

Elemental Prayer as Portrayed in Psalm 70

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Psalm 70 Text

170 לְמִנְצֵחַ לְדָוִד לְהַזְכִּיר:
2 אֱלֹהִים לְהַצִּילְנִי יְהוָה לְעֲזָרְתִּי חוֹשֶׁה:
3 יִבְשׂוּ וַיִּחְפְּרוּ מִבְּקִשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי יִסְגּוּ אַחֲרָי וַיִּכְלְמוּ חֲפְצֵי רַעְתִּי:
4 יִשׁוּבוּ עַל-עַקֵּב בְּשִׂתְמָם הָאֹמְרִים הֲאֵחָו הָאֵחָ:
5 יִשְׂשׂוּ וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ בְּךָ כָּל-מְבַקְשֵׁיךָ וַיֹּאמְרוּ תָמִיד יִגְדַּל אֱלֹהִים אֱהִי יִשׁוּעַתְּךָ:
6 וַאֲנִי עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן אֱלֹהִים חוֹשֶׁה-לִּי עֲזָרִי וּמַפְלְטִי אֶתְּהָ יְהוָה אֵל-תַּאֲחָר:

Psalm 70 Translation (*note* the following discussion incorporates the *Hebrew verse numbers*):

- 1 For the choir director. Of David. For a remembrance.
- 2 O God, *hasten* to deliver me. O Yahweh, Hasten to my help.
- 3 Let those who seek my life be ashamed and confused; let those who delight in my demise be turned back and destroyed.
- 4 Let their shame return upon themselves, those who say: Aha! Aha!
- 5 Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; and let those who love your salvation say continually: "Let God be magnified!"
- 6 But as for me, I am afflicted and poor, O God, hasten to me! For indeed, You are my help and my deliverer; O Yahweh, do not delay!

Interesting Notes

Some interesting features of this psalm nicely serve to show the elemental nature of prayer. Prayer is simple calling out to God for help (vv. 2, 6). Indeed, it is only God who can act and deliver the afflicted person from his enemies (vv.3, 4). Also noteworthy is the reality that though the persecution, the chasing, and the mocking from the enemies is going on, the psalmist can *simultaneously* recognize that the godly ones who love His salvation can "rejoice" and "be glad" in God! It is the godly ones who—no matter what may assail in life—can *continually* say: "let God be magnified!" To magnify God is to enlarge the visibility of God in the way you live, the way you talk, the way you speak, and the motives of your heart. It is, as it were, to peel pack the veil and allow Christ who dwells in His elect, to shine more visibly in and through you for all to see. This is what it means to magnify God (cf. Ps 34:4 [v.3, Eng]).

Verses 2 and 6 contain a number of key words tying the psalm together as a cohesive unit, one of which is *חָוֶה*. It functions as a sort of inclusio showing that Psalm 70 is about David begging God to *hasten* and *quickly* come to his aid!

Verse 6 contains an interesting word play: וְאַנִּי וְעַנִּי . Phonetically this would sound like: *v'ani ani* and it means: But as for me, I am (*v'ani*) afflicted (*ani*). This rhetorical device makes the phrase memorable on the minds of those who heard this prayer recited.

One thing that our sinful flesh wants yet God in His infinite wisdom refused to include in this psalm is the outcome of the afflicted one. The psalm does *not* reveal whether David was delivered or not. We want to know because we want to know if he made it out “alive” or “safe” or “healthy.” But God desires to teach another lesson through the hand of David in this psalm. What we need to know about the outcome is provided within these verses, namely, God is sovereign and that the people who “love God’s salvation” (אֲהַבְתִּי יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ) can continually rejoice and be glad in God while continually saying: “Let God be magnified!” God is to be magnified *even* amidst the trials, hardships, tumultuous troubles, and confusing circumstances. God is to be praised. I love how David—after *just* saying that all who are Godly and love His salvation can continually say: “Let God be magnified” and they can rejoice and be glad—reveals that *He himself* is poor, afflicted, and in need of God’s help! His situation hasn’t changed but his perspective has! His hardship hasn’t minimized but His worship has elevated.

May we learn from Psalm 70 about elemental prayer. Although it is a short psalm it is loaded with great information to instruct us about coming before God’s throne in worship, humility, pleading, and with a proper perspective.