

PRAYING THE PSALMS: **STRONG SHEPHERD**

Tuesday, January 2

Reading: Psalm 28

Psalm 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and He helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise Him. 8 The LORD is the strength of His people, a fortress of salvation for His anointed one. 9 Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.*

C. H. Spurgeon told of a Welsh lady, who when she lay dying, was visited by her minister. He said to her, 'Sister, are you sinking?' She answered him not a word, but looked at him with incredulous eyes. He repeated the question, 'Sister, are you sinking?' She looked at him again as if she could not believe he would ask such a question. At last, rising a little in her bed, she said, 'Sinking! Sinking! Did you ever know a sinner to sink through a rock? If I had been standing on the sand, I might sink; but thank God, I'm on the Rock of Ages, and there is no sinking there.' ¹

As believers, we have a sure foundation to stand on no matter what is thrown at us. In this psalm, David is under attack by his enemies and pleading for God's mercy and rescue. What stands out to me in this particular psalm are the names of God he uses in his plea.

He begins by calling God "my Rock" (28:1). A rock provides a stable foundation on which to stand. No wonder this picture is used so often in the Old Testament. In times of trouble it is a comfort to know that we are on the Rock. People may fail or disappoint us, but God never will.

Twice David refers to God as his strength (28:7-8). This Hebrew word is used primarily of God and pictures His power to help and keep His people secure. He is their fortress! Why do we struggle along in our own strength when the mighty power of God is available to all believers?

That God is our "shield" (28:7) is a picture of His protection. The root word means "to cover, surround, defend, and protect." The Lord surrounds His people with His love and mercy. When the enemy attacks the Lord Himself is our shield to deflect the temptations that are thrown at us (see Ephesians 6:11-17).

The image of God as a "shepherd" pictures His care. As a shepherd himself, David knew what it took to care of a flock. Sheep are helpless and need constant attention so they don't go astray. The picture of God as Shepherd is an old one, going back to Genesis (c.f. Genesis 49:24). Psalm 23 is a beautiful picture of God's care for His sheep. Jesus called Himself "the Good Shepherd" (John 17) and the New Testament writers would apply this picture to Jesus as well.

PRAYER THOUGHT: These titles all remind us that God is sufficient for every area and circumstance of our lives. When we feel weak and think we can't go on, our ever-present strong Shepherd will carry us through. How can your prayers help you place your cares and needs in the Great Shepherd's hands?

¹ <http://www.moreillustrations.com/Illustrations/rock%20of%20ages.html>