

# Prayer

A Look At Psalm 25:1-5

January 2, 2011

- I. Review of Previous Teaching on Prayer
  - A. In our study on prayer, we've looked at praying without ceasing, Psalm 24 (Remember I've encouraged you to try using Psalm 24-26 as templates or aids in your praying?), and different aspects of intercessory prayer. Along the way, I have continued to remind you that all prayer is a form of fellowship and communion with God. And because of this I have encouraged you to approach prayer as something that includes both need based and fellowship based praying.
  - B. Last week we talked about intercessory prayer in relation to praying for one another. Today, we are going to begin looking at Psalm 25. But before doing that, I want to encourage us further down this path of intercessory prayer for each other with eight "Let us" statements:
    1. Let us love, guard, and arm each other with mutual intercessory prayers.
    2. Let us pray for the weak that they may become strong in faith, love, purity of heart, and godliness of life.
    3. Let us pray for the suffering – be it from trials or tribulations or sickness or oppression or persecution – that they may be strengthened by our Almighty God to endure, and in so doing, to humbly and patiently pass through their time of suffering so as to gain the greatest spiritual profit possible for their own soul's sake, God's honor, and the health of the church.
    4. Let us pray for the sorrowful that they would be comforted by the inner presence, encouragement, and joy of God.
    5. Let us pray for those who have fallen into sin, that they would come to their senses, acknowledge their rebellion against God and the gravity of their sin – to the point of weeping over it; and that they would repent and return to living for God's glory and honor.
    6. Let us pray for those whose faith is being sorely tried, that they would persevere in standing fast – so that their faith is strengthened rather than weakened by their circumstances.
    7. Let us pray for those who seem to be making commendable progress in the faith or who appear to be spiritually mature, that they may not become prideful in their progress, neglectful in their vigilance, lax in their perseverance – and as a result, forsake the truth they know and

take needless steps backwards – to the harm of their own souls and to the weakening of the church.

8. Let us pray that we all would grow in the grace and knowledge of God, whether our earthly needs or current circumstances improve or grow worse.

### C. Prayer

## II. Psalm 25 – A template or example for prayer.

- A. [1] To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul. [2] O my God, in You I trust, do not let me be ashamed; do not let my enemies exult over me. [3] Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed; those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed. [4] Make me know Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. [5] Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day. [6] Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses, for they have been from of old. [7] Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to Your lovingkindness remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O LORD. [8] Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He instructs sinners in the way. [9] He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way. [10] All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies. [11] For Your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my iniquity, for it is great. [12] Who is the man who fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way he should choose. [13] His soul will abide in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. [14] The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant. [15] My eyes are continually toward the LORD, for He will pluck my feet out of the net. [16] Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. [17] The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses. [18] Look upon my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins. [19] Look upon my enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with violent hatred. [20] Guard my soul and deliver me; do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in You. [21] Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for You. [22] Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

- B. [1] To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul. [2] O my God, in You I trust, do not let me be ashamed; do not let my enemies exult over me. [3] Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed; those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed.

1. *To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul* – This is a statement of endearment. It's a declaration of love. To lift up my soul to the Lord is another way of saying I have set my affections on God or I have given Him my heart. The example here is one of declaring our love for God in our praying. And even as we make such declarations, may we examine ourselves to see if our proclamation is supported by our choices and behavior.
2. *O my God, in You I trust* – This is a statement of single-minded faith in God. In our country, we are presented with many things to trust in, such as: government, income, job security, retirement benefits, health insurance, doctors and hospitals, the value of our possessions, the stability of our investments, and the size of our savings – just to name a few.
  - a. Now I believe the things I have mentioned are basically good things. In fact, none of these things I just mentioned are inherently evil.
  - b. And yet, the example before us is that of proclaiming in prayer that God is the single source of our hope and trust. And as with our love for God, may our claim of faith be supported by our deeds.
  - c. Now if you cannot honestly say to God that you trust in Him **and Him alone** – in spite of having everything on the list I just mentioned at your disposal – then I urge you to begin asking God to help you get to the place where your inner conviction, your mindset, and your actions all agree that God is your single source of trust. Of course, such praying will result in people and circumstances who test your faith in order to give you a setting wherein you can build your faith to the place where you do make God your rock, your fortress, your only provider and protector, your single source for all that you need in life.
3. *Do not let me be ashamed; do not let my enemies exult over me* – This statement builds on the last one: “O my God, in You I trust.”
  - a. In New Testament language we might pray: “O God, because I have publicly stated that I trust in You alone, do not fail to bring good out of this or that situation so that those who know I trust in You can see that my faith is well placed.”
  - b. This kind of praying is an example of having a greater concern for God's honor and other's salvation than a desire for relief from whatever it is that is causing us trouble.
  - c. I am now going to read **Micah 7:7-10**.
    - (1) See if you can pick up the assortment of thoughts and attitudes conveyed in Micah that would be fitting for anyone praying: “*Do not let me be ashamed; do not let my enemies exult over me.*”

(2) **Micah 7:7-10** . . . But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. [8] Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me. [9] I will bear the indignation (*righteous anger*) of the LORD because I have sinned against Him (*Lamentations 3:39 – the true penitent accepts the consequences or punishment of his sin*), until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me out to the light, and I will see His righteousness. [10] Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will look on her; at that time she will be trampled down like mire of the streets."

4. *Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed; those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed* – This is a concluding statement to what the Psalmist said in the first two verses. And I believe it is vital for us to take serious note of what this conclusion says about faith in God, about patiently waiting for God, and about the conviction that God never fails!!
  - a. It is one thing to ask God to do something – hoping, and yet wondering if He will hear and answer. It is another thing to come to God in faith **and** in a condition of righteousness that gives us the inner assurance that God will hear and answer – whether it takes a moment, a day, a week, a month, or even years to receive His gracious help.
  - b. May our faith and godly living be such that we can go beyond the words of faith in prayer to having an inward conviction that we are part of that company of Christians who patiently wait for God and therefore have no reason to think we will be ashamed.
5. In summary, these three verses set an example for us in prayer – an example of affirming our love for God, declaring our faith in God, and stating our unshakable conviction that God will hear and answer.
  - a. And though this should never need to be said, I do want to remind us that these three verses do not present a formula for getting our prayers answered. Following the Psalmist's example as a means to answered prayer – while lacking a life that gives credibility to your use of these words – is to exalt yourself above God and treat God as if He is here to serve you.
  - b. My prayer for us is that we would be people who speak such words as the Psalmist spoke, supported by a life that gives credibility to our speaking them.

C. [4] Make me know Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. [5] Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day.

1. I believe it should be of interest to us that the Psalmist moved from declaring his love for God and his faith in God to pressing God for more spiritual growth. It seems reasonable to say that one of the top things on his mind in this psalm was making further progress in becoming the person God created him to be.

2. In these two verses, the Psalmists asks for two things from God to promote spiritual progress in himself.

a. **First**, he says: “*Make me know Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths.*”

(1) In asking to know God’s ways, he is asking for knowledge – the kind we get from reading, studying, and meditating on the scriptures. The lesson here is that of asking God in prayer to speak to us concerning Himself and His ways as we read, study, and contemplate God’s Word.

(2) But the Psalmist is not satisfied with gaining more knowledge, he wants the knowledge to be practical and therefore applicable to his everyday life. So he prays: “***Teach me your paths.***” The point here is that knowledge of what God is like, is important. But to be able to make practical use of that knowledge is best. And so I want to encourage you to pray for understanding and insight as you read, study, and meditate on God’s word. But don’t stop there. Press God to make it practical to everyday living so you can know best how to apply it to your life.

b. **Second**, he says: “*Lead me in Your truth and teach me.*” This time he is asking for guidance – the kind we New Testament believers look for and receive from the Holy Spirit. But he doesn’t stop with a request for guidance, he wants the guidance to be just as practical as the knowledge he just requested, so again he adds, *and teach me.*

3. Now these two requests regarding spiritual progress and growth point to two important truths that go hand-in-hand. And understanding these two inseparable truths can guide us in our prayers. The two truths are: A growing knowledge of God and His ways – on the one hand, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit – on the other hand, are together essential for making progress in living the Christian life. And on top of this, a practical understanding of spiritual knowledge and experiencing the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the most practical ways

possible, are vital to applying spiritual truth to our daily life in ways that bring about the desired results.

- a. Therefore, we ought to continue praying for understanding regarding God's Word, His ways, and His will – so as to continue making progress in knowing God, relating to God, and pleasing God.
  - b. We ought to continue praying for the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit – to help us stay on the narrow path and to help us serve God at those times and in those ways that please Him and accomplish His purposes.
  - c. And we ought to persist in pressing God to make His word, His will, and the leading of His Holy Spirit so practical in nature that we cannot help but see how to apply what we know and how to follow where He leads.
4. The next thing the Psalmist says to God is: *“for You are the God of my salvation.”* In other words, the Psalmist is saying he feels confident in making these requests about spiritual growth because he is praying to the God of his salvation. You see, David did not separate salvation from sanctification. He says that it is because God is the God of his salvation that he is asking God for help in making progress in knowing, loving, pleasing, and serving God. With this in mind, I want to make two points here:
- a. **First**, we ought to nurture the mindset that God's salvation is both present and future – and both are equally important to God.
    - (1) His salvation is present in that He saves us from the power and practice of sin in order to make us new creations who no longer live for ourselves but for Him.
    - (2) His salvation is future in that He saves us from the penalty of sin so we can live with Him throughout eternity.
  - b. **Second**, our prayers reflect what we treasure and what we long for. When we treasure spiritual growth – like the Psalmist does – we will eagerly and persistently pray for God's gracious help and indwelling strength for spiritual growth.
  - c. It is my prayer for us that we would be people who treasure continued growth in the knowledge of God, in purity of heart, and in godliness of life – and that our treasure would be validated by our prayers.
5. Finally, the Psalmist gives a second reason why he is confident in making his requests about spiritual growth, when he says: *“for You I wait all the day.”*
- a. Again, let me make just two points here:

- (1) **First**, the Psalmist is looking only to God and waiting on God to teach him and lead him in the truth. Now this does not mean that God does not use teachers or books or our conscience or our ability to think and reason things out or the prompting of the Holy Spirit or the exhortation of other believers. But it does mean that we are committed to remaining within the boundaries of God's character and truth to learn His ways, discern His leading, and discover how to practically apply these to our lives. Anything outside those boundaries we are wise to treat as off limits.
- (2) **Second**, the Psalmist is trusting God to teach him what he needs to know at a rate that he can absorb. This does not all mean we should relax or neglect our studies or prayers or self-discipline or perseverance in our pursuit of God and growth in godliness. But what it does mean is that gaining knowledge without an equal gain of application is not only useless, it is harmful, for it leads to thinking we are spiritual when we are only knowledgeable about spiritual things.

### III. Conclusion