

# The House of the LORD

## **Psalm 26:1**     *Of David.*

Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

<sup>2</sup> Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind.

<sup>3</sup> For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness.

<sup>4</sup> I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites.

<sup>5</sup> I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.

<sup>6</sup> I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD,

<sup>7</sup> proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds.

<sup>8</sup> O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells.

<sup>9</sup> Do not sweep my soul away with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men,

<sup>10</sup> in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes.

<sup>11</sup> But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me.

<sup>12</sup> My foot stands on level ground; in the great assembly I will bless the LORD.

## **Psalm 27:1** Of David (before he was anointed, LXX).

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

<sup>2</sup> When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.

<sup>3</sup> Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

<sup>4</sup> One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

<sup>5</sup> For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

<sup>6</sup> And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

<sup>7</sup> Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!

<sup>8</sup> You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek."

<sup>9</sup> Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!

<sup>10</sup> For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in.

<sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

<sup>12</sup> Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence.

<sup>13</sup> I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

<sup>14</sup> Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

### **Psalm 28:1** Of David.

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.

<sup>2</sup> Hear 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.

<sup>3</sup> Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts.

<sup>4</sup> Give 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.

<sup>5</sup> Because 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.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed be the LORD! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

<sup>7</sup> The 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.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.

<sup>9</sup> Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever."

## Psalm 26-28

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# The House of the LORD

SOMEONE HAS SAID, "Several commentators have observed that the theme of the Lord's house forms a bond for Psalms 26-28."<sup>1</sup> "O LORD, I love the habitation of your house" (Ps 26:8). "One thing have I asked of the LORD, that I will seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life" (27:4). "Hear the voice of

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<sup>1</sup> C. Hassell Bullock, *Psalms: Volume 1: Psalms 1-72*, in Teach the Text Commentary Series, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), pgs not numbered.

my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary” (28:2).

Why do people today enter the house of the LORD? Do they know what it is for? Do they know the basis upon which they can stand in it? Do they realize what they are supposed to do in it? One of my great concerns is helping people understand answers to questions like these. This is due in part because the answers are so profound, and in part because the way so much of the Church acts today, it seems as if few know what they are.

I don't think there can be any question but that Sunday morning has become the greatest “high” of the week for many people. This should be a good thing, given that we talked last time about how prayer is to be a time where we are “lifted up.” We see this same idea throughout the songs today. “He will lift me high upon a rock” (27:5). “My head shall be lifted up above my enemies” (6). “I lift up my hands” (28:2).

The high many get today starts and often seems to end with singing. Singing should also be a great thing in church. “I will sing and make melody to the LORD” (27:6).

The problem is when the purpose of song is for feelings or entertainment (or to hear others sing). You can tell when this happens because the other elements of worship take a back seat—at best. For example, you will be hard pressed to see churches of 5,000 people doing communion each week (or in many places ever during their main service). Sermons have become very short homilies that often aren't exegeting the Bible. Prayer is reduced at best to a short statement just before the homily. Public Bible reading is maybe a verse, if you're lucky, and often in some funky new translation that takes great liberties with the original.

Meanwhile, singing can be an hour nonstop or more. Already out of proportion to the other elements, singing is now easily perverted such that you only sing songs because of how they sound, words become more and more subjective, about my feelings, sometimes in dangerous ways, like singing about seeing God in his bare essence. Often, you can't tell from the song who you are even singing to. Then, when it is **the feelings** you get that matter most, you start wondering what other

things you can do to feel great in “worship.” Next thing you know, the worship service you are in would so confuse any Christian living at any time in history other than this one, they would walk out the door wondering if they had the right address.

Historically speaking, most Protestant churches that trace their roots in any way to the Reformation did not look like this until quite recently. Then, in the early 80s, everything changed with the so-called “[Seeker-Sensitive](#)” movement. The idea seemed good enough. We want unbelievers to come to know the Lord. But they hate church. So, we’ll make church more suitable to their tastes. Then, once they come in, we’ll give them the gospel and many will become Christians.

What no one noticed however was that suddenly, [the very definition of “church” had changed](#), and with it, hundreds of years of Protestant teaching on worship. Today, a very large percentage of what was once the conservative remnant in Protestantism finds itself unable to disciple its people (according to their own surveys), lacking significant teaching, biblically and

theologically illiterate, full of non-Christians, seized with immorality, without a witness in the world, looking almost identical to it in every statistically significant moral category.

Psalms 26-28 form a **three-legged stool** upon which the worshiper can sit and take stock of what it means to worship the Lord in his temple. One, how may you enter? Two, what is it like in here, and what does it do to my desires for other things? Three, what should you do in here? As we reflect on them, let us **“Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!” (27:14)**. These are questions that many today have never once asked, and yet God very obviously cares about them so much that he talks directly to them in the Psalms.

## **Enter the House of the LORD**

Psalm 26 deals with entering the house of the LORD. It is a psalm **“of David.”** As such, we need to remember that the place of worship in those days was not in a

temple, though it was where the ark was, probably here on Mt. Zion. David wanted to build a temple for the LORD, but God did not authorize it (2Sa 7), though he did give him plans for it and helped him accumulate great wealth in order to construct it (1Ch 22, 28-29). In the meantime, many would gather to worship at the temporary sanctuary. But **not all of them were sincere**. You would have men like Absalom worshiping God on Saturday and trying to kill David on Sunday. As Wiersbe points out, “**It was this situation that led to the writing of this psalm.**”<sup>2</sup>

So **how does one enter this house?** This takes us back to the question, “**Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD, and who shall stand in his holy place**” (Ps 24:2; cf. 15:1)? We have already learned one answer elsewhere. “**He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart...**” (15:2ff). But we saw that even David himself could not do this perfectly, as he has kept

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<sup>2</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 105. He also sees Psalms 26-28 as a kind of unit of thought.

confessing that his is a sinner to the LORD (16:2; 19:13; 25:7). It is into this context that we must read our Psalm.

“Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity” (Ps 26:1; cf. Ps 7:8). He uses the word “integrity” (*tom*). It can mean wholeness, completeness, blamelessness. The LXX translates it as “innocence.” A good parallel is Job, “And the Lord said to the devil, Have you then observed my servant Job, that there is none of *men* upon the earth like him, a harmless, true, blameless, godly man, abstaining from all evil? and he yet cleaves to innocence, whereas you have told *me* to destroy his substance without cause?” (Job 2:3 LXX). This integrity is a wholeness to his being, where he has done all that God asks of him, not just in terms of obedience, but also in terms of repenting and seeking forgiveness when he falls short. Hence, the second part, “I have trusted (*batach*) in the LORD without wavering.” His life is not one of meriting righteousness, but of hope and faith. Put simply, he is a true believer.

Therefore, he says, “Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind” (2). Don’t test the outside,

but the inside. Know that I'm telling the truth. Not about being a perfect man, or a "basically good" man, but about walking in the way of the LORD. The theme of walking and the steadfast covenant love from the previous psalm pops back up. "For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness" (3).

It is through faith and the covenant love of the LORD that he then becomes like the man of Psalm 1. He walks with the LORD and, "I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not with the wicked" (4-5). Regarding these people, notice that they have an assembly (*qahal/ekklesia*) too. They have a wicked church and he hates it. Why? Who wants to hang out there? With Falsehood or deceit. With liars and hypocrites, people who say one thing, but act another. With evildoers who do not love God's law in any form, though they may feign outward obedience. With the wicked. It seems probable given the word for what they are in, that these are *religious* pretenders. They say one thing in church, and

are the opposite when they leave it. These are not believers.

David will not go into their assembly, but he will go to his. And this is the point. Because, contrary to modern popular opinion, church is for those who fear God. Things happen there that these people love, not that unbelievers love. And no one should apologize for making church be for Christians rather than non-Christians, even though unbelievers are always welcome. Non-Christians have the rest of the world. We have church. And amazingly, if we do what we are supposed to do, God will be pleased to save those who come, in spite of the fact they may not like it. Because here they will find living water and the bread of life.

The center of the Psalm is **vv. 6-7**:

- A. Vindicate me, I have walked in integrity (1)
- B. I hate evildoers, I love your house (5)
  - C. **The way of worship:** wash hands, go to altar, sing loudly, tell of his deeds (6-7)
- B<sup>1</sup>. I love your house, where you glory dwells (8)

A<sup>1</sup>. I walk in integrity, Redeem me (11)<sup>3</sup>

David now depicts the **first two pieces of furniture** one finds upon entering Moses's tabernacle, and would later see in Solomon's temple. "**I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD**" (6). When you entered the sacred space, you came to the **washing basin**. It would seem that whatever temporary place David had set up on Mt. Zion had the same basic idea of water at the entrance. Here, you would ceremonially wash your hands, "**signifying innocence and yet at the same time, the need for purification.**"<sup>4</sup> Your clean hands would symbolically picture the clean heart needed to enter the sanctuary. The same occurs in **Christian baptism**, which is not the removal of dirt from the body, but the sign of the confessing believer that their conscience may now be clean. This is why David prayed

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<sup>3</sup> This chiasm is in Margaret Nutting Ralph, *And God Said What?: An Introduction to Biblical Literary Forms* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), pgs not marked.

<sup>4</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 226.

for God to test his *heart* (**vs. 2**), because his heart has been washed clean of sin by the LORD.

Only when the hands were clean could you then pass beyond the gates into the temple where you would come to **the altar of sacrifice**. Craigie notes that it also “**symbolized God’s table, where his fellowship and presence could be known.**”<sup>5</sup> For us, the Lord’s Table is where we have fellowship and with his presence. These are two of the ordinary elements of Christian worship that are prefigured in our Psalm.

David says that he walked around the altar “**proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds**” (**7**), which would include things like creation, judgment in the Flood, Babel, and Sodom, taking a nation to be his own, the Exodus with all of its miracles, the Sinai theophany, victories of conquest in Canaan, and so much more. This are the things you are to put words to in church. In fact, they come from the sacred word: read, sung, preached, prayed—the other elements of worship.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Thus, we can see the content of worship. It isn't so much about David (except as he has been cleansed), as it is about God—who he is and what he has done for his people in covenant. Many new songs are being written today that match the same majestic themes of older hymns. May they all be the antidote to the twaddle and drivel that makes people high in worship but has no lasting value because it is all about self, so that they crash and burn once the feeling has evaporated and they realize anew that they really just aren't worth being the focus of worship after all.

So, **what does coming into the presence of God through the regulated means of worship do for David?** It does for him what it should do for you and I. **“O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells” (8)**. It creates in him a profound **sense of love**. He loves the place where he has come to dwell, which is the exact opposite response we find when unbelievers who are not being called by the Spirit have when they come into the presence of the LORD. You can see it on their faces. They are uncomfortable, out of

place, they don't want to be there, it bores them, it angers them, and so on. These are **inside things**, things that can be faked to those around in hypocrisy. Do you love coming into the presence of God?

Here, and as we go along in the other psalms as well, you need to know that **the presence of God has changed places** from David's to our day. Or maybe better, the sanctuary has transformed. David anticipated a temple being built. But now, a temple built without hands by God is where his presence dwells. Previously, the Lord Jesus literally dwelt on the ark of the covenant in the sanctuary on Mt. Zion. Now, he dwells in his people by the Spirit, particularly when they are gathered together for corporate worship, but even when they are not. And so, do you love to be in the presence of his people in whom God dwells? Christian fellowship. This is what the Psalm is ultimately singing about. To be in the place where the Lord dwells is to love that place and to love those who are there with you.

His desire is so great he pleads, **“Do not sweep my soul away with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty**

men, in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes” (Ps 26:9-10). It is similar to what we have seen, as the poem makes its way back out of the chiasm. David prays for God to spare him from sin and from delighting in those who love to break his moral law.

Rather, “As for me, I shall walk in my integrity” (11). There’s that word again. He is resolute to do all that he needs to go, as a Christian must be when confronted with both believing the gospel, obeying his law, confessing his sin, repenting, and so on. “Redeem me, and be gracious to me” (11). He knows if God will not do it for him, it won’t be done. Even now he needs a Savior. Even after having entered the sanctuary. But if God will answer, “My foot stands on level ground; in the great assembly I will bless the LORD” (12). And now worshiping with his lips can follow as he sings God’s praises in the true church, the one where God is present, his people have been redeemed, and true worship can begin.

## Security and Joy in the Sanctuary

Psalm 27 is quite similar to 26 in its themes, even as it looks back upon previous psalms as well. It is also a Psalm of David, and the LXX adds that it was written prior to his being anointed. Its form is straight forward—another chiasm:

- A. The LORD is my strength (1)
- B. My adversaries (2)
- C. I ask and I seek (3)
- D. He will lift me up (5-6a)
- E. Three positive petitions (6b-7)
- F. Seek my face (8a)**
- F<sup>1</sup>. Your face I will seek (8b)**
- E<sup>1</sup>. Three negative petitions (9)
- D<sup>1</sup>. The LORD will take me up (10)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Teach me, lead me (11)
- B<sup>1</sup>. My adversaries (12-13)
- A<sup>1</sup>. Be strong (14).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Psalm 27: Robert L. Alden, “Chiastic Psalms: A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 1-50,” *JETS* 17.1 (Winter 1974): p. 20 [11-28].

He begins this song with God's **light** and **salvation**, his being the **stronghold** of his life, the thing that protects him from everything outside. Therefore, he will **not be afraid** of anyone but him (**Ps 27:1**), and **the fear** he has of the LORD is not terror, for God is with him. Evildoers are still on his mind, adversaries, foes. Even as they try to kill him, it is they who stumble and fall (**2**). But knowing God as he does, even if a whole army should encamp around him, he will not fear in his heart (**3**).

All he has asked is that which he also seeks after: "That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple" (**4**). There are several songs out there today that take this idea of gazing upon the beauty of the LORD in very dangerous ways, and it is one of the troubling facets of modern worship. You are not to desire the **Beatific Vision**, a direct, unmediated encounter with the Divine. For that is mysticism, the thing that pantheists wish for. Such a thing would surely kill you in the flesh.

Rather, you need to seek a mediated encounter, where you can be safe from the Consuming Fire. He wants the LORD to **shelter him** in the day of trouble in his tent, and to lift him upon a rock (5). We will see later that he is asking to be hidden in Christ the Word. The Word is God who mediates the direct presence of God. In fact, we will also see later, he is the Presence of God to us. Remember that he dwelled on the Ark? But he came in a cloud, shrouded, there. When Moses, talked to the Lord Jesus in that form, he shone so greatly that the people were terrified of his presence, let alone Jehovah's. This is the danger of worshiping in a way that you have no idea what you are asking for. But if he is sheltered, then his head will be lifted up above his enemies all around, because he is eternally safe and no one can snatch him out of the LORD's hand. Of this he will sing and make melody to the LORD (6).

He cries again for the LORD to be merciful, for he knows he is in need of it. "**Be gracious to me and answer me**" (7), not because he deserves it, for in his flesh he does not. Then we come to the center of the song. It

begins, “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’” (7). We saw “seeking” earlier both in this psalm and in modern worship. There are two things to now say about this.

The first is something most Reformed people get, but few others do. “No one seeks God” (Rom 3:11). This is because all people are sinners who run from God like bank robbers run from the police. They are not seeking the police station so they can walk in and say, “Hello.” This included you and I, and anyone here today who does not know the Lord. Because of this, the whole Seeker-Sensitive movement was built upon a foundation of sand.

The second is that some people do seek God. What? Yes, that’s what David says. “My heart says to you, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek’” (Ps 27:8). But how can no one seek God, and yet David seek God? The answer is because of what God has done for him. He has lit his path, lifted him on the rock, and given him salvation. He has changed David to such a degree that he was not seeking the LORD before the LORD found him, but now

that the LORD has saved him, he now seeks the LORD. So the song teaches us about the need for salvation.

God must give you a regenerate heart, one that loves him, one that loves neighbor, one that is no longer made of stone, but of flesh. He does this by calling you to see the beauty of his majesty and the loveliness of his presence in Christ. It is like no other. Here, there is perfect security and joy. And through Christ, the Father has made a way so that you can see it in the death he died to be the means by which you can be saved. Beloved, all believers seek the Lord, because that is what they have been created in Christ Jesus to do. And this is what it means now to love him, to love his church, to love his worship, to love his laws, and to love his Son.

Many of the words in this Psalm **remind us of Christ**. “My light.” Christ is the light. “The stronghold” and “rock.” Christ is the Rock. “Your face.” Christ is the face of God. “**For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”** (2Co 4:6). Even the enemies encamping around him.

“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them” (Ps 34:7). And so David is singing of the Savior, for he has seen his deeds, believed them, trusted in him, confessed his sin, been washed and made clean. To see this yourself, believe in his death for you, confess him as Lord, believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, and you will be saved. Do you hear him calling you just now?

The prayer then tells you more of how to respond in his presence. He asks the LORD not to hide his face from him, after he has just sought it, not to turn his servant away in anger (9). Why? Because David continues to be a sinner, and he knows God doesn't like it. He pleads with him to remember that it is he who sought David, not the other way around. “You have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!” (10). Others have forsaken, even father and mother (11), but the LORD will always take him in.

Then he prays that the LORD would teach him his way, just like he did in Psalm 25. He wants to be led on the level path because of his enemies (11). He asks for

protection from them (12), from their false witnesses against him, from their violence. And if God does this, “I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD” (13-14). This is a marathon, not a sprint. He will believe that God will do what he has said because he has seen who this God is and what he has already done. This is the response of a Christian.

## Response in the Sanctuary

Psalm 28 now becomes David’s great response to having entered, having had his desires transformed, having seen God anew and what he is like, having taken refuge in him. Its structure is more complicated than the others, as it has three different chiasms with **three main points**:<sup>7</sup> Together, they show us exactly what it means to worship.

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<sup>7</sup> The chiasm is from Samuel L. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*, 271.

I. The Silence of God (vv. 1b-2)

- (a) I cry
- (b) Do not be silent
- (c) Otherwise, it's death
- (b') Do not be silent
- (a') I cry

II. The Workers of Nought (vv. 3-5)

- (a) The scoundrels
- (b) Their malicious endeavors
- (c) Their due deserts
- (b') Their malicious endeavors
- (a') The scoundrels

III. Blessed Be the Lord! (vv. 6-9)

- (a) He hears
- (b) He helps
- (c) I praise
- (b') He saves his anointed
- (a') He saves his people

The first deals with **the silence of God**, though it begins in a most unexpected way. God might be silent, David will not. **“To you, O LORD, I call” (Ps 28:1)**. The parallel is, **“I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary” (2)**. Worshiping the Lord is calling upon him. I will call upon the LORD who is worthy to be praised.

There is always a reason or two never far away. “My Rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me...” (1). This is paralleled with “Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help” (2). When he calls for pleas of mercy, when he cries out for help, and when he worships, he calls out for God to hear him and to answer him.

Why? Because if God doesn't, he will be like everyone else, “I become like those who go down to the pit” (1). This is main point #1 in Psalm 28. In other words, Lord, if you will not hear, then I die. Other men have an echo chamber in their halls of their head. When they call, it just rings loudly. God doesn't answer. God won't hear them, because they do not know him. They do not call to him. But being a believer does not stop the hardness of this life, nor the cries for help and mercy. Christians are not immune. The difference is, God hears and answers our prayers because we call. Thus, he raises his hands in worship. This God is worthy to be praised.

The thing that seemed to bother David more than any other except perhaps his own unworthiness, is the

hypocrisy of the evil men that he faced throughout his life. This was Israel, and everyone was a Jew, just like this is America and everyone is a Christian, right? Living here in Denver/Boulder, we don't feel that trapping nearly as much as they might in the Midwest or down South. But believe me, it is very similar to what David sees. Everyone claims to love God, but those same people seek to kill him, to dethrone him, to laugh and scoff at him *and his God*, even while they go off to the temple to worship.

The world today sees this hypocrisy, but they get confused about it at precisely the wrong point. The hypocrisy is not from David, for though he is a sinner, he is humble and repentant and seeks to obey the law in all things, to do right to rich or poor, slave or free it doesn't matter. What the world sees is many people who claim to be Christian who neither have anything close to biblical doctrine nor ethics. But they then **lump everyone** who claims to be a Christian into that category. Nonsense. David is not evil, but there are real evil people seeking his life.

Again we read him saying, “Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil” (3). Like Psalm 25, he asks God not to let him fall into sin with them. Temptations are real, including the temptation to seek revenge or to become like those who despise the most. This line finds its completion not in a parallel, so much as in an answer. “He will tear them down and build them up no more” (5). If the temptation is real, let me know their ultimate fate, to help me from falling. His prayer is filled with hope, and that is why it is in the context of worshiping in the sanctuary.

God will not let them prosper forever, and David cries out, “Give to them according to the work of their hands” (4). This is paralleled with, “Because they do not regard the works of the LORD or the work of his hands” (5). The first talks about justice. People think it is wrong to ask God to be just. But **justice is a good thing**. When wicked people do something terrible in society, we all demand justice (even if our sense of it is perverted). But this has a flip side. He wouldn't pray this about someone who is humble and seeks mercy from the LORD. But

these are people who do not regard him or what he has done. They've surely heard. But they don't care. The work of their hands is what they care about, not his. They live for themselves, not for him.

All of this leads to **the second main** point of the poem: "**Render them their due reward**" (4) or their just desserts. Oh, how the king and all Christians wish that everyone would come to see the beauty of the Lord in his holiness. That's why we talk to them about him. That's why we plead with them to turn. That's why we show them what he has done in the gospel through Jesus.

But all Christians also long **to see their King and not another be glorified**. We live in his kingdom, for his glory, that he might be praised. And therefore, if they will not turn, then may they receive exactly what it is that they want, so that God will not be mocked. Some people blame God that people go to hell. Does he send people to hell? Yes. But is he somehow evil for doing so? No. Hell is the result of exactly what people are seeking. For in not seeking him, they seek themselves through every

manner of wickedness. The law of *lex talionis* says, “**And eye for an eye.**” If you want so badly to take an eye, then your punishment should be your own eye.” This is what is being prayed here. If you want so badly not to believe, not to do what he says, not to humble yourself, but rather to go off seeking to disobey him and harm your neighbor, then Lord, give them exactly what they do to others. Justice is a worth while thing to praise God for.

But **justice does not finish the poem** or come close to the end of our worship. Rather, that is the position reserved only for **the gospel**. You see, the good news is not that God would give people what they deserve, but that **he has made a way in Christ whereby evil people may not get what they deserve, but rather may find mercy and grace.**

“**Blessed be the LORD! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy**” (6). Anyone who calls upon him may find mercy in the Day of Salvation. Anyone, it matters not what you have done. Any sin, no matter how great, will be forgiven by Christ Jesus. But it means calling out for mercy to him. O Great King! Have mercy on me, a sinner!

If you call, he will answer, and you can worship. Blessed be the LORD, for he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. No one need suffer endless torment for what they deserve. No one need live in the torment that your daily sins bring upon you. He will grant mercy. **He hears.**

He hears and then **he helps.** “**The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped**” (7). Forgiveness and salvation, though a singular declaration of “not guilty” (justification), is not a one-and-done where he then leaves you to yourself to figure things out alone. He helps his people like a Shepherd who goes after that lost scared entangled sheep. He gives you the Spirit so that you are never alone, never without a **comforter**, never without an **advocate**, and always in his Temple where he hears your cries. Because for a believer, even his **body is a temple** of the Holy Spirit. He cannot get away from the Lord’s kind friendship and presence.

All of this leads to the **third and final main point** of our third and final psalm, making it in a way the point of the message. “**And with my song I give thanks to him**”

(7). Let us recall how so many people treat song in our day. Sadly, some treat it the opposite so that the music doesn't matter, just the words. But if you can read these psalms and not have your heart leap for joy in rapture of his love, then you are an emotional zombie. And certainly, singing includes melody and harmony as well as words. But it is the words, the content, the things we have seen in the songs today that is the source and root of our worship. We praise him for these things. All of them. And the heart of a believer can't help but **give him thanks for the things he has done.**

What is left then? But to internalize the final two verses. **"The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed."** Such a curious word, *messiah* or *christ* (LXX). Certainly, David is singing this about himself, for he was the anointed king of Israel. But it is also the word for the Lord Jesus. Eusebius said, **"This teaches us that all the wonders of Christ written in the holy Scriptures, done for our salvation, whether teachings or writings, or the mysteries of his resurrection now referred to, were all done by the will and power of**

the Father defending his own Christ as with a shield in all his marvelous and saving words and works” (*Proof of the Gospel* 4.16.185). The Father defended the Son to the point of raising him from the dead. He was vindicated.

Because he has saved the King, “Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever” (9). Christ has a people that have been given to him. They are his inheritance. And as he came to this earth to die for sin, he surely came to save his people from theirs. He is their Shepherd, we shall not want. The themes of the psalms are intertwined, always causing us to think about earlier ones (cf. Shepherd--Ps 23:1, 28:9; rock--28:1, 27:5; don't be deaf to me/hide face from me--28:1; 27:9, sanctuary--28:2, 27:4-5, help--28:3, 27:9, my song--28:7, 27:6, salvation--28:8-9, 27:1, 9), creating in us longing for more. That is what it means to worship him in his house. You are the temple of God now, a living temple made of living stones. May the Lord be quick to give you salvation through the word proclaimed to you this day. And may the House of the

LORD be quick to offer thanks for his great blessings in Christ.