

Intro:

The main theme of this psalm is spiritual oppression. In his own spirit, David finds himself at the end of his resources. To God, then, he appeals, looking to the Divine Spirit for the spiritual strength he requires.

This psalm is included in a list of psalms called 'Penitential', this mostly from the words of v. 2 and from its tradition of use in the church.

Notes:**I. The paradox of prayer (1-2)**

On what grounds does David approach the Lord in this prayer? (1)

On the basis of God's faithfulness and righteousness

Faithfulness: expresses the image of being in steady, firm hands – total dependability

Righteousness: the familiar word for righteousness, the quality of conformity to holiness, to the righteous standard

God's behaviour is always predictable, and it is always righteous.

What does David admit in part two of his approach? (2)

He confesses his own unrighteousness – in his prayer, he is asking for what he does not deserve, he is asking for mercy and grace, not justice.

II. The practice of prayer (3-6)

What are the circumstances that call forth David's prayer? (3)

The oppression of an enemy

What is the consequence to David's spirit? (4)

Overwhelmed, appalled – he has come to the end of his own resources

Having come to the end of himself, where does David's mind turn? (5)

He remembers the days of old (and presumably his relations with God in those days)

He meditates on all the acts of God that he knows

He considers the works of God's hands (creation)

These considerations are the bedrock of prayer – they constitute the firmness of God's faithfulness (v. 1) and the ground of personal hope.

In fact, one need not be the recipient of the acts of God in any direct way to make these meditations – the work of God for Moses, for example, is ground for us to pray for our own deliverance.

“It is this personal devotion that was David’s greatness and is the continuing greatness of his psalms.”¹

What kind of image is portrayed to us in the v. 6 as David turns toward God for help?

The image of a thirsty soul in a desert land pleading for a drop of water

III. The prospects of prayer (7-12)

The pressure remains intense in v. 7, but there is a clue to change in v. 8a. What is it?

David sees himself in great need, but he know the morning is coming. The dark night will not last forever.

The prayer takes on hope as David’s petitions mix with pledges – how is this expressed in vv. 8b-10?

David commits himself to walking in God’s way, he lifts up his soul to God’s teaching (8b)

David calls for deliverance, but yields himself to the Lord completely – I take refuge in you (9)

David asks for God’s Spirit to guide him to the level plain where there is no stumbling by asking to be taught God’s will (10)

The psalm concludes with three appeals to God’s nature and three petitions for God’s deliverance. (11-12)

What aspects of God’s nature form the final petitions of the psalm?

God’s name (11a); God’s righteousness (11b); God’s lovingkindness [covenant] (12)

What is the content of the final petitions?

Revive me (11a); Bring my soul out of trouble (11b); Cut off and destroy my enemies (12)

What is the final commitment of the psalm that shows David’s hope of a favorable answer?

I am your servant

“If God cared nothing for His name, for the cause of right or for His covenant, we might have doubts of His salvation.”²

¹ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 476.

² Ibid., 476-477.