

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Notice the two distinct parts to this psalm (vs. 1-6) and (vs. 7-14). With what one word would you characterize each part? Does this mean two authors were involved in the composition of this psalm? Discuss.
2. Talk about specific ways God can be a "light" and "fortress" to us.
3. How often does God protect us unknown to us? Are there not "Spiritual hosts (armies) of wickedness"? Discuss.
4. What is the "house of the Lord"—how shall we dwell in it?
5. In the experience of David when did his father and mother fail him?

PSALM 28

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer Turned into Praise.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Prayer Boldly Pleads the Feared Result of Refusal to Answer. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4 (with addition, ver. 5), Depicts the Character of the Lawless, and Imprecates their Punishment. Stanza III., vers. 6-8, Praise for Deliverance. *Refrain*, ver. 9, Invokes Jehovah's Blessing on his People.

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(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Unto thee I call my Rock—<sup>1</sup>  
do not turn silently from me;  
Lest if thou turn silently from me—  
I be likened with them who are going down to the pit.
- 2 Hear the voice of my supplication—  
as I cry for help unto thee,  
As I lift up my hands (O my God)<sup>2</sup>  
unto thy holy shrine.<sup>3</sup>

1. M.T. adds: "Jehovah."

2. Not in M.T.

3. "Chancel"—Dr.

## PSALM TWENTY-EIGHT

- 3 Do not drag me away with the lawless—  
and with workers of iniquity,<sup>1</sup>  
Who are speaking peace with their neighbours—  
while wrong is in their heart.
- 4 Give them according to their deed—  
and according to the evil of their doings;  
According to the work of their hands give them—  
bring back their dealings to themselves.
- 5 Because they heed not the deeds of Jehovah—  
nor the work<sup>2</sup> of his hands<sup>3</sup>  
he will put them down and not build them.
- 6 Blessed be Jehovah  
because he hath heard the voice of my supplication:
- 7 Jehovah my strength and my shield—  
in whom hath trusted my heart,  
Since I have found help and my heart hath exulted  
with my song will I thank him:
- 8 Jehovah a strength to his people<sup>4</sup>  
and the all-saving stronghold<sup>5</sup> of his Anointed one is he!
- 9 Oh save thy people and bless thine inheritance,  
and shepherd them and carry them unto the ages!<sup>6</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 28

I plead with You to help me, Lord, for You are my Rock of safety. If you refuse to answer me, I might as well give up and die.

2 Lord, I lift my hands to heaven<sup>7</sup> and implore Your help. Oh, listen to my cry.

3 Don't punish me with all the wicked ones who speak so sweetly to their neighbors while planning to murder them.

1. "Naughtiness"—Dr.

2. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.): "works" (pl.)—Gn.

3. Cp. Isa. 5:12.

4. So it shd. be—G. Intro., 143. And so it is in some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.). Cp. Ps. 29:11—Gn.

5. Ml.: "the stronghold of the salvations" (= "great salvation," pl. intensive).

6. Ml.: unto the age: Heb. *'adh-ha 'olam*.

7. Literally, "Your innermost shrine," i.e., the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

4 Give them the punishment they so richly deserve! Measure it out to them in proportion to their wickedness; pay them back for all their evil deeds.

5 They care nothing for God or what He has done or what He has made; therefore God will dismantle them like old buildings, never to be rebuilt again.

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6 Oh, praise the Lord, for He has listened to my pleadings!

7 He is my strength, my shield from every danger. I trusted in Him, and He helped me! Joy rises in my heart until I burst out in songs of praise to Him.

8 The Lord protects His people and gives victory to His anointed king.

9 Defend Your people, Lord; defend and bless Your chosen ones. Lead them like a shepherd and carry them forever in Your arms.

## EXPOSITION

In this psalm prayer is prolonged; but praise, when it comes, is pronounced. The prayer is prompted by some unnamed peril, the continuance of which, it is feared, will cause death. We are struck with the terms in which the prayer is couched. God is so addressed by the term *Rock* as to make of this word a proper name, inasmuch as the *figure* of a rock as such disappears, since an entreaty to a rock to turn or not to turn is incongruous: thus showing that the application of the term to Jehovah has become so familiar that the appropriate imagery is forgotten. The Becoming One (=“Jehovah”) is the Abiding One, the Changeless One (the “Rock”): the conception of immutability being retained, all else is let go. The Changeless in nature, is thought of as changing in attitude: turning towards in favour, ready to answer prayer; or turning away in silence, leaving the suppliant’s mind in painful suspense. The feeling for the personality of Jehovah is intense; and the sense of nearness to him is so vivid as to induce great boldness in supplication. The impression of this made by the first stanza is deep. Before leaving this stanza, we may recall the fact that the name *Rock*, is a favourite name for Jehovah, is found in Psalms closely bound up with David’s name; e.g. 18:2, 31, 46; *Debir* for *shrine*, as used of “the holy of holies,” is more closely associated with the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6:5 and onwards) than with the holy tent of David’s

## PSALM TWENTY-EIGHT

own day; but as names are often carried backwards it would be trifling to make of this an argument against the Davidic joint-authorship of this psalm. It is wonderful, however, to note how much Hezekiah found in David suited to his own case; and then further how brightly the image of Hezekiah himself is wont to shine out in the close of the psalms. There is, indeed, nothing in the third stanza (vers. 6-8) which David could not have used; but a sense of enhanced fitness greets a reference to the unparalleled experience of the later monarch. "At ver. 6 Hezekiah adds his experience (cp. Isa. 38:10-20)"—Thirle, O.T.P., 316.

With the reference to the "lawless" in ver. 3, Ps. 9:17 and the note on "lawless" in Ps. 1:1 may be usefully compared.

The imprecations of vers. 4, 5 may serve to remind us of the instinctive passion with which injured human nature turns to "the vindicatory righteousness of God" (Intro., Chap. III., "Righteousness"); and that it is only in the strength of the highest manifestation of the Messianic Spirit that we can hope victoriously to exclaim, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." At the same time all persecutors would do well to beware of the Divine indignation which may necessarily alight on them in order that Jehovah may *save his people, bless his inheritance—shepherd them also and carry them unto the ages.*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The Lord is our "rock"—specify two or three comparisons of Jehovah to a rock.
2. If God is a loving Father, why is it necessary to plead with Him to do what we know He must do? Discuss.
3. Vindictiveness seems to be a part of this psalm—and of several others—how shall we understand this? There *is* an explanation—Discuss.
4. Read these eight points of thought by W. G. Scroggie on the subject of "The Imprecatory Psalms"—(p. 317 in PSALMS).

IMPRECATION is the invoking of evil upon others. Imprecations are found in a number of brief utterances, as in 40:14-16; 63:9; 104:35; 143:12; but statements of some length are found in 35:1-8, 26; 59:11-15; 59:22-28; 109:6-20; and 139:19-22. These anathemas constitute a major moral problem, and, obviously,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

are contrary to the spirit of the New Testament (Matt. 5:43-48; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). Such imprecations cannot be regarded—

- 1 as referring, not to individuals, but to the moral enemies of the soul.—(ARNOLD).
- 2 as predictions of a future yet to come, when all the unrepentant wicked shall be punished.—(HORNE).
- 3 as curses, not of the Psalmist, but of his enemies; by supplying, for example, the word *saying* at the end of verse 5 of Psalm 109.

Towards an understanding of this problem the following points should be considered.

- 1 The writers lived in the dispensation of Law and not of Grace (John 1:17).
- 2 The intense provocation to which the sufferers were subjected.
- 3 The utterances need not be regarded as expressions of personal vindictiveness.
- 4 The belief that Israel's enemies were God's enemies (139:21, 22).
- 5 The sharp distinction which we draw between the sinner and his sin, was not recognized by the Hebrews; they regarded them as identical.
- 6 The imprecations disclose a zeal for righteousness.
- 7 The unit of old was the family, not the individual, so that a man's fate was the fate of his family (109:9-13).
- 8 The belief that the righteous must be rewarded and the wicked punished in this life, for there was then no revelation of a final Judgment.

## PSALM 29

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Glory in the Temple and in the Tempest: Jehovah's Kingship of Judgment in the Past and of Blessing in the Future.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Angels Called to Worship in the Heavenly Temple.  
Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Commencement of Storm on the Mediterranean.  
Stanza III., vers. 5-7, Bursting of Storm in the North. Stanza IV., vers. 8,