

Prayer

A Look At Psalm 26

February 27, 2011

I. Review of Previous Teaching on Prayer

A. Prayer Quotes

1. We must alter our lives in order to alter our hearts, for it is impossible to live one way and pray another. (William Law)
2. It is good for us to keep some account of our prayers, that we may not unsay them in our practice. (Matthew Henry)
3. There are more tears shed over answered prayers than over unanswered prayers. (Teresa of Avila)
4. Since the days of Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon God for ten days, that the Spirit's power might be manifested? We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power. (Hudson Taylor)
5. There is no power like that of prevailing prayer, of Abraham pleading for Sodom, Jacob wrestling in the stillness of the night, Moses standing in the breach, Hannah pouring out her hurting heart, David heartbroken with remorse and grief, Jesus in sweat of blood. Add to this list from the records of the church your personal observation and experience, and always prevailing prayer includes the cost of perseverance and passion unto blood. But such prayer prevails. It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings the power of God to specific situations and settings. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God, himself. (Samuel Chadwick)

B. Pray

II. A Look At Psalm 26

- A. **Psalm 26:1-12** . . . Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. [2] Examine me, O LORD, and try me; test my mind and my heart. [3] For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. [4] I do not sit with deceitful men, nor will I go with pretenders. [5] I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. [6] I shall wash my hands in innocence, and I will go about Your altar, O LORD, [7] that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and declare all Your wonders. [8] O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells. [9] Do not take my soul away along with sinners,

nor my life with men of bloodshed, [10] in whose hands is a wicked scheme, and whose right hand is full of bribes. [11] But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me. [12] My foot stands on a level place; in the congregations I shall bless the LORD.

- B. As you may recall, I asked you to consider **Psalm 24** through **Psalm 26** as templates for your praying – not that you ought to follow them exactly or even partially, but that you would see how someone with the spiritual stature of David prayed and learn from him how to pray better yourself.
1. Just as a quick review, **Psalm 24** focuses on worshipping God, and on reminding ourselves who God is and what He is like, and on what we must be to come into His presence.
 2. **Psalm 25** focused on help me prayers, teach me prayers, corrective and confession prayers.
 3. And now we come to **Psalm 26**, which begins as a need based prayer (the first two verses are a request), and then moves into more of a fellowship prayer with a couple more requests sprinkled in.
- C. **Psalm 26:1-2** . . . Vindicate (*judge*) me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. [2] Examine me, O LORD, and try me; test my mind and my heart.
1. David begins this psalm with a request for vindication. Apparently, David was being attacked by someone, or some group, who was:
 - a. denying him his rights
 - b. or falsely condemning him as if he were already proven guilty
 - c. or who was treating him in some other unjust manner.
 2. David tells God that he believes he has a legitimate basis for this appeal because, to the best of his knowledge, he has done nothing wrong to deserve the injustice that is being done him. In fact, from David's perspective, he sees himself as having lived as one who has done what is right and whose faith in God is unwavering.
 3. However, David does not declare his own goodness as if he has the right to be the final judge of just how good he really is.
 - a. Rather, David states his beliefs about himself and then turns to God – and asks God to judge him. You see, David wanted to make sure he was seeing himself as he really was, and who better to turn to than the one who created him, who is the only Just Judge, and the only one who sees into our thoughts and intentions.
 - b. And so David says: “Examine me, O LORD, and try me; test my mind and my heart (my thoughts and my intentions).”

4. There are two important lessons we can glean from these first two verses of **Psalm 26**:

a. **First**, David turned to God for vindication, and to bring about justice, in the face of what he believed to be an unjust attack.

(1) And so the question I have for you is: “What or who do you turn to first, or at least most often when your rights are being denied or you are being falsely accused or you are being treated unjustly in some other way?”

(2) The common human response to such injustice is:

(a) self-defense and self-justification (some explanation to show why the accusation or attack is unfounded, or why what we did was unintentional),

(b) or anger and threats (to make the accuser back down or drive him away)

(c) or claiming a position of superiority (who are you to talk to me this way, or you can’t treat me this way)

(d) or pointing out that the accuser is just as guilty of wrong-doing as the one being accused – as if this makes the original accusation null and void.

(3) Consider: How you handle legitimate criticism and accusations that others bring to you is a strong indication of how you will handle unfair or false criticism and accusations.

(4) Therefore, let me urge you to be like David – turn to God and pray, first, and then consider what action to take.

b. **Second**, David did not trust or demand that his self-assessment was the final and only right assessment. Obviously, he had to qualms about expressing his opinion, but he also had to qualms about quickly turning to God for verification or correction of his self-assessment.

(1) Do you hold yourself up as the final judge of your own goodness? How often do you seek another person’s opinion of your goodness or righteousness in a matter?

(2) Here again, I urge you to quickly turn to God for God’s truth in any matter of your perceived goodness.

D. **Psalm 26:3-5** . . . For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. [4] I do not sit with deceitful men, nor will I go with pretenders. [5] I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.

1. From **verse 3-8**, David moves from need based praying into fellowship praying. Why do I say this? Because David has moved from requests to talking with God about his relationship to God.
2. **Vs. 3a** – David begins by stating that he has set his focus and thoughts on God’s lovingkindness. For us, this is the practical fulfillment of **Colossians 3:1-2** and **Philippians 4:8**.
 - a. **Colossians 3:1-2** . . . Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.
 - b. **Philippians 4:8** . . . Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.
 - c. What do you focus on when being falsely accused or denied your rights or treated unjustly? Memorizing **Colossians 3:1-2** and **Philippians 4:8**, and meditating on them each day, for a year, will powerfully help you focus on the right things when people are doing bad things to you.
3. **Vs. 3b-5** – David continues talking with God about how he lives. Notice, his focus is on:
 - a. Living according to God’s truth (word or proclaimed ways).
 - b. Being careful who he chooses to be his friends – and hence who will have influence over his thinking, values, interests, words, and behavior.
 - (1) Notice I am not saying “who he chooses to be friendly with,” but who will be his friends. We should be friendly toward everyone.
 - (2) David says he will not befriend or be befriended by:
 - (a) those who are willingly deceitful or dishonest
 - (b) those who are hypocrites
 - (c) those who knowingly do evil
 - (d) those who are wicked as an overall way of life.
 - c. For me, these assertions by David raise two questions for us?
 - (1) **First**, why does David choose to refuse friendship with these kinds of people? The answer is found in **I Corinthians 15:33** . . . Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals.
 - (2) **Second**, who do you choose as friends? This is an important question, because our friends will either help us or hinder us in how we love God and the degree to which we hunger

and thirst after righteousness. Therefore, I urge all of us to select friends who will influence us God-ward.

- E. **Psalm 26:6-7** . . . I shall wash my hands in innocence, and I will go about Your altar, O LORD, [7] that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and declare all Your wonders.
1. To wash our hands in innocence includes two specific actions.
 - a. **First**, it is confessing our sins so as to make things right between God and us and between others and us.
 - b. **Second**, it is putting away known sin so that we no longer practice it.
 - c. On your own, look up and consider the following two scriptures **Isaiah 1:15-16** and **James 4:8-10**.
 2. Here in the fellowship part of this prayer, David makes it clear that there is a reason for dealing with his sin in this way, and that reason is so he can worship and praise and give heartfelt thanks to God!
 - a. You see, for David, worship and a clean heart were inseparable. He believed he could not worship God with unconfessed sin in his life or with unrepented, ongoing sin in his life.
 - b. What do you believe about worship and a clean heart?
 - (1) Some believe that worship and music are inseparable, and the better the music the better the worship. Some believe worship and feelings are inseparable, and the more we feel good about God and sense the presence of God or sense God moving in a special way in our midst, the better the worship.
 - (2) Again, David believed that worship was right and good when his heart and life were right with God.
 - c. Oh that we would treasure God and respect God enough to deal honestly with Him and worship Him according to who He really is – which means worshiping Him like David – from a heart and life that is right with God. Is this not worship that is in spirit and in truth?
 - d. And may our worship and praise and thanksgiving not be fleeting or swept along by the music and praise of others, for if that is the case, we will return to discouragement and wondering at God's goodness when the music and praise has ended.
 3. I understand that you hear a lot about sin from me. However, it is as we deal directly, honestly, and thoroughly with our sin – from the sin of unbelief all the way to the grossest sins imaginable:
 - a. that we gain a heart that can see, love, and reverence God,

- b. that we gain eyes that can see His faithful goodness,
- c. that we find true contentment with God and with what He is doing or allowing,
- d. that we experience God's marvelous comfort and encouragement,
- e. that we find true and lasting joy – which is the joy of the Lord.
- f. In other words, there is no true and worthy worship, no real joy, no inner peace, no trustful contentment, without dealing with our sin.

F. **Psalm 26:8** . . . O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.

1. In the last two verses, David was telling God that he would prepare for worship by doing what was necessary to come with a clean and acceptable heart. And he told God that while worshiping, he would publicly declare his praise of God. Here in **verse 8**, David is telling God he loves Him and the place where God dwells.
 - a. In our day, we would say we love God and God's people, for God no longer dwells in man-made buildings.
 - b. In our NT age, God dwells in and among His people – for where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there in their midst.
2. So what is David doing here? I suspect he is affirming a truth he holds dear and wants so implanted in his being that it becomes who he is.
 - a. How often do you tell God you love Him and that you love His people and the gathering of His people.
 - b. Do you realize that if you take seriously keeping your heart clean before God, you cannot continue to tell Him you love Him and His people without feeling convicted and driven to repentance when you come short of this love? And if you respond rightly to that conviction, you will nurture and build a genuine, heart-felt love for God that will be in you and with you all the time.
3. Fellowship with God on this level, not only nurtures and builds godly characteristics in you, it also drives you to deeper, more meaningful levels of relationship with God. And so I urge you to follow David's example of keeping a clean heart before God as you talk to God about your love for Him and longing to be with Him and with His people.

G. **Psalm 26:9-12** . . . [9] Do not take (*gather*) my soul away along with sinners, nor my life with men of bloodshed, [10] in whose hands is a wicked scheme, and whose right hand is full of bribes. [11] But as for me, I shall

walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me. [12] My foot stands on a level place; in the congregations I shall bless the LORD.

1. David is bringing this prayer to an end in these last four verses. He begins by affirming that when God gathers all mankind for the final judgment and separation, he, David, does not want to spend eternity with sinners.
 - a. This is not a selfish plea for heaven over hell, this is a plea to be gathered with the godly because, to David, being with the ungodly is so uncomfortable and offensive to his sensibilities that he does not want to spend even one minute of eternity with them.
 - b. In other words, just as David wanted to be with God and the godly in this life, he wants to be with God and God's people in the next.
2. The next thing David does is affirm his commitment to take a different path from most other people in the world. He is committed to the Narrow Path and to building his life on the Rock rather than the sand.
 - a. Here again, affirming with God – over and over – a truth you know you should hold, helps get that truth so implanted that it becomes who you are – from the inside out.
 - b. I am not suggesting we use this method as a psychological ploy or a way to trick our mind into thinking we are something when we aren't. But I am saying we should talk with God just as we talk to a loving, caring, Father and teacher, telling Him what we want to be, what we ought to be, and how much we want to get there!
3. David winds down this section by affirming he cannot live a perfectly sinless life, and so he asks God to redeem him and to be gracious to him. No matter how far we advance in the faith, no matter how godly we become or how pure our heart is, we will always be the imperfect, marred creature coming into the presence of our perfectly holy God. Therefore, we need his mercy and grace!
4. Finally, David ends on a note of praise. I doubt he is ending this prayer this way because it fits some pre-determined form for prayer, but rather because that is what is in his heart – praise toward God! To put this into NT words, no one can live the Beatitudes without discovering he is exceedingly blessed and full of adoration and praise toward God.

III. Conclusion