

David seems to have written this psalm during a time of persecution from an enemy. The prayer expressed in this psalm demonstrates David's desperate desire that the LORD would rescue him from the danger of his situation as well as the discouragement that he felt because of it. David understood that his only hope was in the LORD and this psalm is an expression of that dependence.

A Psalm of David.

The title of this psalm informs us of the author, although it does not give us its purpose or the occasion of its writing. However, the content of the psalm indicates that it is a prayer of David asking that the LORD rescue him from his enemies. Some commentators suggest that David is describing his prayer to the LORD during the time when his son Absalom was attempting to steal the throne from him, and many of the things David says in this psalm could certainly fit that scenario.

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness. 2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

“Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications [earnest requests]” – David begins the psalm by calling out to the LORD to hear and pay attention to his prayer. This was no casual prayer but one for which David was earnestly seeking an answer.

“in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness” – David pleads with the LORD to answer his prayer based on both the LORD's faithfulness and His righteousness. David knew that he didn't deserve for the LORD to answer his prayer and so he calls on the LORD to answer on the basis (1) that the LORD is faithful to those who are His and (2) that He is a righteous God Who will not neglect to intervene when His people are suffering an injustice.

“And enter not into judgment [to decide a case; justice] with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified” – David did not want the LORD's answer to his prayer to be based on his own righteousness. He knew that if he were to be taken into court and judged on his worthiness to be helped by the LORD on the basis of his own righteousness then he, like the rest of mankind, would fall far short. This is why his appeal is based on the LORD's faithfulness and righteousness. Sometimes we may feel ashamed and unworthy to ask the LORD for help with a situation in our own lives, knowing that we have no right to ask based on our own righteousness (of lack thereof). However, we can never earn any of God's blessings and every good thing He gives us comes through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God blesses us because He is faithful and righteous.

3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. 4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.

“For the enemy hath persecuted [to pursue; to harass] my soul” – David describes in poetic, figurative language the reason for his prayer in vs. 3-4. He begins by stating that his enemy has been pursuing him, forcing him to flee. These verses do seem to fit how David may have felt when Absalom was intent on killing him.

“he hath smitten my life down to the ground” – The intense harassment of his enemy has made David feel like he has been knocked down to the ground in defeat. David likely felt this way when he realized that his own son wanted him dead.

“he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead” – The damage and destruction that his enemy has inflicted has caused David to fall into a depression that feels like he has sunk into the darkness of the grave. David had to leave everything behind when he fled Jerusalem, which certainly would have made David feel dead inside. He may have felt that he might as well have been dead since he had nothing left.

“Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me” – David was emotionally devastated by what his enemy had done.

“my heart within me is desolate” – David had lost all hope because he could see no human way out of his situation. Regaining all that the enemy had taken from him seemed to be an impossibility. This is how we often look at our own troubles and trials when we forget that God is taking care of us.

5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands. 6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

“I remember the days of old” – David begins to think back to a time before his latest predicament. He will remember that the LORD has been there for him in the past.

“I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands” – David remembers what the LORD has done in the past. He no doubt remembered how the LORD had blessed him and all the promises that the LORD had made to him. He recalled how the LORD had helped him defeat his enemies in the past. We should do this whenever we are overwhelmed with situations where we don't know the solution. We should remember how the LORD has taken care of us in the past and be confident that He will continue to care for us. We ought to look to God's promises and understand that He will be faithful to keep those promises.

“I stretch forth my hands unto thee” – After remembering that the LORD has helped him in the past, David reaches out to Him for help and comfort. The picture is that of a small child reaching up to his/her parent, wanting to be picked up, protected and comforted.

“my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land” – Just as dry ground yearns for rain during a drought, David thirsted after the comfort and fellowship that can only be found in the LORD's presence.

“Selah” – The meaning of this word is uncertain, but most commentators believe the intent is to pause and reflect on what has been said.

7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

“Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth [*to come to an end; to be consumed; exhausted*]” – David is physically and emotionally exhausted from the attacks of the enemy. He calls on the LORD to answer his prayer soon before he collapses from the stress.

“hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit” – The expression “them that go down into the pit” refers to the dead who have gone down into the grave. David expects that he will either die or be as good as dead if the LORD does not intervene.

8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

“Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness [*goodness; kindness; faithfulness*] **in the morning** [*break of day*]” – Hearing is one the ways we become aware of things in our surroundings. “In the morning” refers to the very beginning of the day as the sun is coming up. Just as the chirping of the birds can be heard when you first wake up in the morning, David is asking that he could also wake up to the sounds indicating that the LORD goodness and kindness will be with him that day.

“for in thee do I trust” – David’s trust is in the LORD and the LORD alone. David is not “hedging his bets” by appealing to the LORD in case all of his other avenues of help should fail. Rather, he is staking all of his hopes on the LORD. If the LORD does not help him, then David has no other hope.

“cause me to know the way wherein I should walk” – David asks for the LORD’s guidance for the day, not only in righteousness but also in his response to his enemies. The reason for his request is because of his complete dependence on the LORD.

“for I lift up my soul unto thee” – Rather than trust in his own reasoning to preserve his life, David wants the LORD to guide his steps and places his very life and soul in the LORD’s hands (“I lift up my soul unto thee”).

9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.

“Deliver [*rescue*] **me, O LORD, from mine enemies”** – David pleads with the LORD to rescue him from the enemies that want to do him harm.

“I flee unto thee to hide me” – David sees the LORD as being his only refuge from his enemies, so he appeals to the LORD to hide him from these enemies.

10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

“Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God” – Rescue from his enemies isn’t the only thing David wants from the LORD. Since the LORD is his God, David also wants the LORD to teach him how to obey Him. This demonstrates David’s submission to the LORD.

“thy spirit is good [*pleasant; agreeable*]; **lead me into the land of uprightness** [*level place; uprightness*]” – David recognizes that men at their best are still sinful, but the LORD is “good” and His ways are pleasant. For this reason David wants the LORD to teach him how to live in accordance with His will. He wants the good LORD to lead him into a “land of uprightness” where the LORD is in control and not sinful men. The literal translation of the Hebrew word for “uprightness” means “a level place” with a figurative meaning of “uprightness.” Level land is easier to cultivate or build upon and is thus preferable or “right.”

11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. 12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

“Quicken [*to preserve alive; revive*] **me, O LORD, for thy name's sake”** – David wants the LORD to preserve his life so that the name of the LORD would be glorified and not blasphemed. People might say that the LORD was unable to save someone who trusted in Him if David died at the hand of his enemies. Moses also wanted to protect the name of the LORD by interceding for Israel when the LORD threatened to destroy them because of their sin (**Num. 14:15-16** “*Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness*”).

“for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble” – David now appeals to the righteous nature of the LORD as a reason for the LORD to rescue him from the troubles brought on him by his enemies. He knows the LORD is a righteous God that keeps His promises to help those who trust in Him.

“And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul” – Mercy is another quality of the LORD that David appeals to in his prayer for help. He knows that the LORD shows mercy to those who trust in Him, and on that basis David asks the LORD to “cut off” (destroy) his enemies and all who would seek to do him harm.

“for I am thy servant” – David has just acknowledged that the LORD helps those who trust in Him, for the sake of His name, His righteousness and His mercy. David now identifies himself as the LORD’s servant, someone who obeys and trusts in the LORD. This places David in good company with those whom the LORD helps.