



Love God, Love Neighbour – I love you Lord my strength

Psalm 18

We would be wrong to assume that all Psalms are outbursts of praise. This one is a lament. The writer expresses severe physical anguish and suffering. The writer, King David, is acutely aware of his own sinfulness and pleads with God to withdraw his anger from him. He feels the rebuke of God for his personal failure – the arrows feel as if they have ‘pierced him’ (v2).

David also acknowledges God’s anger against his sin (v3). Some Christians don’t like talking about the ‘wrath of God’ – they think it’s all rather miserable and unattractive. He also talks about his guilt – again, some find this oppressive. But consider a process whereby all these points are very releasing.

1. Very few people would claim to be without sin when sin is understood as disobedience to God’s commands. ‘All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ (Rom 3:23)
2. God is angry with our sinfulness but does not reject us
3. The deep sense of sinfulness makes us long for God to deliver us – we are so aware of our sin that we cry out for God to deliver us.
4. And he does through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross

In other words, the more we realise we are sinful people the greater we value the salvation we have through Jesus. Verses 9 to 11 express David’s longing to be right with God. Acute awareness of our sin deepens our longing to be given God’s forgiveness.

Have you ever experienced that moment of sinful awareness where you cry out to God?
Share some times where you have been aware of God’s forgiveness.

FROM THE PASSAGE

1. If you read verse 5 to 9 you get a pretty grim picture of David’s physical and mental state. The language he uses is an horrific picture of his state.

Do we tend to use this kind of language about how we feel about ourselves?
Is that something we should change if we want to go deeper with God?
Do we treat sin too lightly?
Does this lead to a shallow faith?

2. In verse 9 the Psalmist talks about ‘his longings’

Talk about your longings.
In recent days have you found yourself ‘brought very low’
Do you find it hard to admit that?

3. In verse 11 we read about the decline of David’s relationships. ‘Friends have deserted me and neighbours stay far away’. We have experienced something of this in lockdown. We have not seen as much of our friends and neighbours.

How have you found that isolation from those you love has been difficult?

David admits that it is hard to see friendships evaporate.

How can we best restore and renew the relationships we have been deprived of?

How deliberate should we be about that?

4. David then gets to the point of where he must turn to God to be restored. He realises he is not hearing anything from God (v13). He cannot speak. He is cut off from those he loves. Then he realises he must 'wait for the Lord' (v14). That does not mean hanging around at a bus stop. Waiting on the Lord is a strong biblical concept – those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. This is about creating a deeper relationship with God as we listen to him through his word with an open heart. We do that because we know that God will be our strength in a difficult time.

Talk about times when you have been very aware of God's word and God's presence during a difficult time.

5. Realising he is in a difficult place David is clear about what he must do. He knows (v17) so he confesses his sin (v18). This is a very positive thing – it is us being honest with God, acknowledging our frailty and asking God to stay by him. (v21). He knows he will get great strength from God who has promised to never leave him or forsake him.

When we are in a difficult situation is our first move to try to solve the issue ourselves or is to speak to God admitting our frailty.

Have we been over influenced by the problem-solving culture ('I can sort this out') and lost the richness of a life walked in obedience to God?

Do we only turn to God as a last resort when he should be our greatest source of strength?

THINGS TO DO

- Spend some time just talking to God and admitting your sin. Don't worry, because God knew about it anyway and has promised to forgive you if you confess it (1 John Ch 1)
- Think back to a difficult time and ask yourself if you were trying to be self-sufficient and less dependent on God. Is this about pride?
- Find a quiet space and thank God for his promises to always be with you and be your strength
- Think about one situation where you could apply that in the coming week

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Can you forgive your own weakness and sinfulness?

IF NOT

Do you believe God can forgive you?

Why not spend time confessing your sin

And ask God to forgive you

And give you his strength to resist in the future