



WOW: Word Of the Week

Selah

October 2, 2024

*This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek your face—even Jacob. Selah.
Who is this King of glory? Yahweh of Armies is the King of glory! Selah. (Psalm 24:6,10)*

Selah. Have you ever wondered about this word? The word appears 71 times in the Psalms. In Psalm 24 the psalmist praises God for granting access for those who diligently seek God. For the psalmist, it is an incredible thought that mere human mortals can ascend to the presence of the King of Glory! In other psalms, the psalmist praises God for controlling sunrises and sunsets, for God's majestic splendor, for the creation, for God's perfect judgment, for the fact that God will not be silent—that God will always speak to reveal himself and his will.

In the middle of such words of praise, the psalmist often pauses. Selah. Many Bible students believe that Selah indicates a place to pause the reading or singing. "Stop and listen." There is no easily discernable pattern to explain when the word will show up. Sometimes it follows complaints. Other times it follows praise. The nature of the world often leaves us panting and out of breath. Wondrous thoughts about God can and should leave us breathless. We catch our breath. We meditate, contemplate, marvel. Can you see what God doing in this world? Selah. "Stop and listen."

Other Bible scholars believe Selah means to increase the volume, to raise voices in praise, to speak more loudly. If so, Selah is a crescendo. After words of praise, that meaning is easily understood. When Selah appears at the very end of a psalm, it would have to apply to the verse or section it concludes.

Perhaps we can incorporate both ideas into our readings of the psalms. Read about God's glory. Selah. Lament. Selah. Praise. Selah. Complain. Selah. Call out to God. Selah. Sing loudly the praises of God. Declare his wondrous works. Then catch your breath. And say ever more loudly, God is worthy. Selah.

Why not try it today? Read all of Psalm 24 aloud. Read with expression, pauses, putting emphasis on the words or verses that are most meaningful to you.