

A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House. A Psalm of David.

I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up,  
And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.

O Lord my God,  
I cried to You for help, and You healed me.  
O Lord, You have brought up my soul from Sheol;  
You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.

Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones,  
And give thanks to His holy name.  
For His anger is but for a moment,  
His favor is for a lifetime;  
Weeping may last for the night,  
But a shout of joy comes in the morning.

Now as for me, I said in my prosperity,  
"I will never be moved."

O Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong;

You hid Your face, I was dismayed.

To You, O Lord, I called,

And to the Lord I made supplication:

"What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?

Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness?"

*continued...*

## an intimate dialogue

A  
SERIES  
IN THE  
PSALMS



# FOR-GET-TING



Every year, as autumn begins its slide into cooler temperatures, it is time to prepare the wood that will be burned in our fireplaces during the fast-approaching winter. There is often more wood that *should* be burned than we will need. Natural attrition of the trees in our timber means there are more dead or fallen trees than we can consume in one season. At such times I call my friend Rich to come help with the tree felling, and have him (he of the voracious wood-burning furnace) take home half of the sectioned wood.

This last autumn found me with a large number of dead trees to cut down. As Rich and I addressed each one, I outdid myself in my lumberjacking prowess. One after another I dropped the trees precisely where I intended. As I approached the last tree—larger than the previous—I was feeling pretty cocksure. No sweat. Let me just make my first cut here, my second cut here and...

The large tree fell precisely where it shouldn't, leaned comfortably at a forty-five degree angle, caught in the branches of neighboring trees. Oh, we finally got the errant tree down and sectioned up, but with much greater effort and time.

How much easier it would have been had I not been so impressed with myself.

### his man

King David had a similar problem.

Now as for me, I said in my prosperity,  
"I will never be moved."

O Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong...

It was not because David lived a life of unadulterated righteousness that he was called by God (through the prophet Samuel) "a man after His own heart." The shepherd-turned-king missed the mark many times as he strove to serve his God. His sins—some egregious—were many. But one of the character traits that set David apart, and earned him the holy appellation, was his willingness to quickly admit wrong and—even in the throes of God's painful discipline—give praise and thanksgiving for His gracious forgiveness.

### remembering

*I am grateful that you have saved me, so that I have You as Lord over me, high and lifted up, rather than having my enemies "lord it over" me. When I*

*needed You, You not only heard me, but answered, and did what I asked. You lowered down Your ladder, so that I might escape the horrors of death, then You sustained me, so that I would not have to return.*

Like David, we should never forget that we belong to the Lord. No matter how we have failed Him, no matter how stained we have become by our transgressions against Him, the Father is always ready to reach down into our rebellion to restore us. He waits—and waits—longing for us to acknowledge Him and confess our wrong. Then He is quick to respond.

And what should be our response to God's forgiving grace?

*O God, I remember all these things You have done for me, so I make beautiful music to You, and lift up my hands to You in reverent worship. In comparison to God's longsuffering, extravagant love toward me, his discipline is so brief that it is gone before I can blink my eye. The tears I shed over my sin, or my unpleasant circumstances, are wiped away at breaking of dawn.*

## the offense

Just what had David done that was so wrong?

*I thought myself so strong, so wealthy, so secure that I was convinced nothing could stand against me. I said to Jehovah, because I have been so good, because You like me so much, You have girded about my kingdom—my Jerusalem—and it will never fall.*

Oh, here is the root of so many of our ills. Life in God's family is good, it is solid and rewarding. He is generous with us, pouring into our lives blessing upon blessing from His boundless, bottomless warehouse of riches.

But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs

according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

*Philippians 4:18-19*

But then, as is the way of all flesh, we forget that our exalted position is the product of His grace—not ours. And in a moment, we play out the faithful old proverb:

*Pride goes before destruction,  
And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

*Proverbs 16:18 NKJV*

## repentance

And what is the "fall"? It is desolation. It is the aching absence of God's favor.

*But then I came to my senses; I realized You were no longer with me, and the terror of that moment was too awful to bear.*

Echoing the words of Christ on the cross—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?"—the child of God cries out to Him in his misery.

*I called out to You, God. I threw myself upon Your mercy, praying that You would reach down to me and show me kindness. What will You gain, my God, if my praise is silenced into the rubbish and ashes of Sheol? How, then, can I stand up and proclaim Your truth to those needing to hear? Have mercy on me, Lord! Reach down into the depths of my despair and wrap me again in Your protective arms.*

## release

With confession and repentance comes quick forgiveness, for the Lord is eager to restore His child to the sweet communion they once enjoyed.

*You have changed everything, O God! You have converted my funereal aspect into a Spirit-dance, my wailing into a beautiful song. You have torn away my suffocating sorrow, and replaced it with Your comforting joy. You, O Lord, have done this so that that fullness of my life would no longer be mute in my self-absorption, but instead sing glory to You. More than that, O God, I will happily worship and praise You beyond time itself.*

*"Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me;  
O Lord, be my helper."  
You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;  
You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,  
That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.  
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.*

*Psalms 30:1-12*