

Psalms 28:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

Analysis

Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. This urgent opening prayer reveals the psalmist's desperate dependence on God's response. David addresses God using intimate language—"thee" and "O LORD"—showing personal relationship even in crisis.

"My rock" (צָרוֹן/tzuri) is a favorite Davidic metaphor for God's stability and reliability. In a land of shifting sands and unstable terrain, rock represents unchanging foundation. The possessive "my rock" emphasizes personal relationship—not just acknowledging God's strength generally but claiming it personally. This same imagery appears throughout Psalms (18:2, 31, 46; 19:14; 62:2, 6, 7).

"Be not silent to me" (מִתְּחִרְשָׁנָתֶךָ/al-techerash mimmenni) expresses the terror of divine silence. Charash means to be deaf, silent, unresponsive. The psalmist fears not rejection but abandonment—God withdrawing, becoming unresponsive. Throughout Scripture, God's silence often precedes judgment or represents testing. Job experienced this silence; Psalm 22 opens with "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The fear isn't that prayer reaches no one, but that God has chosen not to answer.

"Lest...I become like them that go down into the pit" (בָּרָה/pen-ah-shel um-yon-ki bor)

emshal im-yordei bor) reveals what's at stake. The "pit" (bor) refers to Sheol, the grave, death itself. Without God's intervention, the psalmist faces destruction. The phrase "go down into the pit" appears frequently in Psalms as metaphor for death (28:1; 30:3; 88:4; 143:7). This isn't melodrama but recognition that life without God's presence and intervention leads to spiritual and often physical death.

The verse's structure—direct address, urgent petition, stated consequence—models honest prayer. David doesn't approach God with formality but desperation. He states his need boldly, reminds God of their relationship ("my rock"), and explains why God's response matters. This teaches believers to pray with both reverence and urgency.

Historical Context

Psalm 28, attributed to David, likely emerged from one of his many crises—perhaps during Saul's persecution, Absalom's rebellion, or another threat. The superscription offers no specific historical context, suggesting the psalm's themes apply broadly to various situations.

Ancient Near Eastern prayer literature often included divine epithets and urgent petitions. However, biblical prayers uniquely combine intimacy with majesty—addressing the sovereign Creator as "my rock" while boldly requesting response. This reflects Israel's covenant relationship where God bound Himself to His people in faithful love.

The metaphor of God as "rock" had deep cultural resonance. Palestine's limestone landscape featured massive rock formations providing shelter, water sources (springs from rock), and defensive positions. David, who hid in wilderness rocks fleeing Saul (1 Samuel 23-24), personally knew rocks' protective value. When he calls God "my rock," he draws on visceral experience of finding refuge in stone fortresses.

Divine silence terrified ancient Israelites because prophetic silence often preceded judgment. During Israel's apostasy, God sometimes withdrew prophetic revelation as judgment (1 Samuel 3:1; Amos 8:11-12). Conversely, God's voice brought

creation into being (Genesis 1), delivered Israel (Exodus 20), and sustained His people. Silence therefore represented abandonment, judgment, or absence.

The concept of Sheol (here "the pit") in Old Testament theology represented the shadowy place of the dead—neither heaven nor hell as later theology developed, but the grave where both righteous and wicked descended. Pre-resurrection revelation didn't clearly distinguish eternal destinies, though psalms occasionally glimpse God's power over death (Psalm 16:10; 49:15).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to call God 'my rock' rather than just acknowledging He is strong, and how does personal appropriation of God's attributes strengthen faith?
2. How should believers respond when God seems silent, and what does the psalmist's urgent prayer teach about persevering when God doesn't answer immediately?
3. What is the relationship between God's voice/response and spiritual life, as suggested by the connection between divine silence and 'going down into the pit'?
4. How does this verse model honest, desperate prayer that's both reverent and urgent, and how can modern believers recover this balance?
5. In what ways do we experience 'divine silence' today, and how does understanding this psalm's context help us persevere through such seasons?

Interlinear Text

תִּמְשֶׁךְ הַ אֶל כָּרֶב אֶל כָּרֶב אֶל כָּרֶב אֶל כָּרֶב אֶל כָּרֶב אֶל כָּרֶב
H413 O LORD H3068 H7121 H6697 H408 H2790

to me lest if thou be silent

עַם אֲנַחֲשׁ לְתִי מִמֶּנּוּ
H4480 H6435 H2790 H4480 H4911 H5973

to me I become

בָּורָה וְרַדְיִי
like them that go down into the pit
H3381 H953

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 143:7 (References Lord): Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

Psalms 18:2 (References Lord): The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Psalms 83:1 (Parallel theme): Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

Proverbs 1:12 (Parallel theme): Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:

Revelation 20:3 (Parallel theme): And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Isaiah 26:4 (References Lord): Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

Job 33:28 (Parallel theme): He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

Isaiah 38:18 (Parallel theme): For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

Psalms 22:2 (Parallel theme): O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

Psalms 30:9 (Parallel theme): What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?