

Introduction

- In 1836 a well known minister by the name of **Charles Simeon** retired after **54 years of ministry** at Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge
 - a friend discovered he was still rising at 4am to light his own fire and spend time alone with God
 - "Mr Simeon, don't you think that, now you are retired, you might take things more easily?"
 - reply came back: "What? Shall I not now run with all my might when the winning-post is in sight!"
- This Psalm is the testimony of another old man (see vs.9 & 18!) who is also running with all his might:
 - ripe in experience of God (v.5, 6, 17)
 - still challenged and pressured (v.4, 13)
 - deeply reliant on prayer (v.1-9, 12-13)
 - uplifted in praise (v.8, 14, 22-24)
 - leaving the future to God (v.19-21)
 - and avid to prolong his testimony (v.17-18)
- Don't know the author or the specific context, though it does fit with the preceding two, Davidic, Psalms, whose context is of David under false accusation and fearsome assault, yet still making preparations for the Temple Solomon was to build...

1. Prayer within a secure position (vs.1-4)

- (1) *In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame. (2) Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness; turn your ear to me and save me. (3) Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. (4) Deliver me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of evil and cruel men.*
- Here is a plea, for refuge, for safety
 - from what specifically we do not know (v.4 gets closest, "the hand of the wicked...")
- But what is clear is that, as he has done in the past, the Psalmist turns to God:
 - v.1, "have taken refuge... let me never..."
 - v.3, "be my rock... for you are my rock..."
- Here is the habit of a lifetime coming to the fore once more in time of trouble

2. Lifelong divine care (vs.5-11)

- (5) *For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. (6) From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you. (7) I have become like a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge. (8) My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendor all day long. (9) Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone. (10) For my enemies speak against me; those who wait to kill me conspire together. (11) They say, "God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him, for no one will rescue him."*
- That habit of a lifetime has been nourished by experience of God going back beyond the reach of memory:
 - since youth he has been conscious of it (v.5)
 - but more he has become aware that even since his birth he has been cared for by the Lord (v.6)
 - v.7: **portent**, a visible sign of the stupidity of following God ("see him, he's one of the God-squad; you know what they're like...."), yet he chooses still to focus on God's care, to recall how God has acted as his refuge in the past - look at his response in v.8, giving God praise!!

4. Prayer (vs.12-16)

- (12) *Be not far from me, O God; come quickly, O my God, to help me. (13) May my accusers perish in shame; may those who want to harm me be covered with scorn and disgrace. (14) But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. (15) My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure. (16) I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone.*
- The times we most need to seek God (such as the circumstances of v.10-11) are not always when inclination and energy make it easy to do so
 - the reverse, in fact!!
- Here the Psalmist prays for:
 - divine nearness, God's presence (v.12)
 - for the end of his accusers, for the downfall of the wicked (v.13)
- That prayer is rooted in hope (v.14a), and marked by praise (v.14b-15)
 - and the result?
 - confidence! (v.16)
- Insistent, committed seeking of God in the face of threat is a central feature of this Psalm

5. Lifelong human testimony (vs.17-21)

- (17) *Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. (18) Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come. (19) Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God, you who have done great things. Who, O God, is like you? (20) Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. (21) You will increase my honor and comfort me once again.*
- In vs.4-11 we saw something of the Psalmist's consciousness of God's lifelong goodness to him
 - here that is matched by a lifelong commitment to sharing all that he has received...
 - in particular, (v.17) what you have taught, God's revealed truth
 - then (v.17) his deeds, his saving acts in the past
 - and finally (v.18) his power (literally "his arm"), God's personal power intervening in the lives of his people
- Much of that is echoed in vs.19-21, which offer a summary of what he hopes to share with the next generation:
 - God's character, his past acts, his incomparable being, his strange providences, his reliable purposes and his certain recompenses!
- What do we want to pass on?!

6. Responsive Praise (vs.22-24)

- (22) *I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praise to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. (23) My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you - I, whom you have redeemed. (24) My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion.*
- The Psalm opened with prayer (1-3); in 12-16 prayer merged into praise
 - now only praise remains!!
 - for God's faithfulness (v.22), holiness (v.22), redemption (v.23), his righteousness (expressed in actions; v.24) and for answered prayer (v.24, cf v.4)
 - to this exercise of praise the Psalmist brings his fingers to play, his lips to sing, and his tongue to tell; every skill he has is poured out, every possible way of expressing his response to God is marshalled
 - Holy One of Israel: (v.22) holds together two things, his holiness and his

presence with his people!

Conclusion