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Psalm 28
July 27, 2025

The Lord is My Strength

What a great week it has been at Vacation Bible School! As Janet said, we have been On the Road with God. We have learned how *God is with us on the journey* (Genesis 12:1-9). *God is with us when we go off course* (Exodus 13:17-22). *God is with us when we're joyful* (Luke 1:39-56). And *God is with us when we're lonely* (Luke 19:1-10). Each day was filled with crafts, snacks, bible stories, games, and songs that shored up the daily lesson. If you participated in some way, whether big or small, please stand up and let us say thank you! You have no idea the impact you've made on these kid's lives and how these truths will shore them up in the future when they need them most.

They say that you can accomplish more spiritually in kid's life through experiences like VBS or Summer Camp than you can throughout the rest of the year. They form the foundation, or bedrock, that our kids will build upon as they grow up and experience life. Whether in good times or bad, they will always have these lessons imprinted upon their hearts to help them navigate when life gets rocky or off course. Just like King David in our psalm today.

The Psalms were poems written by King David that the Jewish people turned into worship songs. Remember how I said that two thirds of the psalms are laments or cries to God for help? Well, Psalm 28 is another one of those laments. While David did not have a Bible to read, someone certainly shared with him stories of how God was with his ancestors as they journeyed through the wilderness into the Promised Land. These stories formed the foundation of his faith...his certainty that God was with him as well.

Please turn with me to Psalm 28 as we hear David's cries for help in his time of need.

To you, Lord, I call;
you are my Rock,
do not turn a deaf ear to me.
For if you remain silent,
I will be like those who go 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.

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.
 4 Repay them for their deeds
 and for their evil work;
 repay them for what their hands have done
 and bring back on them what they deserve.
 5 Because they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord
 and what his hands have done,
 he will tear them down
 and never build them up again.
 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 he helps me.
 My heart leaps for joy,
 and with my song I praise him.
 8 The Lord is the strength of his people,
 a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.
 9 Save your people and bless your inheritance;
 be their shepherd and carry them forever.
 Let us pray. Prayer of Illumination.

If you were to remove the carpeting from the sanctuary floor and blast away at the concrete, you would find so much rebar underneath that it would be hard to destruct. Likewise, the walls have steel beams in them to hold up the walls and the clear story above. If there is ever an earthquake, run inside here! Because it isn't going anywhere.

This morning I want explore in-depth this psalm and see how it forms the foundation for David's faith or what kept him strong when times got tough. We'll consider it's movement with it's highs and lows. We will see how it points us to our rock in life, Jesus Christ. And ultimately we'll draw upon the firm wisdom it provides us today.

Notice how Psalm 28 is bookended by David's acknowledgment that his strength comes from some place other than himself. Verse 1 reads "To you, Lord, I call; you are my Rock." And verse 8 reads "The Lord is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one." This is the foundation for any 12 step program.

The Hebrew word for rock is tsur. It can mean rock, boulder, or cliff. In other words, something that is not easily moved...neither wind or rain, nor the storms of life. It is constant. A firm foundation. Something that is the same yesterday, as it is today, as it will be in the future. It can be counted on, like the rebar in these floors or steel beams in these walls.

The Hebrew word for strength is oz. It can also mean might, power, or refuge.

The Hebrew word for fortress is mauz. It can mean stronghold, refuge, or protection. In another words, it's a place where one retreats to be protected from an enemy or a storm.

This is where David went when life got rough. Whether it was as a child shepherd in the wilderness fighting off wild beasts, being chased by a vicious King Saul, maligned by Saul's daughter, hotly pursued by his own son, convicted by a friend, or condemned by his own guilty thoughts. David had a safe haven from the storms of life. His relationship with the Lord.

Now, I'm guessing by the sense of Verse 3 that this psalm was written some where after David was chased by Saul but before his adulterous affair with Bathsheba. There is no implication of any wrong doing on David's part.

Verse 3 reads, "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."

At this point, notice how David distinguishes himself from "those who do evil." Perhaps naively thinking, he would never fall into those traps. Let me see if I can propose who I think David was talking about here.

When David was anointed king over Israel, King Saul was still on the throne. In fact, David was part of Saul's royal court. He was best friends with Saul's son, Jonathan. Normally the kingship passed through family lines to the first born son. That would have been Jonathan. But in this case, because Saul had done evil in the eyes of the Lord, God rejected him as king and chose David instead, not Jonathan. So we can only imagine the animosity and contempt that must existed between the two. Saul became so paranoid and insecure that he threaten David's life to the point where David had to run away and hide in the desert. My guess is that's where we find David in this psalm today.

Have you ever experienced this kind of contempt before? Through no fault of your own, someone seemed to just have it in for you and wished you ill? Or maybe you felt the scourge of someone's venomous rage?

I once had a boss who seemed to despise me and the Christian faith that I stood for. No matter how hard I tried to please him, it just never seemed good enough. He would often try to make my life miserable. He berated and belittled me in front of others. He gave me terrible performance reviews.

Now fortunately, my bosses above him really liked me and the job that I was doing. So they always corrected my performance reviews and made them positive. I even got an award for something that I had done that had a huge impact on our outfit's readiness. My boss certainly didn't write it. But my bosses boss did. And that made him hate me even more.

Now it would have been so easy to stew on his discontent and reflect that negativity back to him. But somehow I knew as a follower of Jesus, that I had a choice. I could return hate for hate or I could replace hate with good. The only way I could do that was by relying on the Lord and his strength and not my own. I had to trust that God would take care of me, my reputation, and my performance reviews. I just had to continue being true myself, work hard, and trust that God would take care of the rest!

Notice how David opted not to take matters into his own hands, but instead put his trust in the Lord who saw what was going on and brought justice when it was time.

The Apostle Paul taught us, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing so, you will heap burning coals on his head."
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."¹

Are you in that place now where you need to let go of the awful things that someone has said to you or about you? We can either choose to either stew on it and let it consume us or we can return good for evil?

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he taught, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."²

The best thing we can do is hold our tongues and say nothing at all. What if we relied on the Lord to be our strength, shelter us from the crazies, do the good we can do, and then trust God to sort things out? God will hold them accountable. He will bring justice. It's just not up to us to know when, or how, or where.

Once David was able to let go of this inner stewing and how he was wronged, he was able to praise God, once again.

¹ Romans 12:17-

² Matthew 5:11-12

My friends, the same thing is true for us. When we let go of anger and judgment and allow God to be God, we are freed up to worship God in spirit and truth.

“Praise be the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy.”

So how does Psalm 28 point to Jesus Christ?

Jesus is our rock. Our faith in him is our stronghold through life, good or bad.

In the Gospel of Matthew when the Pharisees and Sadducees were spreading deceit and lies about Jesus to the people, Jesus turned to his disciples and asked, “But who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

“But what about you?” Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?”

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”³

The testimony that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God was the rock upon which the church would be built. Peter was not the rock. He came and he went. But his testimony is what has stood the test of time. That has not changed and never will.

As Jesus was dying on the cross, passersby hurled insults at him. The religious leaders mocked him. Soldiers offered him wine vinegar to drink and cast lots for his clothing. And what did Jesus do? He forgave them, praying, “Father forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing.”⁴

Jesus even instructs us to love our enemies and to pray for them. Even those who persecute us.⁵

This is hard stuff. We cannot do it on our own or with our own strength. We must trust the Holy Spirit to help us to do these things.

So what hope does Psalm 28 provide us today?

It shows us how life can sometimes be an emotional roller coaster. Full of highs and lows. Instead of being tossed upon the seas of our emotions, we can experience the peace and calm of God.

Psalm 28 models how we can pray with honesty and with open hands, lifted high to the Lord. In fact, David encourages us to bring our full selves to God. Our hopes, our fears, our insecurities, our joys, our sorrows, and our pains. God wants to hear it all.

³ Matthew 16:13-18

⁴ Luke 23:34

⁵ Matthew 5:44

Psalm 28 gives us the certainty that God hears our cries for help. He may answer us right away. Or he may not.

Psalm 28 calls us to pray for our enemies. As we pray for them, God changes our hearts towards them, replacing our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. And we pray that God might change their hearts as well and draw them closer to himself.

Psalm 28 encourages us to trust that Jesus will take care of what concerns us. To believe that He has everything in his hands, like a Good Shepherd. So we can rest in his arms.

Psalm 28 calls us to praise the Lord in every season of life. David declares, “The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped.”

And finally, Psalm 28 models a faith journey from the depths of anxiety to the heights of praise, from solitude in suffering to solidarity in worship.

So may we let Psalm 28 direct us to pray with bold honesty, to trust joyfully, and to remember that the God who hears the cries of His people once did so supremely in Christ—and continues to do so today. May we put our faith in Jesus, our rock and our redeemer. May this be the foundation upon which we build our lives. Amen.