

ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Sunday 18th July 2021

Choruses to sing or read

I will call upon the Lord
who is worthy to be praised.
so shall I be saved from my enemies.

The Lord liveth and blessed be my rock
and may the God of my salvation be exalted.
The Lord liveth and blessed be my rock,
and may the God of my salvation be exalted
(Mission Praise 306)

Give thanks with a grateful heart
give thanks to the Holy One;
give thanks because He's given
Jesus Christ, His Son.
Give thanks...

And now let the weak say, "I am strong",
let the poor say, "I am rich",
because of what the Lord has done for us;
and now let the weak say, "I am strong",
let the poor say, "I am rich",
because of what the Lord has done for us.
Give thanks...

And now...
(Mission Praise 170)

Prayer

Our Loving Heavenly Father,
Thank you for the privilege of prayer. Thank you for all your many blessings
and daily provision in my life. I pray for any in need, especially friends and
family. May each one know your presence and peace at this time. Thank you

for your faithfulness to your promises in your Word. Speak to all who join with me in working through these Church at Home notes today. May we see you more clearly, know and love you more dearly, following your more nearly, Amen.

Bible Verses for today

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vine...yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my saviour. The Sovereign Lord is my strength...he enables me to go on the heights." (Habakkuk 3.17-19)

Read Psalm 28.6-9

"Knowing the Lord through prayer"

The Prophets of Baal cried out to their god but there was no response. They increased the volume and the activity, but still nothing! Elijah mocked them, "was their god asleep?" Then Elijah set up an altar to the Lord. Even after dowsing it three times in water, Elijah's prayer was answered immediately with fire falling from heaven. So how is your prayer life?

Do you see God responding like Elijah did? If we are honest, our experience is more like that of the Prophets of Baal – with one big difference – the Lord is definitely not asleep, He never sleeps nor slumbers!

David wrote Psalm 28 to express his struggle with prayer – so be encouraged. In it he reassures us that God does hear even when at times we wonder if it is the case. The Psalm highlights two important factors when thinking about prayer – and God's answering of prayer. The first is...

I. THE RESPONSE OF GOD

Why do we know times of delay? God always answers prayer – as we wait on the Lord we will receive a response. Remember "no" is an answer as much as "yes". There is of course the answer of "wait" for perhaps your timing is out?

1. GOD HEARS

a) He does not have a deaf ear

However, though the Lord always hears, He chooses not to respond where there is sin. For example in Isaiah 59, Isaiah says, *"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear to dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."* (v1-2)

Sin separates. God's people separated themselves from God when they thought they knew best so God allowed them to learn the hardest of lessons

by not intervening, an example of this was when they chose Saul as their king to be like the other nations – see 1 Samuel 8.18.

Amazingly through God's grace He sent his Son, Jesus, to be placed in a position where God the Father rejected his cries from the cross, to save us. Psalm 22 speaks prophetically of that rejection with the harrowing words of Calvary, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me...O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer..."* (v1-2)

Through sacrifice sin was dealt with. Through Jesus' sacrifice for sin once for all we have access to the throne room of God's grace. With sins confessed and forgiven we can know...

b) He hears our cry

The Psalmist follows, *"Hear my cry for mercy"* (v2) with a trusting statement of faith, *"Praise be to the Lord for he has heard my cry for mercy"* (v6)

God in his mercy enables faith to arise to bring assurance that God has heard. Praise is an important part of prayer. We need to remind ourselves how great a God we have. When we exalt the Lord our hearts and faith are lifted too. Think back, remember how the Lord has answered prayers in your past. He hears and He helps.

2. GOD HELPS

a) He strengthens His people

"The Lord is my strength...the strength of His people" (v7-8)

There are times when the Lord takes us "out" of a situation – a miraculous deliverance – and times when He takes us "through" a situation. I guess we would all prefer the former but if we are to get stronger in our faith we often need more of the latter. God delivered his people through the Red Sea miraculously but then provided daily Manna for 40 years as they wandered in the wilderness. Sadly, a generation fell in the wilderness through unbelief whereas they could have known the Lord better if they had done things his way and got into the Promised Land so much earlier! It was a new generation who grew up to see God's promise fulfilled.

b) He shields His people

"The Lord is my shield...a fortress of salvation..." (v7-8)

God kept His people from their enemies. The constant challenge was for God's people to trust the help God offered. It is always best to submit to God's ways as they are best and keep us from much harm.

*"The Name of the Lord is a strong tower,
the righteous run in and they are saved"*

God sent His Son to be that fortress of salvation – that strong tower – for us.

Have you cried out to the Lord for mercy – because of your sins?
If you call upon the name of the Lord you will be saved – God's Word promises. He hears and He helps - through Jesus.

The second striking thing about these verses in Psalm 28 regarding prayer – something we sometimes forget – is the importance to God of...

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

3. GOD'S WORK IN OUR HEARTS

a) God wants you to trust Him with all your heart

"My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped" (v7b)

Sometimes we must trust when we cannot trace what God is doing or don't like what is happening to us (See Habakkuk 3.17-19 above) here the prophet rejoices in the Lord even when there is no harvest and the future days seem bleak. What a challenge to every Christian to keep trusting?

b) God is worthy of our greatest praise

"My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song" (v7c)

Circumstances may be challenging but we can always rejoice in the Lord and our relationship with Him.

Do you praise God only on the "good days" or on "bad days" too?

Paul exhorts the Church to rejoice in the Lord always. Then he says, *"and again I say rejoice"* for we need to take our eyes off the situation to look fully at our Saviour.

c) God wants you to know His security

"Save your people and bless your inheritance..." (v9)

Through the Lord Jesus Christ we are saved "to the uttermost", i.e. completely. Having a Saviour who has overcome death puts us in an impregnable place. The final verse of the Psalm reminds us of the unique relationship of God with His people. As His people we are saved, as His inheritance we are special to Him, and as His flock we are cared for and safe. Do you see the final picture? It is of the Lord as our Shepherd carrying his flock. Sheep normally follow – but such is the love of the Good Shepherd, He lays down His life for the Sheep. There isn't anything He wouldn't do. As His inheritance, we are precious to Him – more precious by the day.

We are saved – being saved – and will be saved for all eternity through our relationship with Him – which He has made possible. What a wonderful Saviour our Lord Jesus is! Deepen your relationship with Him in prayer.
Amen.