

**Taking it all to the Lord**  
**Churchill 19/7/2009**  
**Readings: John 10:1-18 7 Psalm 28**

**Introduction**

Where do you turn when there's nowhere left to go?

When everyone has let you down, turned their back on you?

If you've been there, where did you turn?

And did it help?

I recently heard someone say that during the toughest times in his life, he has turned to the Psalms.

And he just kept reading them, sometimes 20 at a time until, to use his phrase, 'I heard my voice'.

A Psalm expressing what he was feeling and going through.

And do you know what, when he heard his voice echoed in the Psalms, he found peace.

Because then he knew that if it was in Scripture, God knew exactly what he was going through and what it felt like.

And that was all he needed to get through.

God knows and understands.

The Psalms were the hymn book of the people of Israel, but they're so much more than that.

Because all of Scripture is 'breathed out', by the Holy Spirit, they're God's way of telling us at least two things.

Two things that you need to know and remember in order to get you through whatever may be round the corner.

Here's the first thing.

As you read the Psalms, you will find your voice there.

Because the writers went through just about everything.

So if you remember nothing else from today, remember this.

When you face tough times, turn to the Psalms, and ask God to speak to you through them.

And keep reading, if necessary through your tears, until you find your voice echoed back.

That's the first thing you need to know, that every human emotion is there, and God will speak to you in the Psalms.

Here's the second thing you need to know.

Not everything in the Psalms represents the best and most godly thoughts and feelings.

You've probably noticed that!

But God has put them and kept them there for a purpose.

And that is to encourage you and me to take everything to our great and compassionate Heavenly Father in prayer.

There is nothing that you can't talk to him about; nothing that you can't say to him.

He would always prefer you to say it to him than to someone else whom you might hurt or confuse.

Actually there is one thing you can't talk to him about, and that is sin that you have already repented of, because God will have chosen never to remember that.

But more of that on 16th August when I tackle the vexed subject of forgiveness.

So let's look at Psalm 28, one of the many written by David, the shepherd boy who was 'a man after God's own heart'.

Let's look at what he takes to God.

Why he takes it to God.

And what he gets from God.

**What does he take to the Lord?**

So what does David take to God?

And the short answer is, I don't know.

One commentator wrote that it was an illness for which his enemies were to blame.

But I'm blown if I can see that in the Psalm!

Occasionally we are told, like in Psalm 51 which says 'A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.'

And we read a heartrending prayer of a man wracked with guilt, shocked by what he'd done.

So if you're ever in a situation where you're wracked with guilt and shocked by what you've done, read Psalm 51.

And then, if you find your voice there, re-read it as a prayer.

And keep praying it, if necessary through your tears, until the truth goes in here, the truth of how serious your sin is.

But then, don't stay in the Old Testament.

Because what David asks from God in Psalm 51 became freely available only when Jesus died on the cross for you.

Read those words from John's first epistle, chapter 1v8&9:

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Anyway, Psalm 28 doesn't tell us what was happening.

Which is good, because that way we're more likely to hear our voice in the Psalms and find God's comfort.

But whatever it is, David is pretty desperate, isn't he?

Look at how he starts: "To you I call, O LORD my Rock; don't turn a deaf ear to me.

For if you remain silent, I shall be like those who have gone down to the pit. Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands towards your Most Holy Place. Don't drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbours but harbour malice in their hearts."

He needs God's mercy; he needs God's help; he needs an answer from God, not a deathly silence; and it's something to do with wicked people around him.

David was crying out to God to vindicate him.

'Lord, I haven't done anything wrong like these have, and yet I'm getting all this flack and trouble. This isn't fair Lord, you're a God of justice as well as mercy.'

And so often, I find that the things that make people desperate come from other people, apparently unfairly.

Boy oh boy did Jesus know such unfair attacks from people!

And so did Paul and the rest of the apostles.

And so will you, especially if you stand up for Christ in today's world, as opposed to simply being a pew-sitter.

Try standing up today for the central Christian belief that Jesus is the only way to God, forgiveness and eternal life.

Try standing up today for the core Christian ethic of sex only within heterosexual marriage.

Try standing up today for God's sovereignty in life and death issues, such as abortion and, increasingly, euthanasia.

Take up your cross and follow Jesus, as he commanded you, and you might well start to find your voice in Psalm 28!

But what sometimes makes it even harder for Christians to bear is when God seems to go silent on you.

"don't turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I shall be like those who have gone down to the pit."

'I might as well be dead if you turn a deaf ear to me'.

Isn't that interesting?

Because the night before he died, Jesus defined what he meant by 'eternal life'.

It wasn't what you might have expected, like 'life after death'.

No, he said "this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus

Christ, whom you have sent." John 17:3

Living, in its fullest sense, means being in a relationship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Death, in its fullest sense, means the opposite - no such relationship with God.

You'll never find your voice in the Psalms if you aren't yet truly alive, reconciled to God and in relationship with him.

And if that's you today, then that reconciled relationship with God is just a prayer away.

Speak to either Stephen or me afterwards and we would love to help you begin eternal life.

So, David's desperately in need of God's help, and worried that God won't vindicate him and might turn a deaf ear.

But there's more, and it is still to do with wicked people:

v4 "Repay them for their deeds and for their evil work; repay them for what their hands have done and bring back upon them what they deserve."

God will judge, one day in the future.

All wrongs will be righted by him on that day.

In Romans chapter 12 Paul writes "Don't 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."

And he will!

Jesus promised he "is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done." Matthew 16v27

So you and I can call for God to right injustices that we come across, confident that he will do it, then.

What does David take to the Lord in prayer?

His situation, his feelings, his fears and his longing for justice.

In fact, everything on his heart and mind.

If your prayer life just consists of a brief prayer in the morning and in the evening, and church on Sundays, then what does that say about your relationship with God.

David took everything to him in prayer, all the time.

### **Why does he take it to the Lord?**

That links to the question 'Why does he take it to the Lord?'

As opposed to his advisors, his best mates, his wife.

And it's to do with David's knowledge of, and relationship with, the Lord, isn't it?

You won't call to God in prayer if you don't know he's there, more willing to listen than you are to pray.

Nor will you if you don't think he can do anything to help.

Look at what David knows about the Lord.

He's calling out to God by his personal name, Jehovah, literally 'I am who I am', which is the name God used to introduce himself back in the time of Moses.

Our Bible translates Jehovah as 'Lord', in small caps.

He calls the Lord his rock in v1.

He prays about 'the works of the LORD and what his hands have done' in v5.

He calls him his 'strength and shield' in v7.

His 'fortress of salvation' in v8 and the shepherd who carries his people forever in v9.

All of that comes from a long, close relationship with the Lord.

There's no shortcut to a relationship with God like that.

If the great King David needed to take everything to God in prayer all the time, then so do you and I.

And he didn't just make up this stuff about what God is like!

He got it by spending lots of time in his very busy schedule reading his Bible to see how God had acted in the past, and what he had said.

Please don't tell me you're too busy to pray and read the Bible until your schedule is significantly busier than the man who conquered a land and established an entire nation.

Why does David take his trouble to the Lord?

Because he really knew him!

Are you willing to put in the time now to know the Lord better, so that you can learn to pray like David did?

### **What does he get from the Lord?**

Let me finish by showing you what David gets from the Lord.

And again, we don't know the specifics of how it happens.

In v5 he sees he needn't worry about the Lord doing right.

"Since they [that's the wicked] show no regard for the works of the LORD and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again."

He's assured, probably just from recalling what God's done in the past, that God will do right by everyone in the end.

And you and I can be equally assured from the Bible, for example from the very last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22.

Jesus promises this: "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." V12

If you or someone you love has been hurt by horrible stuff done by horrible people, be assured God knows.

You might be angry; he is too, and he'll deal with them, in his own time, and in his own totally just way.

So do what David did and leave it with him.

Then in v6 he turns from desperate prayer to praise.

"Praise be to the LORD, for he has heard my cry for mercy. The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song."

How does he do that?

Go from the depths to the heights in the space of one line?

Well, it may be that God has done something stunning to sort out the problem between verses 5 and 6.

But if he has, there's no indication here.

What seems to be the case is much more ordinary.

Taking it all to the Lord in prayer of itself does the trick.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace."

Just turning to the Lord in prayer is the start of the answer.

Because by doing that, you start to think about him and how great and loving and merciful and compassionate and fatherly and all knowing and all powerful he is!

Notice that in v6 he doesn't say 'you have answered my prayer' or 'you have duffed up the baddies', or whatever!

He praises the Lord because, very simply, "he has heard my cry for mercy".

So realising that, he says in v7: "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him... and I am helped."

Making the decision to trust the Lord, because he knows that the Lord is trustworthy, is what helps David.

David knows that from his own experience; from others he knows; and most especially from Scripture.

And for all of those reasons, so do you!

So do it, make the decision today that you will turn to the Lord much more readily than you have before now.

The Lord will always hear your cry for mercy.

Remember Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount: "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" Matthew 7:9-11

Will you determine today that in the midst of your most desolate time, you'll do exactly what David did before you?

Take everything you're going through, everything you feel and think, straight to the Lord in prayer.

And then praise him because he's heard and because he'll give you, his precious child, all the good things he knows you need?

Let us pray.

### **Prayer (do business)**