

Prayer

A Look At Psalm 25:6-7

January 09, 2011

- I. Review of Previous Teaching on Prayer
 - A. Last Sunday we began looking at Psalm 25 to see what it can teach us about prayer. We completed the first five verses and it is my intent to continue from verse 6 today. And by way of reminder, I want to say again today that all prayer is a form of fellowship and communion with God. And for this reason I am encouraging us to approach prayer as something that includes both need based praying and fellowship based praying.
 - B. 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. If this Psalm were our single template for prayer, this is the progression we would follow: We would start with an affirmation of our love for God and our single-minded faith in God. We would then urge God to bring good out of our current situation so that those who know we trust in God would see that our faith is well placed. We would then turn our attention toward making specific requests for spiritual growth – which brings us to verse 6 and the beginning of our study today.

III. **Psalm 25:6-7** . . . 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.

A. In verses 6-7, the Psalmist does three things. First, he **appeals** to God for mercy. Second, he **admits** that his sin – past and present – deserves God's judgment. And third, he **affirms** his attitude of humility. What I want to do today is to take a look at each of these three aspects of prayer for the purpose of showing us how to pray.

B. **Appealing to God for mercy:** [25:6] *Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses, for they have been from of old.*

1. The Psalmist is appealing to God for mercy on the basis of two of God's character traits, His compassion and His lovingkindness.

2. Before taking a closer look at God's compassion and lovingkindness, I want to make two points about this appeal for mercy.

a. **First**, when this appeal for mercy is read in its larger context, it is clear that this appeal **is not** based on what others have done to us, but rather on what we have done to ourselves.

(1) Too often, our need for mercy is self-generated. Our suffering is self-inflicted. Why do I say this? Because it is our sin, our selfish and foolish choices, our needless or irrational fears, our fleshly desires, our greed, our worldly wisdom, our addictive behaviors, our unkind – or even abusive – words, and our unwillingness to love others as we want to be loved – just to name a few self-destructive actions on our part – that puts us in need of God's compassion and lovingkindness.

(2) And when you consider that some of us have an accumulation of foolish choices and bad behavior, it is no wonder we continue to face an abundance of self-inflicted suffering.

- b. My **second** point is this: there is no hint here of appealing for mercy or relief from suffering on the basis of making our rebellion seem less rebellious or our sin seem less sinful or by arguing that our sin is a one time occurrence and therefore it should be overlooked or that our sins are few in number compared to all the good we have done or that we are not as bad as that sinner over there.
 - (1) In other words, this appeal for mercy is not based on any supposed or real good in us – as if we deserve mercy.
 - (2) This appeal for mercy is solely based on God’s compassion and His lovingkindness. And this should be our mindset, too.
- 3. Defining compassion and lovingkindness
 - a. When we speak of God’s **compassion**, we are speaking about Him feeling the suffering we feel and having a deep sense of sorrow over our suffering to the point of having pity on us and showing us mercy. We get a sense of what this means between God and us from **Psalm 103:13** . . . “Just as a [loving, tender] father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.”
 - b. When we speak of God’s **lovingkindness**, we are speaking about a love which remains constant regardless of the circumstances.
 - (1) God’s lovingkindness is an unchanging love which is made up of His goodness, His mercy, and His faithfulness. And this unchanging love reaches down to His people (unworthy as we are), especially when we have sinned.
 - (2) It is for this reason that God’s lovingkindness is frequently associated with forgiveness.
 - c. Finally, when we say God’s compassion and lovingkindness **have been from of old**, we are simply saying He has always been this way, as far as we know. Let me point you to just two of the many scripture portions that support this – **Exodus 34:6-7** where God is describing Himself, and **Psalm 103:8-14** where David is describing God.
- 4. In our appeals for mercy, may God find in us, and in our praying, the honesty and humility to clearly and specifically confess our sin while looking only to Him and His compassion and lovingkindness for mercy and forgiveness.

C. **Admitting our sin deserves God’s judgement** – [7] *Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions.*

- 1. It is possible that our first thought regarding David’s request that God no longer remember the sins of his youth is that he simply doesn’t

understand God's forgiveness for sins confessed. And yet, as we read through **Psalm 103**, it is apparent he did understand God's forgiveness, and understood it well, for it was David who wrote the words: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (**Psalm 103:12**). So if David understood that sins forgiven are removed from us so that God no longer holds them against us, what is he talking about when he says: "*Do not remember the sins of my youth?*"

2. Before answering this question I want to put this phrase in its context and define youthful sins and transgressions.
 - a. The context here is that of David asking God to forget **both** his youthful sins **and** his current transgressions – and that request comes within the larger context of asking for mercy.
 - b. Youthful sins are often describes as foolish, impulsive, thoughtless, or careless sins. No doubt, there is some deliberate rebellion in youthful sinning, but the large part of youthful sin is the result of foolish and impulsive choices and behavior.
 - c. However, when it comes to adult sin, the word transgression is used. When we examine the definition of transgression, we learn that its underlying meaning is rebellion as manifested outwardly through word and deed.
 - (1) Rebellious thoughts and desires are not included in the definition of transgression. So when David speaks of his transgressions, he is speaking of the outward manifestations of his rebellion against God, not what he is thinking or desiring within.
 - (2) James makes this same distinction between considering evil and the outward manifestation of evil when he says: "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (**James 1:14-15**).
3. Now back to our question. Why would David pray: "*Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions*" when it is theologically incorrect to pray that way in regard to past, confessed sins? I do not have an answer that comes directly from the Bible, but I do have three answers that I believe are worthy of our consideration.
 - a. **First**, according to God, there is only one penalty for sin – and that penalty is death (**Romans 6:23**). This death is not confined to punishment of some sort in this life – though it is very clear that the consequences of sin include pain and suffering in this life. And the penalty for sin is not confined to physical death – though

physical death is a direct consequence of sin. The penalty for sin is the death of eternal separation from God in a place reserved for the devil and his co-workers.

- (1) Therefore, if we receive what we deserve, we will be damned to eternal hell. Which means, only a fool would pray for justice in regard to his sin, for justice can only bring eternal damnation.
 - (2) What we have here in **Psalm 25:7** is a plea for mercy based on God no longer holding our sin against us – be it the past foolish sins of our youth or the deliberately rebellious sins of our adult years.
 - (3) So what is my point here? There is no such thing as an honest, heart-felt plea for mercy in regard to our sin without a clear understanding and open admission that our sin, and therefore we ourselves, deserves God’s judgment of eternal damnation, whether we have been forgiven or not.
 - (4) May we, like David, ask for mercy in regard to our sin while acknowledging what we deserve and humbly admitting that our only hope for mercy is God’s compassion and lovingkindness.
- b. **Second**, David was a king, and kings in those days administered justice to their people. And so as King, he was the supreme judge of the land. He had the power to exonerate, the power to condemn and punish, and the power to pardon those who were guilty. Now it is this role of David as judge that I want us to consider.
- (1) It is not uncommon for a judge to pardon a law breaker – especially when it is his first offense. However, such a pardon is granted on the condition that the one pardoned will at least stop breaking the particular law he has been found guilty of breaking. The judge may say something like: “I never want to see you in my courtroom here again.”
 - (2) Now if that lawbreaker breaks the same law again, what should he expect from the judge? And if he breaks that same law repeatedly, and has to repeatedly appear before the judge, should he expect or even hope for mercy and pardon? NO!! Why? Because he has been shown mercy on the occasion of his first or second offense with the expectation that he would put a stop to the wrong he was doing.
 - (3) Now bring this reality into our dealings with God about our sin. How many of us have fallen into the mindset of treating our sin as if it were no big deal because we assume on God’s grace and simply expect His forgiveness? Without a doubt, God is gracious

and He forgives us many times over for the same sin. Yet the message here in **Psalm 25:7** is a humble acknowledgment that if God dealt with us as any reasonable judge would deal with a repeat offender, we would be doomed to eternal damnation because of our repeated occasions of the same sin.

- (4) May we never forget what we deserve, especially in light of our repeated sins, even as we humbly confess our sin and receive God's gracious forgiveness.
- c. My **third** explanation for David saying, "*Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions,*" is this: Those who love God have recurring moments when they feel a deep sadness over the pain and loss their past sins have caused God. They know their confessed sins are forgiven and that God no longer holds those sins against them, but they also know, deep inside, what their past sins have done to God and how their past sins have hindered and hurt their service to God. This breaks their hearts – not to the point of living in perpetual sadness or depression, but to the point of expressing – at least on occasion – their broken, humbled, saddened heart over the sins they've committed.
- (1) Paul, the teacher of grace, and justification by faith, and imputed righteousness, stated in writing that he was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And he went on to say: "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (**I Timothy 1:12-15**).
 - (2) Was Paul a forgiven sinner? Yes. Had God removed Paul's sin from him as far as the east is from the west? Yes. Yet Paul did not forget the evil of what he had done. His memory of his sin was a memory of pain and sadness at having done such things. Did he bring his past sins up all the time or live a depressed life as a result of remembering them? No. Yet he never treated his past sins as if they were nothing, or as if they did not cost God dearly, or as if his sin did not bring pain and loss to God and the Church of Jesus Christ.
 - (3) May we, like David and Paul, love God to the degree that the memory of our past sins – though now forgiven – brings forth, on occasion, humble sadness and an honest admission that what our sin has done to God is reprehensible, and we deserve God's judgement of eternal damnation because of it.

D. Affirming our need for humility – [7b] *according to Your lovingkindness remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O LORD.*

1. This statement is a show of humility. After asking for mercy and admitting he deserves God's judgment because of his sin, David asks God to remember him – not on any basis of good he has done or any supposed value he may have to God, but solely on the basis of God's lovingkindness and goodness.
2. The word "humble" is an easy word to pronounce, but to be of any value to us and to our relationship with God, it must be more than on our lips, it must be in our heart and in our character.
3. To me, this is a vital point because humility has been lowered in value in recent years among Christians while pride has been exalted. For example, we talk about self-esteem and loving yourself before you can properly love others as if such ideas had the power to spiritually and emotionally heal our souls. However, these teachings only serve to justify pride – which in turn advances selfishness. And since when did we need help in justifying pride or advancing selfishness?
4. Is it not true that pride motivates some of us to not admit our sin? In pride, some of us refuse to consider the gravity of our sin – pointing instead to our good intentions or the bad behavior of others. Some do everything they can to avoid being specific about their sin. Though many will admit they are sinners in some general way, few will name their sins or admit to recent sins. Is this not all the result of pride?
 - a. And what amazes me about defending ourselves when we have been caught is that in trying to make ourselves look better – be it by denying wrong doing, or explaining away the wrong we've done, or blaming others for our wrong doing – we only make ourselves look worse in the eyes of those who know what we have done.
 - b. We may think we are making ourselves look better through these methods, but we only think this way because we have traded godly humility and honesty for the devil's foolish pride and deceit.
5. The point here is simply this. We need humility – before God and man. We need humility in our prayers and in our dealings with others. And we need humility when seeking God's mercy in regard to our sin.

IV. Conclusion

- A. May our prayers to God for mercy in regard to our sin include an admission of what we deserve and an affirmation of our humility.