

Hard times make believers pray. Recognizing that may help us understand one of the reasons why God brings difficulties into our lives. Because He wants to make us pray. He wants us to put our lives and our situations into His hands. Because that's what faith does, and that's what God is really after. That His children live every day by faith.

David was in trouble. He doesn't say what the problem was. But there are things about the way David speaks that suggest that he was the victim of false accusations. That's always a tricky business. Because it's one person's word against another's. That's one of the terrible things about slander, and false accusations. How do you defend yourself? All you can say is, I didn't do it.

David went to the LORD with it. Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit! From Your presence let my vindication come!

When someone's telling lies about you, it helps to know that God knows the truth. But that could be a bit of a double-edged sword: when you think of what that means, that God knows the truth about you, suddenly that isn't very much of a comfort! But David wasn't worried about that. He says, You have tried my heart, You have visited me by night, You have tested me, and You will find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. With regard to the works of man, by the word of Your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. My steps have held fast to Your paths; my feet have not slipped.

James says in James 5:16: The prayer of a righteous person has great power. When we seek the Lord, and fear Him, and we want to serve Him and do what's right, with all our hearts, that's righteousness.

We can't ask for God's blessing while we're living in sin. But when we walk with Him in real, open fellowship, we may certainly expect His blessing. Because God is righteous. Because God calls us, His children. And He keeps the covenant that He made with us. That's what David says: I call upon You, for You will answer me, O God; incline Your ear to me; hear my words. Show Your steadfast love. You are the Saviour of those who seek refuge from their enemies. Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me in the

shadow of Your wings, from my deadly enemies.

David doesn't say, God, You should listen to me because I'm innocent. He points to God's character. He speaks about God's steadfast love, God's covenant love. He says, I know that You'll listen to me because You promised to. You told me that I am the apple of Your eye. The apple of your eye is the pupil, that little dark spot there in the middle of your eye. We don't want anything or anyone to touch it or even come close to it.

We have no idea why God loves us, but He does. And if anyone dares to hurt us, if our enemies think that they can attack us, they've got another thing coming. The Lord is fierce, and very protective when it comes to His children. So David has absolute confidence that God will hear him, and help him.

And he says, God, look at my enemies. They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly. They shut off the voice of their conscience; they're so intent on what they want to do to me that they shut You out of their thoughts. And when people forget about God, they start to act like animals. They act like predators. They act as if other people are there to be used, to be taken advantage of.

Lord, don't You see what kind of people these are? Their reward is in this life. They live for here and now, for what they can see and what they can have right now. And I'm asking You, Lord, to show Whose side You're on. Or, maybe it's better to say it this way: I'm asking You to show that I'm on Your side. I'm asking You, Lord, to vindicate me, because I put their trust in You. Rise up, O Lord. Show Your justice, show Your faithfulness.

It sounds like this is personal; it sounds like David is asking God to wipe out his enemies, for his own benefit. But there's more at stake than that. These enemies aren't only threatening David. They're putting their gospel, their faith against God's truth. They're worldly; they believe that the only things that are worth having, and living for, are the things you can get and have here and now. That way of thinking is the antigospel. Their attack on David is an attack on his faith in God. An attack on the honour of God's Name

and the truth of His Word.

And so, David says, Arise, O Lord; confront them; subdue them. Vindicate me, because when You vindicate me, You vindicate Yourself, Your Name, Your Word.

This psalm is a bedtime prayer. David spoke in verse 3 about God coming to him at night, and testing his heart. It's the end of the day, and it's time for David to go to bed.

That can be a hard time of the day for us. So often, that's when we worry and stew about the things that are happening, or the things that might happen. During the day, we have our work, we have other people around, and that distracts us from our worries. But at night, when we're by ourselves, we think about what's wrong in this world; we dwell on our problems. They keep running through our minds, and we can't get any rest. Because we can't change things. We don't have the power to make things right. And we're afraid that God's not going to do it for us.

David was in trouble. When believers are in trouble, they pray. He laid it all out before the Lord. He presented his case. He put his trust in the righteousness of the Lord. He reminded the Lord that his enemies were men who rejected the gospel, and refused to live by faith in God's promises. And he reminded himself again of God's goodness, and love for His children. We are the apple of His eye. He saves those who take refuge in Him. That's Who God is.

And when he comes to the Amen, all of his fear and anxiety are gone, and all that he can see is the hope of faith. This is what the LORD gives us, when we pour out our hearts to Him, when we put our lives and our situations into His hands. Then we know again what is sure, what cannot be doubted: As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with Your likeness.

What is David thinking about here? Is he talking about waking up the next morning? Or is he thinking about when he wakes up from the sleep of death? He could be thinking about both. Because this is how it is for

believers: we know that God's face is shining on us, smiling at us, for the sake of Jesus Christ. We wake up every morning basking in the light and the warmth of His love. This is our comfort, no matter what the day may bring.

And this is also what we hope for, more than anything else: that in the world to come, we will see Him face to face. That is our ultimate comfort. Our reward, our joy, our hope, is not what we can have or do in this life. This was the difference between David and his enemies, and this is the difference between believers and those who attack us. We put our hope in the Lord. Jesus said in Matthew 6, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. We store up treasure in heaven, not on earth. Paul says in Romans 8, For in this hope we were saved. But, hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already sees? Hope, by its very nature, is waiting for something that it doesn't see, that it doesn't have yet. But, if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

That is the spirit, that is the strength, of living by faith. No, we don't yet have what we hope for. But, we wait for it, patiently. And in that expectation, we work, we pray, we live; in that expectation, we sleep. Because the Holy Spirit has told us that the prayer of a righteous man has great power.