

# Lead Me to the Rock

Psalm 28

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**Main point:** God uses prayer in the lives of His people to supply them with strength, assurance, and hope.

To You, O LORD, I call;  
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.  
<sup>2</sup> Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help,  
When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.  
<sup>3</sup> 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.  
<sup>4</sup> 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.  
<sup>5</sup> Because they do not regard the works of the LORD  
Nor the deeds of His hands,  
He will tear them down and not build them up.  
<sup>6</sup> Blessed be the LORD,  
Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.  
<sup>7</sup> 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.  
<sup>8</sup> The LORD is their strength,  
And He is a saving defense to His anointed.  
<sup>9</sup> Save Your people and bless Your inheritance;  
Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.

## PSALM 28

### Introduction:

Stuart Olyott, a British minister, called this psalm "*a rainbow prayer*" because it shows many facets and colors of prayer blended into one prayer. But before we open up this prayer, Let's remind ourselves of *what prayer is*.

**Prayer is not** repeating words found written in a prayer book. Prayer is not a mindless, repetitive chant to move God to some action we desire. Biblical Christians understand and believe what the Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 178 states. In response to the question, "What is Prayer?" It reads,

- **Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God**, which means that prayer has to do with our hearts. But not all of our heart's desires are legitimate. So, it goes on to say...
- **For things agreeable to His will**, but we have no right to go before Him in and of ourselves. So, we go,
- **In the name of Christ**—we need a Savior and a mediator, and there is only one who is fit to serve in this office (*Acts 4:12*). He is the One who has been crucified and risen and appointed by God to be the Savior of sinners—the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **With confession of our sins**—now we do this in light of 1 John 1:9, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But "if we regard wickedness in our hearts,"—that is, we *enjoy* and *cherish* and seek to explain away God's demand upon our lives that we may continue in sin—the psalmist said in chapter 66:18, "the Lord will not hear." And so, confession of our sins is necessary. But it doesn't end there. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins...
- **And thankful acknowledgment of His mercies.** Now, that's prayer in a clear, crisp, theologically accurate statement.

Another way to describe prayer is that it is like *one rainbow*. Within a rainbow, there are many colors, and they are very different from each other. But when looking at a rainbow, it is very difficult to see where one color starts and the other begins because they merge into each other.

Now, we have been taught in school that there are seven colors of the rainbow (*red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet*). The reality is, there are many more colors in a rainbow (up to a million colors), but our human eyes cannot see all those other hues. This is what Olyott means when he says, prayer is like a rainbow. Some prayers are very *distinct*, and you can tell where one starts, and the other begins. But at other times, it is impossible to see the *distinction*. Prayer is like a rainbow. Yes, there are different *kinds* of prayer, and different emotions in prayer, yet here in Psalm 28, we discover that we have many types of prayer in one prayer! By looking at the many kinds in this psalm, it makes a point about prayer, which is, prayer is the rock of the Christian's life.

The context in which this psalm was composed is unclear, but from the contents, we discover that the influences of the ungodly tempt David. He is thinking about their lifestyle, their conversations, and their blindness (vv.3-5). This psalm is helpful in the danger of being led astray by the acts and influence of the unconverted. He is conscious of the threat to which He is exposed. Perhaps you feel the pull of returning to past habits and going back to bad days. When captured in the vise-grip of this sort of temptation, what do you do? How do you pray? David offers this earnest prayer and seeks to bring before his own mind the reasons why he should not yield to these influences.

In this psalm, not every kind of prayer is mentioned. I want to draw your attention to seven sorts of prayer with a dominant emotion.

## **Exposition:**

### **A. Prayer is sometimes invocation expressed with expectancy. (vv.1-2)**

- To You, O LORD, I call;  
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.  
<sup>2</sup> Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help,  
When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.

To "**invoke**" means *to call upon, and to do so until you've been satisfied that you've been heard*. Something vocal is with the use of the voice. It means I am using my voice, and using my voice, and

calling and calling until I am sure that the person I am calling has heard me. Prayer is sometimes invocation with the emotion of *expectancy*.

- It is a cry of faith and of belonging to God—**to You, O Lord I call, my rock.**
- It is a cry mindful of God's power—**my rock**; this is one of the most vivid metaphors for God by the Old Testament saints. (*Ps.18:2, 31, 46; Deut.32:18; 1 Sam.2:2*)
- It is a cry of fervency—**do not be deaf to me.**
- It is a cry of strong reason—**for if you are silent to me, I will become like those who go down to the pit.**

One of the significant characteristics of unconverted people is that they cry to God, but then they walk away before they know that their prayers are heard. And the reason is that they are not really interested in *hearing from God*; they simply want relief from their crisis or some blessing that they desire. They utter prayers, but they don't *insist* that if God does not answer, there is no hope for them. What David indicates here is that *he expects to be heard because he is God's servant and child*, and if he is not heard, then he is being treated like an unconverted, unbelieving person—which he knows that he is not. Don't be silent to me, Lord or I will be like those who go down to the pit of destruction.

**Application:** What are you invoking God about in your life today? The absence of invocation in prayer could be a sign of hidden depression or even spiritual discouragement. Perhaps, you've cried out to God before, and it seems as if your prayer has fallen on deaf ears! Jesus tells a parable recorded in Luke 18 to show us why we ought to persist in prayer and not lose heart (*Cf. Luke 18:1-8*). The point is that God is not bothered by His people's many requests, and as you pray with importunity, you should be confident and expectant that God will hear you.

## **B. Prayer is sometimes supplication injected with fear. (v.3)**

- <sup>3</sup> 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.

Another characteristic of the unconverted is that there is an inconsistency between *what they say* and *what's going on inside*. The person you *see* and *hear* is different than *the person they are in their soul*. They put on a front. In this case, David lifts out how they say beautiful things to their neighbors—"**speaking peace**," that is, they speak kindly around people they live and work with, but it is all pretense. They speak with friendliness, but deep down, there is jealousy, unforgiveness, hate, or a judgmental or critical spirit.

David is aware that God is going to "**drag the wicked away**" in judgment. Like clearing or sweeping off the table, God will take all unconverted people in His hand and sweep them away. David is fearful of being treated the same way, so he prays this way.

Notice carefully that David calls them "**workers of iniquity**," and Jesus uses this same description in Matthew 7:23,

- And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

A worker of iniquity is not a person who *commits the same amount of sin* as other people, but they have the same *duplicity* as unbelievers and unconverted people. And an unconverted person does good

works *in* the world's eyes, but they have not done *God's will* by obeying the Gospel to repent and believe. Their *words* and their *actions* may not differ greatly in the eyes of others, but they have the same heart of stone, which is not sensitive to God and refuses to seek Him and love Him.

There is always a difference between *what people see* and what they are inside. And one day, David says, God will take them in His hand and sweep into the pit where unbelievers must go, if God is just.

- **2 Timothy 2:19**—Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

**Application:** As David prays, there is an *invocation*, there is pleading or *supplication*, there is *expectancy*, and there is *fear*. But what does David do with that fear? *He goes to God*. He does not want to be treated like the unconverted, so he pleads with God. This is proof that David's heart has been converted.

From *invocation filled with expectancy*. From *pleading filled with fear*.

### C. **Prayer is sometimes imprecation filled with anger. (v.4)**

- <sup>4</sup> 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.

So often, when we come to a text like this, we don't want our friends and unconverted family members to hear this because these kinds of prayer are like the "crazy uncle" in our family. In other words, we don't want anyone to see or hear this kind of dark-colored prayer. But may I remind you that in *imprecatory prayers*, we are not asking God to do something that He has not already said He would do!

To "**requite**" or to "**repay**" means *to pay them back*. To punish them. And David is asking God to return something to those who work iniquity, "**according to their evil practices**." "Give them what they deserve," David prays.

Now, let's apply a test to our hearts to see if we have experienced the saving grace and life of God. There is no debate about God's call for us to love others, even if they are wicked, ungodly, blind, and harden sinners. Because that is what we once were (*Titus 3:3*). Do we agree?

But, what if that same sinner continues to reject the offer of the Gospel, continues to *use the Lord's name in vain*, and continues to *despise the truth you preach* and treat it in a worthless way, as a pig would treat a pearl? What if they *refuse to leave the path of wickedness*? We should pray that the truth of God will illuminate their minds, and their heart would become repentant and come to the cross of Christ! Absolutely yes! But what if they won't? What if they continue in their work of iniquity? How would you feel about that?

Let me put the cookies on the bottom shelf. While you are sitting in your family room, there are some people in your neighborhood and this city—at this very moment—planning the abuse and exploitation of your children. Some are uploading pornography and sending it down the computer line and into the eyes of your loved ones! Some people are planning the victimization of your neighborhood by smuggling drugs like heroin, cocaine, and Vicodin laced with fentanyl through back alleys and into the veins and nostrils of your relatives! While we are sitting here listening to a sermon, some people are sitting in committees and boards dreaming of ways to propagate false religion and to destroy the

Christian faith by undermining biblical values for the family and marriage and even to legalize wickedness.

And here is the conflict. On the one hand, we are to love people and pray for them that God will give them repentance and faith. But on the other hand, if they will not turn and continue on the road of destruction, then there is a place for praying that God would not only *ruin their plans* but also to "**requite**" them or repay them and deal with them by bringing them down.

God has revealed that He is holy, and He will not allow the guilty to go unpunished, and now David's heart is filled with holy anger and righteous indignation. Sometimes our prayers are to be like that. What we must remind ourselves of is that evil is not a force floating around in the air like a virus; it is in the hearts and minds of people who refuse to conform to God's laws. There is a place to pray against wickedness.

**Application:** May we also remind ourselves that the Christian life is not only to serve God in the harvest-field but also to stand as blood-stained soldiers on the battlefield. In Ephesians 6, Paul reminds us that *we are in a spiritual war*. And there are *weapons to use, armor to wear, and advances to make*. We are to pray against wickedness. This is a dark color in the rainbow of prayer.

#### **D. Prayer is sometimes declaration grounded with assurance. (v.5)**

In sports, whatever field you choose, whether it is baseball, basketball, football, or hockey, it is one thing to be on the field where you *see the intensity* in each eye and *smell the sweat* and *hear the heavy breathing* of your teammates. From that perspective, all you see is horizontal. But if you leave and go into the stands, or in the press box, your perspective changes. You begin to see the movement of the whole field and even the overall strategy. Prayer brings things into perspective.

We see an example of this in verse 5.

<sup>5</sup> Because they do not regard the works of the LORD  
Nor the deeds of His hands,  
He will tear them down and not build them up.

He has just prayed a prayer of imprecation—as he looked at the wicked. When we are looking at evil, sin, and unbelief on the field of battle, it seems as if we are on the losing side. But now his prayer shifts slightly as he goes higher in prayer and gets God's perspective; it brings conviction and assurance as he considers the fate of the wicked. He was *anxious*, but now he is calm. He was *troubled*, but now he is *assured*.

In life's path, our view is short-sighted, limited, and imperfect. In prayer, the perspective is broadened. We begin to see things as they are. When this happens, we begin to make declarations with *certainty* and *assurance*. Sometimes in the place of prayer, we find ourselves saying the very opposite of what we just said or the way we thought things were.

David sees what wickedness is—"**because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the deeds of His hand.**" This is the description of the unconverted.

Psalm 10:4 says, "God is not in his thoughts." But history is a part of His story, and everything that is happening in the world is part of His plan, bringing about an eternal purpose. But the unconverted ignore "**the works of the LORD**"—His work of creation, promise, preservation, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. They refuse to consider what David called in Psalm 8:3, "Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained."

Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God, and their expanse is declaring the works of His hands." But the unconverted go hiking on a mountain and stand under the stars yet refuse to think that this same God of *creation, history, redemption, and judgment*, will require their soul of them someday. Does this describe you? A creature living in God's universe in total rebellion, ignoring God's works!

That's what the unconverted man is; he or she is living in God's world, refusing to regard and respond to the works and the deeds of His hand.

What will happen to them? In the place of prayer, David makes a statement of assurance—"He will **tear them down and not build them up.**" The picture is vivid and simple. There are things we tear down because we are planning to replace them with something *better* or to make it *stronger*. But this is no restoration project; this is complete destruction.

**Application:** What's the point of this color in the rainbow of prayer? We see that in prayer, as we gain God's *perspective*, we gain *assurance*. *Conviction*. Do you find yourself in need of *certainty, confidence, or surefootedness*? Then get on the high mountain of prayer!

- Prayer is sometimes invocation expressed with expectancy.
- Prayer is sometimes supplication injected with fear.
- Prayer is sometimes imprecation filled with anger.
- Prayer is sometimes declaration grounded with assurance.

#### **E. Prayer is sometimes exultation girded with joy. (vv.6-7)**

Do you see the colors of the prayer rainbow? Sometimes it has *expectancy*; sometimes, it feels *fear*; at other times, it is pricked with *anger*; and at other times, it is grounded with *assurance*. But now, *joy!* All in the same prayer.

- <sup>6</sup> Blessed be the LORD,  
Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.  
<sup>7</sup> 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.

The Christian who prays "the Bible way" may start in *tears*, but suddenly they are *moved* and *lifted* to assurance. You may begin with *trembling* and then end with *singing* and *praising* God. Oh, how beautiful the rainbow of prayer is!

Come up close and don't miss this: the answer to David's prayer is experienced in prayer. He blesses God because "**He has heard the voice of my supplication.**" His circumstance may very well be the same, but his heart is renewed, his soul is refreshed, and his mind is refocused. Strength has been pumped into his soul—"the LORD is my strength and my shield."

- **Psalm 18:1**—"I love You, O LORD, my strength."
- **Psalm 3:3**—But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My Glory, and the One who lifts my head.
- **Psalm 33:20**—Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.

What the Holy Spirit wants us to see is that the believer's heart is visited with certainty, and often it is immediate in prayer. And how does it look?

**Application:** Where you were *troubled* before, the Lord makes you *peaceful*, and you begin to feel that *all is well*. To know that God has heard you brings you joy. You become *conscious of strength, help, and assurance*. So much of our lack of joy is linked to prayerlessness. Today, would you ask the Lord to help you to overcome the joy-robbing sin of prayerlessness?

E.M. Bounds (Edward McKendree Bounds—1835-1913) was a man who was mighty in prayer. He once said,

- "Beautiful, vital forces of piety are withered and dead in a prayerless life. Prayerless praying is insincere. It has no honesty in the heart. We name in words what we do not want in the heart. Souls may be lost *in* good works, as surely as *in* evil ways. The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray."

## F. Prayer is sometimes observation struck with wonder. (v.8)

In prayer, our strength is renewed, just as God promised in Isaiah 40:31, "*Yet those who wait on the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.*" God strengthens us in prayer. Then something happens in David's prayer that often happens to us. A thought strikes him. He sees something that he has seen before, but it dawns on him again. It is like a picture that is out of focus, and then all of a sudden, it comes back into focus again. What does David see?

He observes that God is not only *his strength*, but God is the strength of His people too! He is God's anointed king, but David also sees in verse 8 that there are other believers, and God is to them what He is to His servant.

- <sup>8</sup> The LORD is their strength,  
And He is a saving defense to His anointed.

Now, David's heart is soaring because he has been praying! He was all caught up in his own trials and tribulations, but now he is allowed to see that the kingdom, the grace, the provision, and the protection of God is for all the people of God. This is really when you begin to experience the *highest joy*—it comes in the context of observing God's goodness to all His people!

The God who deals with David is the same God who deals with me and you. The God who stretched out His saving hand to David is the same God who stretches out His saving and preserving hand to you and me and to all who repent and believe in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*The very same power* that snatched Jesus out of a Judean tomb is the very same power that has raised us from spiritual death (*Eph.1:20*). It is *the same power* that sent Jesus, the greater David, the Messiah to this earth to be the Savior of God's people.

The very same power that *conceived Christ in the womb of a virgin*,  
...the very same power that *compelled into the war with Satan and then upheld Jesus in that war*,  
...the same power through which Jesus *wrought miracles and which sustained Jesus on the cross*,  
...the same Spirit is speaking to you through the Gospel in this psalm this morning.

**Application:** The very same power that *sustained Christ in temptation held Him in His sufferings, raised Christ from the dead*, and that *magnifies Him in Glory*, is the very same Spirit that is at work in the believer. This fantastic thought and observation only crosses your mind in prayer.

Prayer is sometimes *invocation—expressed with expectancy, supplication—injecting with fear, imprecation—filled with anger, declaration—grounded with assurance, exultation—girded with joy, observation—struck with wonder*, and finally,

### **G. Prayer is sometimes intercession motivated with love. (v.9)**

- <sup>9</sup> Save Your people and bless Your inheritance;  
Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.

Perhaps you are saying, "I don't know how to pray for other believers." Here is the simplest prayer you can utter for other Christians. "**Lord, save Your people...**"

How does God save His people? By *calling* them out of the world through the Gospel of Christ. God has already *elected* and set apart His people from every race and kindred and tribe and nation of the world. They are in every *neighborhood* and of every *age group* and from every social status in the world. And as we take the Gospel to all the nations as Jesus commanded (*Matt.28:18-20*), He calls this one here and another there! Though many hear the external call, the elect receives that internal call and they come to Christ, repent of their sins, and are saved.

How do we pray? We pray, not only "*God save Your people*," but "**bless Your inheritance.**" An inheritance is something you have for yourself. And God has a people that are His very own—"*...a people for His own possession*" (*Titus 2:14*). How does God bless His people, His inheritance?

- **John 17:17**—Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.
- **Acts 20:32**—And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

As we go through *trial and storm, struggle and heartache*, God uses the truth of His Word to first, call His people out of the world and *to Himself, for Himself*. Then, God uses the truth of His Word secondly, to bless and to build up His people. This is why it's important to hear it preached and taught accurately, read it faithfully, meditate on it privately, and apply it daily.

*God save Your people. God bless Your people.* "**God shepherd Your people.**" Oh, there is a Good Shepherd who died for the sheep, according to Psalm 23. The word "**shepherd**" here in Hebrew means to "rule" them by *caring* for them, *feeding* them, and *keeping* them.



**Application:** This is how we are to pray for one another. *God save Your people.* As Britain sings in her national anthem, "*God save the Queen,*" the church prays, "God save Your people, God bless Your inheritance, God shepherd Your people," and finally, "**God carry them forever.**" Be close to them in love. Hold them up in the storm of night. Hold them up in the desert of doubts. Hold them up in flames of persecution. Hold them up in secret places of loneliness. Hold them up in the basement of despair. Hold them up in the heat of temptation. Hold them up in affliction. Hold them up in death. Hold them up always. Forever.

## Conclusion:

O church, arise, and put your armor on;  
Hear the call of Christ, our captain.  
For now the weak can say that they are strong  
In the strength that God has given.  
With shield of faith and belt of truth,  
We'll stand against the devil's lies.  
An army bold, whose battle cry is love,  
Reaching out to those in darkness.

Our call to war, to love the captive soul,  
But to rage against the captor;  
And with the sword that makes the wounded whole,  
We will fight with faith and valor.  
When faced with trials on every side,  
We know the outcome is secure.  
And Christ will have the prize for which He died:  
An inheritance of nations.

Come, see the cross, where love and mercy meet,  
As the Son of God is stricken;  
Then see His foes lie crushed beneath His feet,  
For the Conqueror has risen!  
And as the stone is rolled away,  
And Christ emerges from the grave,  
This victory march continues till the day  
Ev'ry eye and heart shall see Him.

So Spirit, come, put strength in every stride;  
Give grace for every hurdle.  
That we may run with faith to win the prize  
Of a servant good and faithful.  
As saints of old, still line the way,  
Retelling triumphs of His grace,  
We hear their calls and hunger for the day  
When with Christ, we stand in Glory.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Keith and Kristyn Getty, *O Church Arise*

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