

Psalm 108: The Key to Overcoming Hopelessness

When you're depressed, about the last thing you want to do is get out of bed and rise to face the morning. Here's a psalm to counteract hopelessness and help you welcome a new day with courage.

If you think the words of Psalm 108 sound familiar—they are. Look back to Psalm 57 (vv. 7-11) and Psalm 60 (vv. 5-12) and you will find Psalm 108 simply repeats the endings to these two earlier psalms. Psalm 57 begins with David hunted; the setting for Psalm 60 is David defeated. Yet, both psalms end, not in despair, but in confidence that God has a brighter day ahead. It's those positive endings that are joined together in this psalm.

Aren't you glad to know that tough moments in your life, when you feel trapped or beat up, don't last forever—that later you'll focus upon God's promises fulfilled rather than your present pain?

A Wake-Up Song

Are you so excited about living that you can't wait for the dawn of a new day? David is. He's up and singing, musical instruments in hand (v. 2), expressing the sentiments, "When morning gilds the skies, my heart awaking cries, may Jesus Christ be praised!"

Maybe you don't face your days like that. You had a sleepless or troubled night, filled with dread or anxiety. The last thing on your mind is cheerfully getting up.

You really need to tune in to the fundamental truth conveyed in this psalm and all of Scripture. Your day will go better if you begin with praise to the Lord who made and redeemed you.

Remember the apostle Paul? In prison he wrote, among other things, the letter to the Philippians. It's a letter of abounding joy and the assurance that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him (4:13). I used to be troubled by that phrase "all things," thinking maybe Paul was using a cliché. After all, there wasn't much he could "do" in prison—no preaching, church planting or mentoring of pastors. In fact, he could do very little within the confines of his cell. Then it dawned on me one day—the toughest, most difficult thing God ever asked him to "do" was prison. And through Christ, he found he could "do" even that. Surviving unjust incarceration was one of the "all things."

Are you going to compound your misery by having a miserable attitude or will you decide to sing instead (vv. 1-2; Phil. 4:4)?

What's there to sing about? That you're not lost or alone in God's great universe today, that you are part of a vast assembly on earth who lift their voice to praise Him (v. 3). The Lord has not permitted you to fall outside His grace by your own weakness, stubbornness or rebellion. He folded you to Himself even as you ran from Him—otherwise, how would you know His love reaches to the heavens and His faithfulness to the skies (v. 4)?

Jesus' love is no come-on. He didn't cross His fingers behind His back when He said it. At no point has He considered retracting His love for you or breaking the bad news to you that He doesn't love you anymore. He loves you today. He loved you yesterday. He will love you tomorrow.

Open your heart and voice to God in response: "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth" (v. 5).

Confidence for the Day

What gives you hope to live this day? Is it not God's past performance? Isn't the best predictor of what a person will do in the future what he has done in the past?

The psalmist reviews God's track record with geographical references to camping places (Shechem and Succoth) where the Lord sustained Abraham and Jacob (v. 7), as well as the names of a sampling of the tribal territories of Israel (v. 8) and historic enemies God has defeated (v. 9). All these references relate not only to God's past deeds but also constitute promises of present and future aid. With confidence David can ask for help because of what the Lord has already done (v. 6). The Lord's consistent character can be relied upon.

Challenges to Meet

David ends the psalm by recounting the most difficult task facing him—the fortified city of Edom (v. 10). Such a place lay impregnable because of its walls, battlements and defenses.

You may have your own Edom—an absolutely impossible situation. You don't have a clue as to how you can crack through the fortifications of your problem. David didn't know the "how" either, but he knew the "who"—the Lord Himself.

But, here's the catch. What if the Lord says, "Not you. You failed Me. You didn't listen to Me, so why should I pay any attention to you?" David faced that prospect head-on (v. 11), but did not let it deter him from asking the Lord for help anyway (v. 12). The very God who refuses to assist you when you are stubborn, rebellious and self-willed turns toward you when you are vulnerable, humble and penitent.

He'll give you strength to make it through this day (v. 13).

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