

Psalm 70

Introduction – “I thought we were to not be anxious in anything (Phil 4:6-7)? It sure sounds like in some of these Psalms like someone is anxious.” Yes, but look at what is going on in this Psalm and you see how the psalm-singer deals with his anxiousness. Notice the supplication, the thanksgiving, and the peace that passes understanding. Augustine said, *“Let us, then, shout these words with one voice: O God, give heed and help me; for as long as we are in this world we need His constant help. Whenever shall we not? Yet now most of all, when we are in distress, let us say it: O God, give heed and help me!”* A right understanding of our life, all our living on this side of the fall, and we know that we are poor and needy all the time (v5). This psalm, and the first verse especially, can be on our lips whether in fear or reassurance, whether in pain or pleasure, joy or sorrow; it is always proper to pray, *“Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O Lord!”*

Hurry up God! (v1) – We are to have a high view of God, holy and exalted above all, and not like a genie in a bottle promising to answer whatever my wishes. I am not to keep God at my side like I keep my chickens on my property for eggs. Nevertheless, I am to speak to God honestly, from how I am seeing things and not just offering Him words I think He wants. He wants you. He wants you where you are. He can handle the changes that need to be made in you, your perspective, your panic, your wrong view of His sovereignty in the moment.

This Psalm is wrenched out of the context of Psalm 40, from where it comes before almost word for word (Psalm 40:13ff). It seems to do so to be used in any circumstance in which any psalm-singer finds himself or herself. And apparently it is just fine to tell God that, from your perspective, He needs to hurry up, get going, come quickly. There are times where there isn't time to start with adoration and worship. I need help now! Quick. So, speak to Him like that. Remember the benefits that are ours in Christ who Himself intercedes for us (Rom 8:34), through Whom we have confident access to the Father (Eph 3:12) and to the throne of grace (Heb 4:16).

We are to be so bold in our prayers. God has invited us into His counsel where He tells us to tell Him what to do. Think of the Lord's Prayer. In this Psalm the psalm-singer urges divine haste four times. He does so twice in the first verse and repeats this twice at the end as well. This is not the command of a superior; it is the cry of a drowning swimmer yelling at the lifeguard.

And we should be careful not to include “if it be thy will” like some kind of reformed escape clause. It is true that all things have been predestined by God before eternity past. But it is also true that He has predestined your prayers to have life-changing, eternity-changing impacts on the world (Mark 11:22-24). And we would like to see many of those impacts sooner than later, *“...O Lord, do not delay”* (v5).

The Shame of it All (vv2-3) – Not only does the psalm-singer want God to move quickly, but he also knows what he wants God to do when He comes. He wants these enemies ashamed and confounded, turned back and confused, and shamed themselves for mocking him (vv2-3). Remember Psalm 69:19 where we see Christ was despising the shame placed upon Him (Heb 12:2) and praying that His people would not be shamed in His death (Psalm 69:6). That vindictive spirit that the psalm-singer complains about reaches its pinnacle in the account of the crucifixion. And it is interesting to note that the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion do not direct our gaze at the pain of the cross; they draw attention to the shame of the cross (DeYoung). And as our covenant Head, He bore our shame. All of it. And this prayer emphasizes that whoever brought that shame upon Him, upon you, or any of His children, will be turned back and recompensed. Yes, you may pray so, because God has already promised He will do so (Isaiah 41:11).

And this is a societal matter as well. Our culture wars are not a collision of political parties. The antithesis is between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. It manifests itself in the political world, but the center of it is not political. The central thing is righteousness and unrighteousness, living in accordance with God's law and the deliverance of His Gospel or saying that we will not have this Man to reign over us. In our day, the haters of righteousness try to legislate hate crimes and hate speech, and yet it is striking how much vitriol comes forth at the slightest provocation (singing Christmas carols, acknowledging God in official documents or on public land, standing to protect the rights of the unborn, etc.).

But aren't we supposed to love our enemies and pray for them (Matt 5:43-44)? Yes, and we are to pray for God's judgment to come swiftly. This requires wisdom and the work of the Spirit of God. God's enemies need to be destroyed and our enemies need to be forgiven. The merciful way that both happens is when God destroys His enemies by making them His friends, as He has done with us. And so it is proper to pray against their wicked ways, that they might be turned back in shame, a shame and confusion that causes them to see the futility of their ways, the coming judgment, and a repentance that leads to cleansing and new life. Do this now, Lord. Do this quickly!

How to Magnify a Magnificent God (v4) – Ultimately, why do we want God to answer these prayers. This is where we are to grow up into maturity. It is not simply that we need these prayers answered. It is also, and finally, so that God's name is magnified. And it is magnified by the rejoicing in those answered prayers coming from a Personal, caring, good and gracious God. We are not simply people who are glad. We are glad in God. We are glad in Christ. We are glad in union and communion with Him, His salvation, His adoption of us, His cleansing of us.

The psalm-singer, as the Psalm-singer Himself, declares that the answers to these prayers brings more people into the fold, aware and embracing the mercies of God, not just submitting to, but enjoying His omniscience, omnipotence, and sovereignty over all things – even through our present trials (Isaiah 61:10, 65:13-14, John 6:35-40, Rom 5:1-5).

Today's Realities (v5) – In this short psalm, we have gone from desperate prayers to mountain top moments of seeing the vast glory of God and His saving love for us and to the world. But tomorrow morning will come and more troubles will come with it. Or more of the same troubles. What are we to do? Keep singing. Keep praying. Mutter to yourself, over and over, preaching to yourself to never stop asking, never stop seeking, never cease praying.

In fact, those trials continue to teach us and humble us in this truth. We are poor and needy. Not a moment goes by and we don't need God's hand of providence over us. You know your prayer life is lax when things are easy. But a little bit of pain or trouble and our prayer life changes drastically. This is the irony of biblical reality: the more you actually realize, believe, and embrace your complete dependence upon God for everything, instead of thinking you can live independent of Him, the more you will actually experience that which your soul desires: perfect peace that passes all understanding.