

PSALMS

Chapter 28

To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. ²Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. ³Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts. ⁴Give to them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds; give to them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward. ⁵Because they do not regard the works of the LORD or the work of his hands, he will tear them down and build them up no more. ⁶Blessed be the LORD! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. ⁷The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. ⁸The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. ⁹Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Ps 28 A prayer for deliverance from deadly peril at the hands of malicious and God-defying enemies. As with Ps 25, the prayer ends with intercession for all the people of the Lord. Reference in the last verse to the Lord as the shepherd of his people connects this psalm with Ps 23 and probably marks off Ps 23–28 as a collection linked by many common themes. (CSB)

A prayer for help, followed by words of praise in anticipation of God’s answer. It may come from the time when Absalom rebelled against David. David is troubled by his enemies’ duplicity and lack of faith, fearing for his life (v 1). These words also apply to other trying times. Faced with affliction, we rely on God’s help and anticipate His blessing. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, a prayer to be heard; vv 3–5, repay the evil; vv 6–7, the Lord’s help; vv 8–9, save Your people. (TLSB)

28:1–2 Initial appeal to be heard. (CSB)

These saints of God had their manifold misgivings even as we do in our day. (Leupold)

28:1 *I call* – Means “I am now calling.” (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Rock. The translation of two different Hebrew words. “Rock” is a common poetic figure for God (or the gods: Dt 32:31, 37; Isa 44:8), symbolizing his unfailing (see Isa 26:4) strength as a fortress refuge (see vv. 31, 46; 31:2–3; 42:9; 62:7; 71:3; 94:22; Isa 17:10) or as deliverer. (CSB)

remain silent – Do not act in my behalf. (CSB)

pit. Metaphor for the grave – The depths are often linked, as here, with Sheol “the grave,” and “the pit”, together with a cluster of related associations: silence, darkness, destruction, corruption, dust, mire, slime and mud.). (CSB)

The grave. He fears for his life. (TLSB)

28:2 *voice* – This stands for what he says. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

pleas for mercy – The psalmist calls on God’s perfection of “mercy.” This is form of prayer calling for God’s grace to extend to him. (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary - Psalms)

lift up my hands – In worship and prayer (see 63:4; 134:2; 141:2). (CSB)

Gesture of worship. (TLSB)

This is best regarded as an outward symbol of an uplifted heart. (Leupold)

Most Holy sanctuary – The inner sanctuary of the temple (see 1Ki 6:5), where the ark of the covenant stood (see 1Ki 8:6–8); it was God’s throne room on earth. (CSB)

Place where God has promised to be present. (TLSB)

28:3–5 Prayer for the Lord, enthroned in the temple, to deliver his servant and deal in judgment with those who harbor malice toward the king and God’s people and defy God himself. (CSB)

28:3 *speaks peace* – How much of this damnable hypocrisy must have been current in the days when Absalom’s rebellion was in the making. (Leupold)

David’s enemies are deceitful and hypocritical. They speak favorably, but secretly plot evil. (TLSB)

evil is in their hearts – Frequently such attacks came when the king was “low” and seemingly abandoned by God.). (CSB)

They care only about themselves and not about the pursuit of godliness. (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary - Psalms)

28:4 *give to them according to their work* – David’s enemies are God’s enemies too, because when they were trying to destroy David, they were opposing the will and promises of God. (PBC)

28:5 David may be specifically referring to their attack on the monarchy God established, but this equally applies to any failure to recognize God’s work. (TLSB)

works of the LORD – His redemption of Israel, the establishment of Israel as his kingdom (by covenant, Ex 19–24), and the appointment of the house of David (also by covenant, 2Sa 7) as his earthly regent over his people. (CSB)

work of his hands – By “what their hands have done” (v. 4), “the wicked” (v. 3) show that they do not acknowledge Israel and David’s regency as the work of God’s hands. (CSB)

David’s enemies have done evil with their hands (v 4), but they do not see what God is doing. (TLSB)

he will tear – Tearing down is a figure for judgment and ruin. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

28:6–7 Joyful praise, in confidence of being heard – A common feature in the prayers of the Psalter is a concluding expression of confidence that the prayer will be or has been heard and often elsewhere. (CSB)

Some time obviously elapsed between the first part which is a petition and the second which is praise. (Leupold)

28:6 *blessed* – It is clear that the psalmist has been transformed by realizing God answered his prayer. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

28:7 *shield*. That one’s king is his shield (protector) was a common concept in ancient Israel. (CSB)

God provides help for offense (strength) and defense (shield) against David’s enemies. David does not rely on his own power; his only hope is in the Lord’s power and protection (cf v 8). (TLSB)

heart exults – The verb used here signifies the expression of joy through singing and shouting. His praise is exuberant. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

I will give thanks. A vow to praise. Many prayers in the Psalter include such vows in anticipation of the expected answer to prayer. They reflect Israel’s religious consciousness that praise must follow deliverance as surely as prayer springs from need—if God is to be truly honored. Such praise was usually offered with thank offerings and involved celebrating God’s saving act in the presence of those assembled at the temple. (CSB)

28:8–9 The Lord and his people – The psalmists stood before God, the royal King, as his servants responsible for the well-being of his people. (CSB)

28:8 *strength* – As God strengthened David, so He blesses all His people. (TLSB)

his anointed – These constitute a unity – he psalm refers to the Davidic king and is ultimately fulfilled in Christ. The English word “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew word for “anointed one,” and the English word “Christ” from the Greek word for “anointed one.” (CSB)

As king, David was the Lord’s anointed. Likewise, the nation has been anointed as a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6). (TLSB)

28:9 *Save ... bless*. God’s two primary acts by which he effects his people’s well-being: He saves from time to time as circumstances require; he blesses day by day to make their lives and labors fruitful. (CSB)

Our prayers, too, should not be self-centered, but should reflect our concern for our fellow Christians. (PBC)

your heritage – By this he means the people, signifying that they now belong to the Lord as his possession (Deut. 4:20). The word captures the special relationship between Israel and the Lord and their value to him. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

shepherd. The answer to this prayer—the last, full answer—has come in the ministry of the “good shepherd” (Jn 10:11, 14). (CSB)

The prayer to “shepherd them” is a prayer asking God to provide for them, lead them, care for them, and defend them. As a shepherd he will carry them safely through danger (see Is. 40:11). The contrast could not be clearer: God will drag the wicked away to judgment, but the faithful he will tenderly carry and protect from the enemies. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Cf Ps 23. (TLSB)

Ps 28 Facing personal crisis, David realizes he is unable to protect and save himself. He needs God to be his strength and shield. As sinners, we cannot save ourselves. We recognize our helplessness and need for God’s grace. Our Savior comes, giving us His strength and protecting us from our enemies by paying the penalty of our sins. • Lord Jesus, my strength and my shield, I trust in You. Be my shepherd and carry me forever. Amen. (TLSB)