mind and he has called out to God in the midst of his crisis, he ends not only on a note of settled trust for himself, he is so serene that he is able to expand his view of God and his view of prayer to encompass all of the people of God in a way that God is continuing to answer for us even today which is really remarkable to see how far God goes to answer the prayers of his people.

Now, last time we looked at a Psalm that was somewhat similar only in reverse. Last time in Psalm 27, you might remember, that David started from a position of confidence and then he ended up in a place of dependence. We said that it was like holding onto, clinging to a rope in the midst of a storm is where he ended up toward the end of Psalm 27 and at the end of that Psalm he said, "Wait for the Lord." His circumstances were not resolved but he was waiting on the Lord anyway. In Psalm 28, we have a similar structure only it's in reverse. Here in Psalm 28, it opens up in the midst of a crisis but the last half of the Psalm is devoted to an expression of confidence in the Lord. It kind of gives us a sense of how these things work, you know, you can go along and have a sense of strength and

confidence and then a storm hits and you're grabbing for the rope. At the same time, you can find yourself in the storm and by God's grace without the storm going away, find yourself settled and restful and peaceful and confident in the end.

It's instructive to us when we remember that the Lord's confidence in his Father's care was so secure and so perfect that he could actually be asleep in a boat in the midst of a raging storm around him. That's kind of an illustration of the confidence that we can have in our God as we go forward in life. Forgive me for being so repetitive on this point: in the cataclysmic social changes that are going on around us, you and I should have a sense and it should be the aim of our life that we are going to trust God and display confidence in him and not be afraid by what's happening politically and culturally around us. Our church is going to be known by Christians who are confident no matter what, confident in crisis, rather than being tossed about by the storms as if we didn't know who held our lives in his hand.

So these Psalms help to reinforce that for us and are very important for us and I just want you to look at verse 7. I'm going to jump ahead here just to make my point about that and I just think it needs to be reemphasized again and again and again which is why I reemphasize it again and again and again. David says in verse 7, "The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him." He's exuberant. He's joyful. He's confident. He's resting and that's what I believe the people of God should aspire after in this day and age and not be tossed about so much by the politics around us. We need to come back to our anchor and display while everyone else around us is panicking and worried about what's happening, for us to be serene and confident and say, "No, my heart trusts in my Lord. My heart trusts in Yahweh. My heart trusts in Christ and I am helped. I am helped to the point that my heart is strong. It exults and I will sing with joy grateful songs of thanksgiving to him." That's the only thing that is a proper response to the mercy that has been shown to us in our salvation.

Well, David walks us through this and as you go through Psalm 28, you see a clear change in attitude as David moves from his appeal in the midst of his crisis to the subsequent confidence that he has and we're going to see that in two major movements here in the Psalm. And this Psalm shows us, like other Psalms do, it shows us how to live by faith in a fallen world. It teaches us, it shows us how to live and to depend on the Lord alone for our security. To trust in him only for that which affects our lives. It echoes Psalm 62 in that way, trusting God only. Not letting that be detracted from. Not to let our trust be diminished by raging circumstances around us. It is enough for you, beloved, it is sufficient for you that if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, it is sufficient for you to know that the Lord has heard your prayer in the midst of your crisis and you can rest in that alone because God is sufficient in the crisis. He does not lightly treat the appeals of his children that ask for his care and when we know that, we can rest in that regardless of what's happening around us. You trust in God alone as you go through life.

First of all, let's take a look at David in crisis. That's our first point here this evening. David in crisis. As this Psalm begins, David is in an urgent situation that needs God's

immediate help and he is afraid that he is facing a common fate with the wicked which is just unthinkable to him. Notice how it opens up. It opens up with a very clear and expressive statement of solitary trust in Yahweh. He says,

1 To You, O LORD, I call."

It opens up with these words, "To You I call. Not to anyone else. I look not to a change in my circumstances. My appeal is to You, O LORD, and I call upon you." Look at the rest of verse 1 with me there. He says,

My rock, do not be deaf to me, For if You are silent to me, I will become like those who go down to the pit.

It's an expressive way of acknowledging his trust in the Lord and it would appear in a way that perhaps you can relate to, it would appear that David has been praying for a period of time as this Psalm enters in. If he's appealing for God not to be deaf, not to be silent, it gives you the sense that he's been asking and his circumstances haven't changed. He hasn't seen God intervene yet and so he's appealing once again for the Lord not to be deaf, not to be silent.

Now, he's using human words to describe the nature of God. It's not that God is literally deaf or that he's literally silent or mute before David, rather he's saying, "God, don't be inactive in response to my prayers," is the idea. He's asking God to hear him by which he means, "God, answer me. God, do something in this situation because it is becoming increasingly urgent." And as he calls on God as his rock, he is saying that, "God, you are my protection. You are my strength. You are the one that I run to for stability and security in the midst of the uncertainty of life. I am appealing to your character as I pray."

There should be a sense in which we're mindful of the basis upon which we are calling God to act and not simply to dump out our requests before him but to be thoughtful, to consider what it is that we're saying, on what is the basis upon which you appeal for God to intervene on your behalf. David says, "God, I'm appealing to you because you're my rock. You're my defense. You're the one that I trust in. You're my protection and so I'm asking you to fulfill that office that you hold in my life, to carry out that role which you have taken in my life as my protection. Protect me then," is the appeal. It's a poetic way of asking God to intervene in his time of need.

He says here at the end of verse 1, he says, "If you're silent, if you don't act, I'll become like those who go down to the pit." The pit here being a synonym for death, for Sheol. It's a representation. It's a word to refer to the realm of the dead and David says, "God, if you don't help me, that's what lies ahead for me." Life and death are at stake here. It's urgent and it's important and it shows that David is afraid that he may even die if God doesn't answer in response to him.

So what does he say? He goes on and prays in verses 2 and 3. Having kind of framed the crisis and the basis upon which he appeals to God here, he goes on and he repeats himself. He says the same thing with different expressions. Verses 2 and 3, he says,

2 Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help, When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary. 3 Do not drag me away with the wicked And with those who work iniquity, Who speak peace with their neighbors, While evil is in their hearts.

Do you see the repetition? Do you see the recurring theme of what he's saying? He's saying, "God," verse 1, "don't be deaf. God, don't be silent." Verse 2, "Hear my voice when I cry to you." Verse 3, "Don't drag me away with the wicked." There is a repetition and an urgency that is shown that is expressing the urgent nature of his request and it gives us the sense that when our prayers are earnest and thoughtful and sincere, that repetition is a fine way to pray. Repetition is a fine way to express the urgency of the situation and that we would be like the widow who went to the judge in the Gospels and came to him repeatedly saying, "Help me! Act on my behalf! Protect me from my opponent!"

Turn over to Luke 18. I'd like you to see this as just kind of an illustration from the lips of our Lord about what David is doing here as he prays and we see an encouragement. Here's the thing, beloved: we see an encouragement to persevering prevailing prayer, that the believing disciple does not stop after one request when he doesn't get his answer. He comes again and again until God answers his prayer. Luke 18:1, Jesus "was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, 'In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.' And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge said.'" He said, "Her repetition moved him to act on her behalf even though he was unrighteous and did not really care about her situation." Jesus here is reasoning from the lesser to the greater. If an unrighteous human judge would respond to the repeated requests of someone he doesn't even care about, what must it be like for God to respond to his children in love who continually come to him and ask for his protection.

Look at verse 7, he says, "now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" So we have this encouragement to persevering prevailing prayer. Those of you that have been praying for years and years for your loved ones to come to Christ and it just seems like they get more and more hard, don't give up. Don't stop praying. Don't say, "Well, there's nothing more to be done here," and give up as if the omnipotent mercy of God has somehow been exhausted or that somehow your loved one's heart is just too hard for God to crack this one in. Why would that be true? He cracked your heart, didn't he?

He broke through your stubborn will, didn't he? Well then, he hasn't stopped and as long as you have breath, you keep praying. You keep persevering. You keep asking God to act and to respond to your prayers.

Let's go back to Psalm 28 now, verses 2 and 3. With this repetition, "Hear the voice, don't drag me away. Don't be deaf." The echo, "God, help me! Help me! Help me! Answer! Answer! Answer!" the echo is showing the emphasis and urgency that's on his heart. He desperately needs and desires God's intervention enough that he keeps coming and asking. Jesus' question is well considered, you know, if God is like this, we can expect him to respond to our repeated prayers. The question is: do we have the faith, do we have the perseverance in order to pray in that way and to persevere continuing to ask even when there seems to be no evidence of an answer at hand. You see, the challenge in those times when God appears silent, the challenge is not for God to do something, it's for us to lay hold of his character and exercise faith even when we're walking by faith and not by the sight of anything visible that seems to be responding to our prayers.

Look at verse 2, at the end of verse 2 with me, he says, "Hear the voice, When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary." Here to lift up his hands is an expression of dependence. David is orienting his mind toward the sanctuary, that place at the time of his writing where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, where God's presence represented. David says, "I lift up my hands toward your presence and to that place which represents it."

How does that apply to us today? There is no sanctuary in the same way. There is no Ark of the Covenant. There is no physical manifestation of God like that. Well, we've got something better that we appeal to. We appeal to something even better as the grounds upon which we ask God to respond to us. We're mindful of another manifestation, a manifestation subsequent to Psalm 28 when we pray. We're mindful of the way that God manifested himself at the cross of Calvary when our Lord Jesus Christ permanently, eternally displayed the love and care of God for his children when he bore our sins in his body on the cross. When he interceded as a substitute sacrifice for us and forever settled the question, "Does God care about us? Is God concerned about us? Do we have a grounds of appeal to believe that God will hear our prayers?" Of course we do. The cross settled that for all time and so we should appeal to the cross when we pray and say, "Lord, you have already done the greater thing when you interceded for me at Calvary. Lord, you've already. I'm certain and confident of your love when I remember the cross and therefore, Lord, I'm confident now when I pray that you hear me with love, with concern and with compassion and if you interceded for me while I was yet a sinner separated from you, how much more must you be willing to hear my prayer now that I am reconciled to you and I appeal to you not in my own righteousness but on the shed blood of my Lord Jesus Christ, the one that you appointed to be my mediator with you."

You see, when we think through the nature of God rightly rather than just looking through things from our circumstances and, "I don't see how this circumstance is going to work out," and you turn to desperation and you pray to God as if it were a last resort and, "God, I don't know if you can do anything but help me if you can." Well, that's really not

worthy of him, is it? No, we should start with the cross. Start with the certainty of God's love and care for us. Affirm our belief in his good intentions toward his children and say, "Lord, I humbly ask from that position of confidence and strength based on the way that you revealed yourself in the Lord Jesus Christ that you will hear me favorably and while you may respond in a way that's different than what I anticipate or what I presently want, Lord, I'm content to place myself in your loving hands and say, Not my will but thine be done and in that, Lord, if you hear my prayer and you do your will, I know that I'm going to be completely covered and therefore I can be at peace."

That's what he's worthy of and, beloved, as we walk through these challenging times in our culture and society around us, you and I should be reaffirming that to one another. We need to live this way in our own private lives because when we gather together we'll manifest that to each other and when I'm a little bit weak and down, I'll draw strength from your confidence in the Lord and vice versa. So we just need to be mindful of the whole community of God as we walk through these things and let our trust in Christ shape the whole way that we represent ourselves to the world. The always quotable Charles Spurgeon said about this particular passage of Scripture, he said, "We stretch out empty hands for we are beggars. We lift them up for we seek heavenly supplies. We lift them toward the Mercy Seat of Jesus for there our expectation dwells."

Do you know why you should be unassailably confident about what lies ahead? It's because God has revealed himself in Christ and Christ has borne your sins on the cross and risen from the dead and ascended on high. We trust in a Savior who is risen, who is omnipotent, who cannot be defeated. As we sung earlier, he is a risen, conquering Son and when we trust in him, our heart is helped. He cannot fail. If death could not defeat him, nothing else will either. You know, I'll tell you the time when you should worry. Here's the time when you should worry and when this happens, I'll join with you in being frightened and discouraged and in utter despair. Here it is: when someone wicked succeeds in this, when they physically go into heaven and pull Christ off the throne and bring him back to earth and stuff him back in the grave and put the stone back over the grave. That's when we can worry. Until then, we should be utterly unassailably confident. There is no one that will ever do that. Our Lord reigns. He is supreme and what ever we see happening around us will never, ever contradict that fact.

So David here has appealed to God's character as his rock. He has asked to be separated from the wicked. Look at verse 3, "Don't drag me away with them. I'm separate from them. Don't give me a common lot with those who hate your name, with the hypocrites who speak one thing with their lips but in their hearts have evil designed against those that they are speaking to." He says, "God, I don't have any part in their wicked iniquity. I don't share in their hypocrisy so don't assign me a common fate with them." And the more I think about this and think about what's happening in our world and as I look to the future, I realize we may suffer. I realize we may be persecuted. Big deal. Big deal. What matters is that God sees that we are separate. That we have sanctified ourselves by faith in Christ. That we have rejected this world. And he's not going to treat us as he deals with the world in the same way. He will deal with his children according to his grace and mercy even as he deals with the wicked according to his justice and wrath.

We must be confident that God is able. Christ said that at the end of time he will separate the sheep from the goats. He knows if we're a sheep or he knows if we're a goat and we can be confident and rest in the fact that he'll make the distinction when it counts and he will care for us in the end. I just do not buy into this mindset that whips us into fear and then asks us for a donation. I just don't buy into that. We need to be confident in Christ even when in the world the wicked seem to be prevailing.

What does David do? Look at verse 4, he asks God to give them a harvest of judgment that is consistent with the seeds of wickedness that they've sown. Look at verse 4,

4 Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices; Requite them according to the deeds of their hands; Repay them their recompense.

He says, "Lord, reward them according to the wickedness of what they have done." He's asking God to vindicate his justice in light of the wicked conduct of his enemies.

Now, that might sound a little bit harsh or severe on our New Testament ears but take note of what he's doing here: this is not David praying selfishly, self-righteously or vindicating himself here. Look at what he says in verse 5, what's the reason for his request? What's the ground of it? He says,

5 Because they do not regard the works of the LORD Nor the deeds of His hands.

He is recognizing the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, the perfection of his justice and he has identified himself with the glory and the holiness of God to such an extent that he rejects that which opposes it and he says, "God, for your name's sake, for the sake of your glory, for the vindication of holiness, God, act and repay them in their unrepentant wickedness. Repay them so that your holiness might be vindicated. So that your glory might be known."

Notice the contrast he makes here, all these little things that are just woven like diamonds in a string of pearls that sparkle even more. Notice in verse 4 he says, "Pay them back according to their work, according to the evil of their practices, their deeds." Notice the words: their work; their practices; their deeds. Their actions are an outworking of their wicked heart, their opposition to Yahweh and he says, "Lord, that wickedness, I'm so identified with you that I just can't bear it. I ask you to act on behalf of your own name."

Now, watch this: he sets their deeds over against the deeds of a holy God. He says, verse 5, "They don't regard your works. They don't regard the deeds of your hands." So there's lots of deeds and works going on here and David says, "Lord, I want yours to be vindicated. I want yours to be upheld." And as he moves and shifts into that direction and moves into the power of God, the justice of God, the holiness of God, and appeals to God to vindicate his own name and holiness what happens? He begins to shift from the

urgency of the crisis to the confidence of biblical faith. He believes that they will be overthrown permanently. That wickedness will not prevail in the end. Look at the end of verse 5 there. He says,

He will tear them down and not build them up.

Does that remind you of any verse that we've considered in the past through out study of Psalms? I don't expect you to know what I'm talking about. Just go back to Psalm 1:6. I want you to see and I could do this with almost every Psalm because we've said many, many times that the subsequent 149 Psalms in some ways are simply are an outworking of Psalm 1:6 that says, "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." Beloved, if you get worked up over what's happening in the world around you or in your personal life, come back to this verse repeatedly over and over again because there in Psalm 1:6 you find the key to the moral universe. You see the outcome of everything that will ever happen. For those of us who know God, who trust in Christ, who belong to him, we can rest and it's enough for us to be able to say based on the authority of God's inspired inerrant word, "The Lord knows my way. He knows it all. He knows that I'm trusting in him and he's the Lord. He is the faithful covenant keeping God. He is Yahweh. He is who he is. I AM WHO I AM. That's who he is. He is a God of loyal love and as a God of loyal love who has set his love on me, it can only come out well for me in the end. There is no other possible alternative ending but that it comes out well for me in the end. I rest in that," you say to yourself. "I trust in that."

Someone says, "Well, don't you know anything about the world? About what's happening around you? Can't you see that the world has changed and that things are shifting and God is silent? Where is your God now?" I don't have to be able to answer that question or to explain all the intricacies of God's providence or how he will ever bring this to pass to reverse those who seem to be strong and powerful now. I don't need to know. There is one thing that I need to know in order to interpret the wickedness of the world around me and that is what Psalm 1:6 says at the end, "the way of the wicked will perish." It will end in destruction. It will come to nought. It will be overturned. And when you have that settled in your mind, you have the twin tracks that the train of your life can run on. On the one track, the Lord knows the way of the righteous. On the other track, the way of the wicked will perish. We go forward in confidence and strength from that. Period.

When you remember what the Lord said in places like 1 Samuel 16:7 that God does not see as man sees for man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart, beloved, what you should want is that in your heart when the Lord looks there he finds a settled confidence even in times of crisis that says, "Lord, I'm resting on your promises. I'm confident in your holiness. I'm confident in your power and your faithfulness and your goodness that you'll remember me even as you deal with the wicked. Lord, that's all I need to know." And not be ashamed of having a simple, by which I mean a unified, whole-hearted faith. Even if the world mocks it, I don't care. Do you? Do you care? I don't care. We can rest on the promises of God like a weaned child rests on his mother's chest and find our security and confidence in the one who holds us in his hands.

Now, with that certainty of God's justice established in his mind, go back to Psalm 28 now and we'll shift into the second half of the Psalm here. You see a new attitude that emerges here and we said the first half was David in crisis, here in the second half, we see David in confidence and this is going to lead us straight back to our Lord Jesus Christ in the end. David expressed his prayer and now he has a revived and a renewed demeanor. He blesses God because he anticipates an answer from God. Verse 6 says,

6 Blessed be the LORD, Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.

This shows confidence. God is no longer silent. What David says is that his voice of praise rises up not from altered circumstances but from a renewed confidence that God has heard his prayer. It is enough for David, it is enough for us, to know that the omnipotent God of the universe has heard and received our prayer favorably. If God has heard us and God has promised to respond to us, then we can rest in that even if nothing changes. There is that confidence that says God is not silent, God's character gives me confidence. He has heard my believing prayer. Christ has intervened at the cross for me and in the language and the argument of the Apostle Paul, if this God is for me, if this Christ is on my side, who can successfully be against me? It is trusting God alone and mark it, beloved, it's trusting alone before we know the outcome of the circumstance. David says, "He heard my voice. That makes me want to praise him."

Look at verse 7 and notice the joyful exuberance of his response. "God has heard my prayer!" and all of a sudden his heart is lifted up as if on the wings of a multiple engine rocket and his heart soars into space beyond the gravity of his circumstances and moves into an orbit of trust and confidence in Yahweh. He says, verse 7,

7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him.

You know, it reminds me of one of the prophets that we studied at the very, very beginning of Truth Community in Habakkuk 3:17. You don't have to turn there. It would take you too long to find it but in Habakkuk 3:17, Habakkuk the prophet is praying and he's anticipating a judgment coming from the hands of the Chaldeans that are going to sweep in and bring God's judgment upon his disobedient people and Habakkuk prays, he says, "Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, though there be nothing to sustain my earthly existence," he says, verse 18, "Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." "God alone is enough to satisfy my heart," he says. God alone is enough to give strength and joy to your heart despite whatever you're facing. In fact, beloved, I would encourage you to this extent and were it not revealed from the clear teaching of Scripture, I would hesitate to say something like this to you but this is where your spiritual life can and should and must go: when God seems to have withdrawn every earthly joy and comfort from your life, when sorrow is predominating in

your life, when there are threats external and internal to your well-being and you don't know where the answer is going to come from, when you don't know where the next mortgage payment is going to be made from, when you don't know any of those things, when your nearest and dearest has been taken from you in death and everything in life seems to be barren, beloved, what I would have you see from God's word here is that God has presented you an opportunity. I wish someone had been around 25 years ago to tell me this. It would have helped me and saved me a whole lot of trouble. God is presenting to you an opportunity in those barren times for you to enter into a new depth of understanding of his complete and utter sufficiency to satisfy every longing of your soul. He is sufficient to satisfy the longings of your heart to such a point that you can exult and be joyful in him even when the circumstances do not change.

What we see in that is we see how great and how lofty and how sufficient our God is. How great and how lofty and how sufficient our Christ is. How he satisfies every longing of the human heart and when our hearts are satisfied in him, in those times when we exult and give thanks to him, in those times, then God's glory is put beautifully on display through your broken heart. I don't say it lightly. I say it on the authority of God's word and if I've described your broken heart tonight, here in Psalm 28 you find the answer where the healing begins. Where the grace and the restoration can be found. He is a God of power and a God of love.

Look at what he says in verse 8. He starts to expand out and speak in plural terms now as opposed to in first person singular. He says in verse 8,

8 The LORD is their strength, And He is a saving defense to His anointed.

He said there at the end of verse 7, I skipped over something that I shouldn't have skipped over. He said,

7 And with my song I shall thank Him.

With his heart now resting again in God's protection, with his heart satisfied once more in the sufficiency of the God to whom he belongs, he gives exuberant thanks. God has answered him in his distress. "God, my heart is uncertain. I'm in a crisis here. Don't be silent to me." Verse 6, God has given him his answer. He has found that inner strength again. What does he do in verse 7? He does that which you and I sadly too often fail to remember to do, he goes back and he says what? "God, thank you. God, I'm grateful that you've answered my prayer. That when I cried out to you from the pit and when my heart tempted me to think that you were silent and turning away from me and I cried out to you, you in your mercy reached down and you showed faithfulness to me. You renewed my heart. You restored me. You protected me. You brought me through even through the taunts of those who were delighted to see me fail. God, I remember that. God," you say to yourself, "God, I remember those times. I remember those prayers of desperation. I remember the blackness and silence of which everything seemed to be and, O God, I remember how you answered me. I remember how you brought me up out of the pit and,

O God, all I can say is thank you. Exuberantly, joyfully, gratefully, Lord, I say thank you for what you have done."

That's appropriate. Isn't that what you should do when God has shown that kind of favor and faithfulness to you? Isn't it appropriate for us to go back and give thanks? To be resolved in heart with my song, I shall thank him? Interesting, isn't it? He says, "With my song I shall thank him." I know sometimes I might sound a little bit like a broken record when we're getting ready to sing and I say, "Sing out. Sing like you mean it," that kind of thing, well there's a reason for that. Your exuberant singing, unrestrained lifting of your voice is an appropriate way to return thanks to God. We should not be ashamed to sing out whether you've got a good voice or not. We should not be ashamed to sing out. Our church should be marked and the joy and the exuberance of our singing should simply be a reflection of the deep inward gratitude that we have and song gives voice to the thanks that we have when we sing.

So yes, we lift our voice. No, we don't care what people think about us. We don't care if people come in from the street and think, "Restrain yourself." No, I would prefer to be like David who danced exuberantly even though his wife mocked him for it. No, I don't care what the unbelievers think about it. I want to sing out with my voice. Why? Because I'm thankful. Because, you say to yourself, because I'm grateful because he helped me when I trusted in him and our hearts individually and corporately become such that we can't help ourselves. You're going to give me opportunity to sing? Ha, I'm going to raise my voice because my heart is exalting and with my song I'll thank him and the way that I engage my heart in the song will be an expression of the sincerity and the depth of my thanks. Shouldn't we sing that way? Kevin, don't you think we ought to sing that way? I knew Kevin would say yes.

Now watch what happens here. From this position of personal gratitude, David gradually extends out his thanks. In verse 8 he says, "The LORD is their strength, And He is a saving defense to His anointed." His anointed here thinking about, I don't believe not thinking in Messianic terms about Christ as the anointed one. That happens in the Psalms but what happens as you go into verse 9 as you see that he's thinking about the people of God collectively as his anointed. In verse 9 he says, "Save Your people and bless Your inheritance." So where he goes in verse 9 makes us think that he's thinking about a plurality of God's people in mind and the Lord is their strength. God is a saving defense to his anointed. God can be trusted by his people to deliver them in their distress. He is a saving defense. He is like a high-walled fortress that you run into and you are safe when you trust in him.

And look at what David does as his mind expands out to the people of God. Now that he's confident, he's come out of his crisis and he's confident, he expands. He has grown spiritually so that now he is interceding on behalf of the entirety of the people of God and look at what he prays for them. Verse 9, he says, "God,

9 Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; Be their shepherd also,
and carry them forever.

What a magnificent, magnanimous heart the appointed king and representative of the people of God has just issued on their behalf. It's not just David who needed God's saving protection. He looks out as their king, as their representative and says, "God, your whole people need this kind of protection and help that you've just given to me and so don't just keep it to me, Lord, give it to all of your people. Spread the blessing around. Strengthen them in their trials and tribulations because, God, I want them to have the same confidence with which I pray to you now myself. I would have," he says, "I would have all of the people of God know your sufficiency to this great extent where they just spontaneously burst out with gratitude, Blessed be the name of the Lord! Because he is our strength and shield."

It's interesting, save your people. God looks on us as his own. As his inheritance. As that which belongs to him. We, the people of God, are a precious possession to him. Not for our own sakes but for the glory of God and for the glory of Christ. God cares about the well-being of his people and guarantees that he will ensure it until the end. And because God is like that, David could say, "God, draw upon your character and save your people and bless them," and he could pray that with every confidence that God would fulfill his request and be good to them.

"Be their shepherd," he says, "carry them forever." Hold onto your hat: how fully did God answer this prayer? How great was the fulfillment? So great and so perfect that only the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ could exhaust the meaning that the Spirit inspired David to pray as he closed out this Psalm. What did Jesus say about himself? "I am the good shepherd." In Christ Jesus our Lord, we see the fulfillment of this. We see God in the person of Christ being the shepherd which laid down his life for the sheep. How fully does God answer the prayer of Psalm 28:9, "Carry them forever"? Jesus said in that same chapter of John 10:28, he said, "No one will pluck them from my hand."

So he comes to us as a shepherd, as one who guides us and protects us and provides for us. Protecting us from every enemy. Providing for our every need. And doing so in a way that secures our permanent and eternal blessing. He carries us forever. He carries us through this life and when this life is over, he bears us up and carries us with himself into heaven where sin and death and foe and taunts and separation and loneliness will never strike again.

David probably didn't see the fullness of this but when the Spirit of God prompted him to write these words, God knew how he would fulfill these words. Jesus Christ saved his people at the cross. Jesus Christ is their shepherd through life. And Jesus Christ will carry us forever. You see the career of Christ even in Psalm 28:9 and so Christ Jesus our Lord came to save us. He came to save you if you belong to him, not only from physical peril but from spiritual peril as well. His death and resurrection secured our eternal blessing and until we receive that inheritance in full, he protects and guards us as his sheep with intimate care.

Beloved, are you in a time where God seems silent to you? Take heart from this Psalm. David was where you are at now. Don't give up. God hears your cry. If he delays in answer, it's only so that you can exercise faith and enter into an even more abundant realization of the glory of who he is so that your capacity to praise and give thanks to him would be expanded and deepened beyond what it would have been if you had not known this trial that you find yourself in. Our God is good always. He is gracious always. He carries us always. Trust your Rock. Trust him forever.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Our Father, you are our Rock and you have not been deaf to us. You have not been silent when we called upon you. We thank you for those times where you reached out to us in our distress and you rescued us. When it seemed like all the world was aligned against us and we cried out with only your ear to hear us, Lord, you answered. We thank you for your faithfulness. We thank you, Father, that you display that faithfulness to us so often in this life and if we've seen it in this life, Lord, how much greater and more glorious will be the ultimate fulfillment when we are with you in heaven. O Lord, may the glory of your grace and the fact that you offer it now to sinners who have not yet come to know you, may the glory of the promise of your blessing cause these who do not know you to come to Christ in eager expectation of his blessing, forsaking sin and the world for the sake of knowing you. Lord, we love you. We honor you and we'll show that now even in the way that we sing. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.