

Psalm 108

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 11 January 2021 09:34

This psalm was written by David. The first part is from Psalm 57, and the latter part is from Psalm 60. That the same words are used in prayer is not an issue, so long as they are spoken with a spontaneous attitude. That is, same words with a new heart and mind. I have often said that we should not keep repeating the same prayers, but the reality is closer to what David did (as explained by Matthew Henry). If we simply repeat and repeat with the same heart, then the prayers are tainted with our sin and are said in vain. But, the same words may be used so long as the impetus behind them is different and pressed upon us by the Lord. And this is what David has done.

Verses 1-4

1.

O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

2.

Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.

3.

I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.

4.

For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.

Oh *'elohiyim*, calls David! The word is not a proper name of God, but a straightforward Hebrew noun referring to God's attributes; in this case, judge, ruler, one who is divine, the one true God. And note that the word is plural, so we know even from this one word that God is more than one and at least two. (We have to read other texts to discover He is a Trinity). David says his heart is fixed, *leb*. That is, his heart and mind, his emotions and thoughts, are all combined and *kuwn* – established and immovable, settled and solid, just as a house is built upon a firm foundation and cannot be moved. Because of this, David knows his faith is real and God is His Lord. For this reason he can sing praises with his own inferior "glory".

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What does he mean by this? Matthew Henry says this speaks of David's tongue, but it is more than that. His glory, *kebowd*, speaks of his personal honour, riches, reputation and earthly glory. In other words, he is giving Jehovah his meagre human glory because it is as nothing compared to God's glory. It is giving back to God what He has given to David.

So, David the musician calls on the temple instruments to come alive and play! Awake from slumber and make beautiful music to the Lord! Today, there are many church music groups and almost all play because they love to play as people, and not because God has called them to do so. We can tell this is so by the way the 'music' is loud, rhythmic and a mimic of rock and roll. It is a way to be a rock and roll musician without adopting the secular lifestyle. This makes them musicians who play to be in front of an audience, uncalled by God. David appointed temple musicians and singers, but they did not play and sing as they would in a concert hall or in their own homes! They sang and played as to Almighty God, with attendant dignity, pleasantness and beauty. This can rarely be said of modern church music.

The instruments mentioned are just a few of the total kinds employed by David – the psaltery, *n ebel* (an early guitar, maybe a lute, or some other instrument, possibly with a rounded 'belly'), and a harp, *kinnowr*, a lyre of the shape we recognise as a harp (an instrument that is plucked). And David himself would arise early to sing and praise God amongst the Israelites and also to other nations. Probably he refers here to visiting dignitaries or those passing through who look into the tabernacle.

He will sing and praise because God's mercy is great. That is, His mercy, *checed* (goodness, kindness and faithfulness even to His sinful people), is even higher than the universe itself. His truth can be seen in and above the clouds, such is its verity and power. 'Above the heavens' suggests to us that God's abode is not in the universe. How could it be within its bounds, when it did not exist until God created it with His voice? Heaven, the place where God resides, must, then, be external to everything made. Thus, in this tiny partial text we see a truth about God's abode.

Verses 5-9

1.

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;

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2.

That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me.

3.

God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

4.

Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver;

5.

Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.

It might seem that David is here saying God could be exalted above the heavens. The Hebrew text says that God IS above the heavens. And His glory is already above the earth. All powerful, all embracing, all good, all wise. Because of His position – Creator not created and so with absolute power – David will be delivered from dangers and woes. David thus calls on Jehovah to free him from evil ones with His right hand, the hand symbolic of divine power. I do not think from the linguistic structure, that David is referring to a particular evil against him at that time, but is speaking generally. As far as David is concerned Jehovah had already delivered him, which led him to act wisely as king: “God hath spoken”.

We must praise and honour the Lord even when we think our enemies or circumstances are against us. As I have discovered many times, God works in the background when all we can see is trouble and anxiety. He puts together many pieces of our life, so we move along His path. It is only when we kick against it that we have genuine problems.

David says that with God’s approval he will “divide Shechem”, *chalaq* – assign it, or ‘stretch it out’ just as the place of the tabernacle is unlimited. This is God speaking through David, saying

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what He has done and will continue to do. Succoth was where the Hebrews first stopped on their way from Egypt. And it was where Jacob lived east of the Jordan near the Jabbok (later given to the tribe of Gad).

David then speaks of places that already have been given to him by God – Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah. Moab is his “washpot” (as he said in Psalm 60), the place where he does his washing, thus showing his disdain for Moab. David will cast his shoe over Edom (the land owned by Esau’s descendants) to strike at Philistia. In this text the throwing of a shoe against the enemy is a sign of subjection of an enemy he considers to be worthless. The root verb, *na’al*, indicates that the Philistines will be bound hand and foot by his rule under God (as a sandal is bound to the foot by straps). He is saying the Philistines will be beaten, for the shoe was thrown by Jehovah... all David had to do was finalise it by winning battles. When God is for us who can be against us?

Verses 10-13

1.

Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

2.

Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?

3.

Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.

4.

Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

David then asks a rhetorical question. It is rhetorical because he already knows the answer. Who will lead him in triumph against Edom and Philistia? Will it not be Jehovah Who has thrown us aside because of our sins? Will He not lead the army of Israel to defeat the enemy? In our day when we go forth in triumph and faith, God is already before us defeating the enemy or

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circumstance. We are, then, where we should be, no matter what the situation. David calls on God, not mankind, to help. When we try to do things our own way we fail and rightfully become anxious and depressed. When we hand ourselves over to the Lord, there can be no defeat.

Pilgrim's Progress puts all this so well! Through, or because of, God "*we shall do valiantly*"! It is HE Who

"treads down our enemies",

NOT us, not our meagre attempts to win or overcome by our own devices and plans. God has ALREADY planned on our behalf. All we need do is obey and go forth in faith!

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