The Lord Is My Strength and My Shield

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Preacher: Guest: Andrew Godden

[0:00] Good to go? Aha, there we go. I was going to say, it's pretty cool to be able to go to a different church in a different city! In the first chapter, in verse 12, and he says, So I want to see you so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

That's what we're here to do. That's what I get to partake in with y'all, and I hope we get to continue that this morning. We'll be in Psalm 28, as you can see on the screen, so go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Psalm 28.
As you're turning there, I know I'm at a little bit of a disadvantage this morning, because for the last two weeks, y'all have heard some great sermons, not only from my Old Testament Hebrew professor at seminary, but also one of my preaching professors.
So it's like, he's got all the bases covered. I'm just a lowly pawn compared to his preaching. No, he's had some great sermons. I got to listen to them this week, and they're fantastic.
But I asked for grace this morning, and I would expect nothing less from a church called Grace Church. So, Psalm 28, I hope you've made your way there.
[1:31] This morning, as we look at this psalm, we're going to learn a little bit about prayer, as we often do when we look at various psalms. And sermons about prayer are always convicting, especially for me.

We can always pray more. When the New Testament sets a standard, like pray without ceasing, every time you're thinking about prayer, you're like, man, I should be praying more. I could be praying more. Or at least I have that thought.
But this morning, we're going to talk less about the quantity of our prayers and more about how we pray. More about how we pray. And interestingly, our culture doesn't necessarily resist prayer. There's a lot of things that our culture doesn't like about Christianity. And the concept of prayer isn't necessarily one of those things. When something bad happens to you or happens to someone at work, no matter the religious affiliation of people, what is one of the first things that they say? Sending my thoughts and prayers. Yeah. And so, like, no matter whether they're atheist, secular, any religious background, that's often what they say first. If you see on social media some tragedy that happens, you see that also throughout all the comments, just from so many different people, sending thoughts and prayers.
[2:46] For them, it's more of a courtesy, a polite thing to say. For others, again, various different religious affiliations, prayer is a way to verbally process.

They kind of use it as, like, a form of extemporaneous journaling. They're like, this allows me to vent and just kind of get my thoughts out there and I can feel better afterwards.
I'm just verbally processing. And that's how they view prayer. They'd be like, prayer is good because it allows you to verbally process. It's more of a self-help method than anything else. And then for others, it's a way to slow down.
They're like, prayer is a way that life's busy. I need to slow down. It's like a calming technique. People see prayer as a way to just calm their minds, calm their lives, and they just see it as a calming technique.
And to each of these thoughts from the world, and sometimes even within Christianity, to each of these thoughts, I think David has something to say about that in Psalm 28. He has a response to those people.
[3:42] He's going to tell us that prayer is not something we do just to get a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. If prayer is just good feelings or verbal processing or a calming technique, then there's no true hope in prayer.

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Prayer must be much more than that. It is much more than that. Instead, we pray because we are completely dependent on God to answer.
And so in Psalm 28, David's going to show us that in our prayers, we must acknowledge our complete dependence on God.
We must acknowledge our complete dependence on God. That's what we're going to see in Psalm 28. Now, for most of you, I have the ESV in front of me. For most of you, Psalm 28 is likely broken up into four stanzas.
If you look at your text, you have verses 1 and 2, and then a little bit of space, and then verses 3 through 5, a little bit of space. Verses 6 and 7 is number 3, and then verses 8 and 9 is the fourth one.
[4:46] So that's kind of the format of how we're going to go through today. I'm going to read the whole Psalm right now, and then we'll take it kind of stanza by stanza as we work through it and see what David has to say.

So, all right, let's read Psalm 28. Psalm 28 of David. To you, O Lord, I call. My rock, be not deaf to me.
Lest if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands towards your most holy sanctuary.
Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts. Give to them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds.
Give to them according to the work of their hands. Render them their due reward. Because they do not regard the works of the Lord or the work of his hands, he will tear them down and build them up no more.
[5:53] Blessed be the Lord, for he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield.

In him my heart trusts and I am helped. My heart exults and with my song I give thanks to him. The Lord is the strength of his people.
He is the saving refuge of his anointed. Oh, save your people and bless your heritage. Be their shepherd and carry them forever. There's a lot to unpack in this psalm this morning.
It is rich. It is filled with things that we can learn from and we can take away as we think about prayer. A little background on the psalm. Obviously, it says it's of David, written by David.
And some psalms, I know Prof. Scott, we call him Prof. Scott, so I'm going to just call him that as I reference some of what he said. Some of the psalms, including the ones that he preached on the last two weeks, have a little bit more information in that superscript.
[6:55] They'll say this is for the dedication of the temple or this is when he's fleeing Absalom. That was a couple weeks ago, right? This one just says of David. But we have a little bit of information in the psalm itself about maybe when in David's life this psalm was written.

There's two that I want to point out. The first one is in verse 8. If you look at verse 8, the second half of verse 8, he says, The Lord is the strength of his people. He is the saving refuge of his anointed.
And so that word anointed is the Hebrew word Messiah. And again, Prof. Scott, he mentioned that, I believe it was last week. Anointed can also refer to the king of Israel at that time.
So David is saying here, he's referring to himself as the king of Israel, as the one anointed to lead God's people, the nation of Israel, at that time.
So in saying that, it's likely that David is writing this psalm when he is king. When he's reigning in Jerusalem, we get that bit of information here. The second thing, the second little reference point in the psalm is in verse 2.
[8:02] If you look at verse 2, the second half, it says, When I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. And again, if you remember from last week, Prof. Scott mentioned that a good date to remember is 1003 B.C.

That was the date of the restoration of the tabernacle. And so this reference to the holy sanctuary here is likely a reference to that tabernacle that's been restored.
That means that this psalm was written after the restoration of that tabernacle. So we get a few reference points to kind of figure out, okay, where in David's life or when in David's life is he writing this psalm?

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And that's important. Some of us are like, okay, why is that important? This is just a psalm. It's kind of, there's no context. It is important because, number one, every passage has context that influences the meaning of that passage. Some of you guys, like you just said, are going through hermeneutics, how to understand the Bible.
Context is the most important thing when you're coming to a passage. And it's really tempting when you come to the psalms and you're like, it's just a little poem. We don't need to worry about the context. Actually, the context does matter.
[9:03] And here, we realize that the psalm is written when David is king. And so there's certain covenants that God has made with David that might, we need to remember when we're reading this passage to help us understand, okay, maybe what is David referring to here?

What is the theological realities that David is playing with as he's writing this psalm? So it's important. It's important to keep in mind. Other than those two reference points, there's not a whole lot.
In fact, a lot of people will look at this psalm and they'll say, there's quite a bit of generalities. When David is talking about the wicked people here, or even his request, he's fairly general.
He doesn't say specifically, like, these are the people who are coming after me, or these are my enemies in this country. It's generalized, and that's for our sake, so that we can read this not as a prayer of a guy at one time, and then we finish it, and we say, that was cool, and then move on.
It has relevant application in our lives. And so David generalizes it so that it actually, we can read it, and we can find application from that as well. So, the most impactful context as we're thinking through this, what are the things that are influencing this psalm, are the theological realities, the covenants.
[10:26] Think covenants. Where is this within the Old Testament narrative of God interacting with his people at various times and in various ways? So, all that to say, this psalm was written after 1003 BC, after the tabernacle has been restored, and then David is king in Israel as he's writing this.

So, with all that being said, let's take a look at the first two verses, our first stanza, where we see, point number one, we see David's dependence on God to hear his prayer.
David's dependence on God to hear his prayer. We'll see that in verses one and two. I'm going to read them again. It says this, To you, O Lord, I call. My rock, be not deaf to me, lest if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.
Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. Now, there's a lot going on in these first two verses.
Right up front, David is making it clear that he is reaching out to Yahweh, the God of Israel. That's the God he's praying to. But, interestingly, that second line, my rock, be not deaf to me.
[11:50] If you think about it, that's an interesting request. That's an interesting request of an all-knowing God. Be not deaf to me. Of course God hears him. What might David be worried about?

Well, my thought as I was reading this is that David is worried about something that we as humans call selective hearing. I'm sure you're familiar with the concept. You might actually be doing it right now.
It's very possible. It's that time where you are engaging in a conversation with somebody and they're talking to you, but your eyes glaze over and you're just gone.
You have no idea what they're saying. You're hearing it. And then they might say, they might notice that your eyes are just like staring off into no man's land. And they go, hey, are you listening? What are they asking when they ask that question?
They're not asking, are the sound waves from my mouth making it to your ear? No, that's not what they're asking. They're asking, are you understanding? Are you listening?
[12:51] Are you paying attention to what I'm saying? And can you give me a little feedback? Can you give me a little something to just tell me, hey, you're engaged. You're paying attention. I'm here. I'm right there with you. And David here is doing exactly that.

Of course, David knows God is all-knowing. He is ever-present. But he's asking, God, okay, are you paying attention? And will you respond? That's what David is asking.
David fears silence from God. And that fear grows into a grim realization at the end of the verse. Verse 1, he says, Lest if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.

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Now, that phrase, like those who go down to the pit, is common in the Old Testament and in various Psalms. David uses that phrase quite a bit. Actually, if you turn over, it's probably just one page, to Psalm 30, verse 3.
He uses similar language. Psalm 30, verse 3, he says, Oh, Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol. You restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.
[14:00] So, that parallel kind of shows the pit and Sheol are synonymous terms. If you're going down to the pit, you're going to Sheol. So, back in chapter 28, if you read this part, Lest if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.

What exactly is David saying? What is his point that he's getting across with us? Some people think that this is David saying, If you don't respond, then I'm going to die.
Like, this is a life-threatening situation in David's life. And he's saying, God, if you don't respond, then I'm actually going to go down to the pit. Some people say that. I think there's one word in here that makes it probably more metaphorical.
If you look at it, it says, Lest if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. So, David's, maybe he's, it's a life-threatening situation. We don't really know. He doesn't make it super clear. But, what we do see is, David is saying, If God doesn't respond, Hold on, let me make sure I get to my right point.
He's saying, If God is not listening to my prayers, if God is deaf to me, or silent to me, then I might as well be dead. If God does not respond, then I might as well be lying in a coffin, and my soul on its way to the underworld.
[15:27] And that's some stark language. That's some, that's some vivid imagery. But it's because David is desperate for God to hear him.

He's desperate for God to listen and to respond. And so he says, God, if you don't respond, if you are silent to me, I might as well be dead.
There is no, there's no hope for me. So, if David is so desperate for God to hear him, what does he do? Does he, he realizes he needs to get God's attention.
What does he do to get his attention? Does he start trying to do things to please God? Does he, like the prophets of Baal, remember with Elijah, and the prophets of Baal, and they start dancing, and they start cutting them.
Is that what David does, to kind of get the attention of God here? Or, or maybe he starts doing, some good, good deeds, like giving extra to the tabernacle, or loving his wife, or his kids a little bit more.
[16:29] Maybe he starts flattering God, and say, God, you're so gracious, you're so mighty, I love you so much, so that he can get God's attention. We don't see any of that here. And so what does David do?

He asks. That's all he does. David just asks. He asks in verse one, and he asks again in verse two, right? Look at verse two. Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands towards your most holy sanctuary.
David simply asks. He doesn't do anything else. He's just asking God to hear him. Now granted, it's not just a one-liner request. It's not a simple request. This is packed with a lot of emotion.
He's pleading. He's crying. He's calling out to God. He realizes that if God doesn't respond to me, then I am like a dead man. There's emotion and imagery packed into this request, but that's all it is. It's a request. He even lifts up his hands towards the sanctuary. And remember from last week, the sanctuary in the Old Testament was the place where God resides.
[17:40] It's his special presence resides in the Holy of Holies. So David's saying, I'm trying to get as close as I can to you, God, so that you can hear me, so that you might respond, so that I can get a response from you.

And so these two verses are David asking God to hear him. And that's an important point because he spends a considerable amount of time praying, asking God not for his actual request yet, but just to hear him.
Like before, we're not even at the main request of the psalm. This is where David is simply asking God, will you hear me? Will you listen? Even as the anointed king of Israel, the man after God's own heart, he recognizes that he's not worthy, nor does he expect an automatic hearing from God. David recognizes he's a creature before his creator, and he knows he is completely dependent on God to even bring his request to God.

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He is complete, before his prayer even begins, he knows he is dependent on God to even pray. And so as we're reading this, the question is, is this how we approach God?
[19:01] In our own prayers, in our own lives. David here demonstrates for us a proper approach to God in prayer. When we cry out to God, when we pray, we need to realize that we are dependent on God to even approach the throne of grace.

We have not earned a hearing. We are not owed a hearing. There's no amount of good works, giving to the church, flattery, or even dancing, that we can do to earn a hearing before God.
Our ability to even access the Father at all is completely by the grace of God. And so today, as believers, as New Testament believers, the only reason that we have access through prayer to the Father is because of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
Right? Paul mentions this a couple times. He says in Ephesians 2.18, he says, For through him, we both have access in one spirit to the Father. Through who?
Through Jesus Christ. That's what he's saying. And in Romans 5, verses 1 and 2, Paul says, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.
[20:14] Through who? Our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him, we have also obtained access by faith. into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And so, it is only through Jesus that we now have access to the Father. And that certainly was not anything that we did. It is strictly by grace.
So, that's a lot in the first two verses. But it's an important point to make. God in his grace allows us to even bring our requests before him.
And so, we need to remember that in our own prayers. So, the first stanza, David gives us an example of a prayer that is dependent on God before it even begins. And in the second stanza, we're going to see that David is dependent on God to answer his prayer.
So, point number two, David is dependent on God to answer his prayer. This is seen in verses 3 through 5. I'm going to read these real quick.
[21:18] Verse 3. Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts. Give to them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds.

Give to them according to the work of their hands. Render them their due reward. Because they do not regard the works of the Lord or the work of his hands, he will tear them down and build them up no more.
Now, if you think through a lot of David's psalms and his prayers, his requests to God, you might remember that often his prayer is deliverance from his enemies.
There's some situation going on. David asks God, will you deliver me from my enemies who are coming after me? In this prayer, he's asking for deliverance from something far worse.
And we think, okay, what could be worse than being caught by our enemies? Well, being judged by God alongside our enemies. That's certainly worse than being caught by our enemies, right? And so, that's David's request to God and it's vivid imagery, right?
[22:24] He says, do not drag me off with the wicked. David wants no part of this. And again, like I said, these wicked men are generalized for our benefit.

We don't really know who they are. They could be people who are chasing after David or they could just be your run-of-the-mill wicked people that David sees prospering and is like, please don't judge me alongside these men.
So, in verse 3, David's request of God is divine favor, essentially. Please treat me differently than you would treat these wicked men. And in verse 4, he switches it and says, actually, give to them according to their work.
He's asking for justice on the wicked. And when I first read this, I thought, David, that seems a little selfish, right? Like, verse 3, you are asking for mercy for yourself and then verse 4, you switch and you're asking for justice for the wicked.
Wouldn't it make more sense to ask for mercy for them too or something along those lines? And this is where the context, that Old Testament context, that theological context comes into play.
[23:37] And it's important to remember as we read passages like this. First, we want to remember that David is living in the context of the Mosaic law, right? God's covenant with the Israelite nation applies also to David because he's an Israelite.

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And so everything from Genesis to Deuteronomy is the theological deposit that God has given to David and to the entire nation of Israel. And so David knows that under this covenant, under this law, according to what Deuteronomy says, God will bless those who obey his law and he will judge those who do not.
All throughout Deuteronomy you see this. Deuteronomy 4 specifically, you kind of see this language. So if you're interested, that would be the place to go. Deuteronomy 4. You can read what God says about provoking Yahweh to anger or what happens if you keep his statutes and commandments.
So David is living in this context and he's aware of the covenant, he's aware of the blessings of obeying the law and he's aware of the consequences of disobedience.
So as we look at Psalm 28, we need to keep that in mind. They're operating under this covenant, under this law. And so David's saying, God, I know what you will do to those who do not obey your commandments.
[24:57] You have said so in Deuteronomy. This is what's going to happen to those who do not obey your commandments. You have promised that you will strike them down and you will judge them severely. And so David's request is, please do not judge me in your covenantal judgment of the wicked.

That's David's request in verse 3. He says, you have covenanted with me and he's referring to Deuteronomy and he's also referring to the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7.
That if I obey your statutes, you will deal kindly with me. Now, again, notice, do you see David appealing to his own righteousness in this psalm?
If you look down there, do you see him saying, because I'm so righteous, because I'm so holy or blameless or upright? I don't see it. Not in my Bible translation.
Instead, he appeals to God's character as a God who judges wickedness and he appeals to God's covenant that he has put in place to bless the righteous and not drag the righteous off with the wicked.
[26:03] So he's appealing to, and that covenant was given by God's grace. That covenant with Israel was not because Israel was an amazing nation. That covenant was founded in grace. And so, David is appealing to the character of God, his righteousness, and his covenant given in grace.

So, in verse 4, his prayer of judgment, give to them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds. Give to them according to the work of their hands.
Render them their due reward. David has seen these wicked men with evil hearts perform evil deeds too many times and to David, it looks like they're getting away with it.
Their deeds have yet to be judged and David's tolerance for injustice has hit its breaking point. David has had enough and so what does he do? When David sees wickedness running rampant, he's the king, right?
He can go and administer judgment himself or justice himself. He can be the one to make sure there are consequences to actions and yes, he can do that but he doesn't do that here.
[27:15] He actually asked God to take responsibility for it. He doesn't take justice into his own hands. David doesn't put on his bat suit and go out in the middle of the night taking out bad guys because if no one else is going to do it, David will do it, right?

He's not taking justice into his own hands. He's giving it over so that God will handle it. God can be the one who truly judges sin and judges wickedness and gives mercy to those whom he decides to give mercy to.
And in saying that, David instead expresses dependence and trust in God by giving it up to the Lord. And so this request leads into verse 5 where we see David finally reveal his confidence in the character of God to answer his requests.
So if you look at verse 5, David prays, because they do not regard the works of the Lord or the work of his hands, he will tear them down and build them up no more.
Now if you compare this verse with the first four, it's interesting because the tone just completely shifts. You have prayer and petition and emotional calling and crying out to God and then in verse 5, it switches and David is extremely confident.
[28:31] He says, because they do not regard the works of the Lord or the works of his hands, he will tear them down. and build them up no more. And in doing so, he points to the real problem that these wicked men face.

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The real problem is that they do not regard the works of the Lord. These men choose a disregard for God's works and instead pursue evil works that fulfill their evil hearts and ultimately end in total rebellion against God.
And because of this rebellion, verse 5, God will tear them down and build them up no more. And again, notice, David isn't doing the tearing down.
David does nothing here but appeal to the just character of God. David is demonstrating that unlike the independence of wicked men, these men who are fleeing, they do not regard the works of God, they are independent from God, David in this prayer is showing he is dependent on God.
He is asking the Lord, he is putting his trust in him. And he's, by doing so, he differentiates himself from those wicked men. And so, as we look at these first five verses, I want to think back to how the world thinks about prayer.
[29:53] So, the world, if they were to look at this, these first five verses, what do you think they would say? They would say, maybe, okay, David, he is, this is a verbal processing session for David.

He's just kind of venting all of his problems, he's getting it all out there. All right, good, David, hope you feel better after that, right? Now it's actually up to you. You kind of got to be, like, don't expect anything to happen.
I'm glad you feel better. You've got to go and do the doing. You've got to be the one to make sure that you don't get judged or actually do the judgment of the wicked. But I think in doing that, in saying that, they're missing the point of prayer, obviously, right?
David's not using this prayer as a chance to vent his frustration or feel better because he got it all out of his system and then later on, after he prays, he's going to actually go and do what needs to be done.
That's not how David is approaching this. David's praying because he actually can't do these things on his own. He needs God to answer his request. That's why he's praying even in the first place.
[31:00] And so, I think what we learn is that if God is not present in listening to our prayers, then really, there's no hope in praying. There's no point in praying.

If God's not there, there's no point. If God doesn't respond to our prayers, then we are truly hopeless in our prayers. And our prayers are only as helpful, only as comforting, and only as effective as the God we pray to.
We pray because we are completely dependent on God. Before we pray and in our prayers, we need to remind ourselves and reaffirm in our hearts that there's a God who is listening and that we can trust in him with our prayers.
I have to give this Spurgeon quote. It wouldn't be a sermon without a Spurgeon quote, right? This one's fantastic. He's writing on Psalm 28. He says, this is what he says, quote, Mere formalists may be content without answers to their prayers, but genuine suppliants or genuine requesters cannot. They are not satisfied with the results of prayer itself in calming the mind or subduing the will. They must go further and obtain actual replies from heaven or they cannot rest.
[32:19] And those replies they long to receive at once, if possible. They dread even a little of God's silence. End quote. I think it's really good.

Do we pray for real responses? Or do we pray because it's a formality? Do we pray because we are truly dependent on God for an answer?
Do we acknowledge our dependence on God in our prayers? We must pray like David because we are truly desperate for God to step in and to work.
So in these first two sections, these first two stanzas, we see David acknowledges dependence on God to hear him in the first place and then he acknowledges his dependence on God to answer his prayer, to answer his request.
In the third stanza, we'll see David's trust in God as the answer to his prayer. That's point number three. David's trust in God as the answer to his prayer.
[33:26] And so that second stanza, let me read that, verses six and seven. Blessed be the Lord, for he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

The Lord is my strength and my shield. In him my heart trusts and I am helped. My heart exults and with my song I give thanks to him.
That's really good. I'm just going to read it again. Verses six and seven. Blessed be the Lord, for he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield.

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In him my heart trusts and I am helped. My heart exults and with my song I give thanks to him.
It's a beautiful pair of verses. Some of you maybe have memorized this before. Maybe at least verse seven. Or maybe you have a little Hobby Lobby picture in your house on your wall with like a bunch of cows in the background and then there's this verse kind of just put there.
[34:38] It's a great verse. It's one of those that just warms our hearts when we hear the verse.
And so in these two verses I just want to look at two things.

There's a lot we can unpack in this verse. I want to look at two things that promote our dependence on God from these verses. And the first one I want to share with you my opinion.
I don't know this for a fact. This is just based off my study. It's my opinion. You can take it or leave it.
But I want to make the case that David doesn't see a tangible answer between verses four and five or between verses five and six.
Okay? I don't think that God between verses five and six smote or whatever that word is the wicked.
And then this is David's response to something that God has done in the past.
Okay? And here's why. Here are my reasons. Look at verse five. He says this. Because they do not regard the works of the Lord or the work of his hands what does he say?
[35:40] He will tear them down and build them up no more. Now when I hear that I hear a confidence and assurance of what God will do. A future treatment of God on the wicked people.

So it's this confidence that David is communicating and assurance of what God will do more than maybe a past action. Like a thankfulness for a past action that God did in the past.
So that's the first reason. Verse five. The second reason is I think verse seven points to this as well.
Where he says in him my heart trusts and I am helped. Again, what is he trusting him to do?
He's trusting him to do what he said in verse five. He will tear them down and build them up no more. David is trusting that this will happen in the future rather than expressing thanks that this has happened in between verses five and six.
And so if you are reading this and you're looking okay, so David doesn't see a tangible answer to his request in between five and six.
[36:46] What causes his confidence then? What makes him go completely change his tone and go from one through four where he's asking God and he's crying out to him to verses five through the end where he's confident?

And I think it's because David in some sense did receive an answer to his request. Although maybe it's not what he thought it was. And I think what David's answer was in this psalm is God himself.
I think that's the answer that David gets after making his pleas. David's answer to his prayer is God himself. Now look at verse seven. I think this helps make this clear.
Verse seven, the Lord is my strength and my shield. In him my heart trusts and I am helped. My heart exults and with my song I give thanks to him.
David doesn't thank God for new circumstances necessarily. He's not rejoicing in the defeat of the wicked. He's actually finding joy and strength in God himself.
[37:52] God is his strength and shield. God is who David trusts in and God is who David is helped by. And remember throughout this entire psalm David has been appealing to God depending on God to listen to him to answer his requests and it only makes sense that David finally comes to the realization that the answer to his prayer is God himself.

The presence of God. And so sometimes for us when we're looking at this and thinking about our own lives when we pray the suffering doesn't end.
Right? When we pray justice might not be realized. Things don't turn out the way that we think they should. But in our prayers God answers our prayers in a much more powerful way.
He answers our prayers by saying I am here. I am your strength. I am your shield. Depend on me. Trust in me and be helped.
Our answer to our requests might not always be a change in our circumstances. But our answer to our requests is always the presence of God. It is God himself. And this fits again with everything that David has been saying in this psalm.
[39:15] David has pleaded with God. He's trusted him to hear his request, to answer him, and God uses those prayers to assure David of his presence in David's life.

And again, this is where the prayers of the world fall short. A prayer that's verbal processing or a calming technique fails to see God on the other side of the prayer and experience the joy and the hope that comes from the presence of God himself.

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David's prayer recognizes God as the reason for why he prays. And David gets to experience that blessing of hope and joy that comes with God's presence.
And in that dependence on God and his presence, David can exalt and give thanks in these verses, in verses 6 and verse 7. This is just praising the Lord.
Blessed be the Lord. He's rejoicing that God is his strength, that God is with him and in the presence that God gives to him, that he's there.
[40:21] God is the reason that our prayers can be heard and the reason our prayers can be answered and he is the answer to our prayers. All right, for our last stanza, verses 8 and 9, we've seen David express dependence on God to hear his prayer, dependence on God as to answer his prayer, dependence on God as the answer to his prayer, and in the last two verses we're going to see David trusts in God beyond the immediate prayer.

David trusts in God beyond the immediate prayer. Let me read these verses. The Lord is the strength of his people, he is the saving refuge of his anointed.
O save your people and bless your heritage, be their shepherd and carry them forever. David finishes the psalm by remembering he's not the only one who trusts in the strength of the Lord.
The Lord is the strength for the entire nation of Israel, for all of his people, and whether it be the nation of Israel or the church, God is the strength of those people.
He's not only working in David's life, he's not only working in individual lives, but he's working all around the world in his collective group of people to accomplish his will.
[41:44] But I think it's the last line of this psalm that is one that should follow us out the door. That last line, be their shepherd and carry them forever. When we pray, we are often praying for something specific, a specific person, a specific circumstance, a specific situation.

That's good. David does that here too. But what David does in the final line of the psalm is remind us that our dependence on God is not finished when he answers our request.
When God answers our request that we prayed for, we are no less dependent on him then than we were in that situation or in that prayer or before that prayer.
And in saying this, I want to point out the, I've been saying this purposefully, acknowledging our dependence on God. I use that word acknowledge because truthfully, we are always dependent on God, whether you acknowledge it or not.
We are all dependent on him. These wicked men, they don't know it and they certainly wouldn't admit it, but they are dependent on him. But if everyone's dependent on him, if we're always dependent on him all the time, the question comes up, okay, then why, what's the importance of acknowledging it?
[43:01] Why is there so much importance on acknowledging him and acknowledging our dependence on him? And it's because when we acknowledge that, when we acknowledge our dependence on him, we live in a way that is pleasing to him and brings him glory.

Again, versus the wicked people in this psalm, they're living in a way that's independent of God, and in doing so, they're in rebellion against him.
A life lived independently of God is a life living in rebellion to him. And so we are obligated as creatures to acknowledge our dependence on our creator.
And a life lived acknowledging him as our strength is a life that rightly ascribes the Lord the glory that he deserves. When we acknowledge him, we are glorifying him.
And there will be times when that's difficult. We're going to fall, we're going to fail, and we're going to need help. And that's where this final line is so beautiful. It's so powerful, right?
[44:03] God is our shepherd, and he is not going to drag his sheep off with the wicked, like it says in verse 3. He will carry them forever.

And think, which are the sheep that the shepherd has to carry? They're the broken ones. They're the lame ones. They're the sick ones. The lost ones.
God is that good shepherd who will carry us forever. Beyond the prayers that we ask him in ways that we don't even understand. So, might we praise him for leading such broken sheep who are so prone to wander like us?
Might we trust in him to hear our prayer, to answer our prayer? Might we trust in him as the answer to our prayer and enjoy his presence?
And might we trust in him beyond our prayers, recognizing that we are completely dependent on him? Let's go ahead and pray. Amen. Dear God, we come before you as humble creatures, not

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because we've earned a hearing, not because we're owed an appointment with the King of Kings, but because of your grace.
[45:39] It's because you loved us that we have access to the Father. because of the sacrifice of your son on the cross, we can have a reconciled relationship with you in which we can come to you with anything, at any time, anywhere, it doesn't matter.

And so Lord, we praise you. Blessed be the Lord. We have this privilege. So Lord, I pray that you would stir in our hearts a reminder that we are dependent on you.
Again, whether we know it or not, you orchestrate all things in our lives, but help us to keep that in mind as we live, as we pray, as we're working through various things in our lives, as we're thinking through and praying for other people, might we remember that we are dependent on you in all these ways.
We thank you for this psalm. We thank you for the Holy Spirit and his work in Scripture, his work in understanding the text, and we pray that our prayers would be filled with praise to you, acknowledging our dependence on you.
We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

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