

Keep Me and Judge Them

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Bible Verse: Psalm 141
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Psalm 141, I'd like to read the Psalm in its entirety as we begin. Psalm 141, A Psalm of David.

1 O LORD, I call upon You; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to You! 2 May my prayer be counted as incense before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering. 3 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. 4 Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies. 5 Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it, For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds. 6 Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock, And they hear my words, for they are pleasant. 7 As when one plows and breaks open the earth, Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol. 8 For my eyes are toward You, O GOD, the Lord; In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless. 9 Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me, And from the snares of those who do iniquity. 10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, While I pass by safely.

This Psalm is a very interesting juxtaposition of of a desire for sanctification and also a prayer for help against enemies in life, and it's almost unique in the sharp contrast of those those desires as you see David earnestly pleading that the Lord would keep him on the path of righteousness, while at the same time recognizing his enemies and asking God to, as it were, "To keep me and to judge them."

And so we're in the middle of this four Psalm set, Psalms 140 through Psalm 143, where David is seeking help from his enemies. And let me just remind you of the of the context of the different Psalms. Psalm 140:1 that you read him saying, "Rescue me, O Lord, from evil men. Preserve me from violent men." You see the theme right from the start there. Here, in our Psalm this evening, in verse 9, he says, "Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me, And from the snares of those who do iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets." And then in Psalm 142:6 in the middle of the verse David says, "Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me." And then in verse 12 of Psalm 143, "in Your lovingkindness, cut off my enemies And destroy all those who

afflict my soul, For I am Your servant." And so it's always good for us to see how the Psalms are arranged and whoever the compiler was, it very well may have been Ezra at the end of the Old Testament era of revelation, but it's good to just see that there was a structure and an order and themes that were being put together as the Psalms were compiled and we take those things into account as we read and interpret the Psalms as we go along.

Here in Psalm 141, David is using the threat from his enemies as a motivation to pursue holiness. That's not often the way that we think about the opposition that comes to us; our first thought is often to justify ourselves and how dare they and all of that, David rather sees this as an opportunity to grow in grace and to grow in the knowledge of God and grow in his personal holiness. And so this is one of the key themes in the Psalm and we're going to see it as we look at our first section here tonight, which I've titled: an urgent prayer for help. He opens with an urgent prayer for help. As so often happens in the Psalms, David asks God to hurry to his side and help him.

Look at those first two verses with me again, he says,

1 Yahweh, I call upon You; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to You!

And he's asking God to do more than simply receive it through his divine ear, so to speak, he's asking God to hear and to respond to him and that's what he's asking, "God, I need Your help. I'm calling upon You. Hasten, give ear," in other words, "respond to me quickly because the situation is urgent."

Now we do not know the occasion of this Psalm, in other words, what the circumstances were that David was experiencing when he wrote this Psalm. We don't know, there's no clues in the Psalms to tell us, but whatever the circumstances, the key thing and what gives it its transcendent value to us here today, we're in Psalm 141, David was in the middle of a situation that was growing increasingly desperate. The situation was pressing upon him, and he could tell that it was going from bad to worse. There was no relief on the horizon, and so that's the situation, that's the spiritual occasion of it, he's asking God to respond to him quickly in response to the prayer that he is making.

And he likens his prayer there in verse 2, he compares it to incense and to the evening offering. Look at it there in verse 2, he says,

2 May my prayer be counted as incense before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.

Now for us in our day, that sounds kind of remote and it seems kind of unclear what he is saying. We wouldn't speak that way, we don't speak in terms, "God, let my prayer be to You as incense." We don't use incense and so it doesn't, you know, it doesn't immediately strike our New Testament ears with an obvious sense of what David is saying here. It would seem if we compare Scripture to Scripture, which is the proper way to interpret the

Bible, that he is referring to the appointed offerings that Moses established back in the Pentateuch.

Go back to the book of Exodus 29 with me, Exodus 29 as we just see a little bit of brief historical background here to help us interpret what David is saying in this Psalm. In Exodus 29:38, God is instructing Moses on how the offerings are to be conducted and what Aaron is to do as the high priest. In verse 38 it says this, "Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two one year old lambs each day, continuously. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight." There was an evening offering that was made as part of the God-appointed sacrifices which were a shadow of the future coming of Christ.

Now if you just go across the page, or maybe turn one page to chapter 30 in verse 7, you'll see this, we read, "Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps. When Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense. There shall be perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations." And so God from the very beginning after he had delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, he established this system of worship, you could say, this system that involved animal sacrifices and the burning of incense as part of the appointed means of approaching him in that time. And God was pleased with these regular offerings; this is what he wanted them to do and when they were offered in the right spirit, God accepted them and blessed the one who offered them.

And so this is the background that David has in mind, and what he is saying as we go back to Psalm 141 now, when he says, "May my prayer be counted as incense before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering," he's saying this, he's saying, "God, just as You accept those sacrifices from the high priest, it's what You appointed and when it's offered according to Your will it's something that pleases You." He's saying, "God, accept my prayer now in this time of crisis, in the same way, regard it as something that You have appointed for me to do, let it be found pleasing in Your sight, because if it's pleasing in Your sight, You will answer me and You will respond and You'll help me in my predicament." And so he's looking back to the sacrifices that God appointed, and he's using them as an analogy to the way that he would ask God to receive his prayer now. "God, it's urgent. God, treat it as something that You receive well, that You accept and therefore respond to me."

Now he goes on and he says there at the end of verse 2, "May my prayer be counted as incense before You," here we go, "The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering." In that day, the lifting up of hands was a symbolic way of expressing dependence and praise, of looking to receive blessing from heaven coming down, your hands are reaching up to receive the blessing coming down from heaven and also to lift up and to offer up praise to God. And so the raised hands that he's describes there is not so much the physical aspect of the mere lifting up of his hands, but rather it's referring to the spirit in which he is praying. "God, I'm praying to You in dependence. I trust You. I'm praying in faith and I'm praying with a recognition of Your greatness, Your goodness and Your grace, and I offer this prayer in worship and also in a sense of dependence." And so he's

praying for help and he's asking God to hurry and answer him, "Hasten to me. Give ear to me," he says, and so that's the opening sense of the Psalm. It's an urgent prayer for help.

Now, if it were you and I having opened like that, you might expect to just go directly into the urgent need that you had and explain the problem and ask God to come and help in greater detail than what he did in the opening, but that's not what David does and we come to our second point here this evening where we see a humble prayer for sanctification. A humble prayer for sanctification. Particularly when David's need is so urgent, it is striking, it stands out that in this Psalm the first thing that he does is he looks within at the state of his own soul. Look at verse 3. He has enemies all about him and we see that not just in this Psalm but in the Psalm that preceded and in the two that followed; there's a strong emphasis on personal opposition that's taking place here. And yet, what is the first actual prayer that comes out of David's lip? What's his first request? He says here in verse 3, look at it. He says,

3 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.

And those phrases are in parallel, you know, there's a parallelism there. He's saying the same thing with both sets of clauses there, he's just repeating them for emphasis. "God, watch my mouth. Work in my heart so that I don't speak in a way that would be displeasing to You, so that I would not sin against You with my lips. Guard what I say so that I don't say anything that is displeasing to You and don't let anything through the door of my mouth that You would not want to have come out."

And so David's first actual prayer request here is he is concerned that he would glorify the Lord with his tongue, with his mouth. And as you read the Psalms of David, it's very instructive, it's very humbling to contemplate it personally for many of us, it's also very endearing to see the king of Israel praying with this kind of spiritual sensitivity and this kind of tenderness in his heart before the Lord, and this is far from the only time where David has prayed in such a manner. In Psalm 19, we don't need to turn there, but that great Psalm where he reflects on God's glory and natural revelation in the first six verses, and then God's glory and the specific revelation in his written word in verses 7 through 12 there in Psalm 19. He closes that Psalm after meditating on the stars and meditating on the Scriptures, he's looked at the skies, he's looked at the Scripture, his closing prayer is this, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer." It's the exact same thing that we see here in Psalm 141. He reflects on his situation, he prays to God, and his heart goes to the fact that he wants his heart to be tender, to be teachable, to be sanctified, to reflect the spirit of God in what he says. That's his prayer. That's what he wants. He is focused on his own personal sanctification in what he is saying.

He does the same thing at the end of another very well-known Psalm which we just looked at a couple of weeks ago, Psalm 139. Since you're right by that, why don't you just look over at Psalm 139 for a moment. You remember that he's reflected on the omniscience of God, God's intimately acquainted with all of his ways. He's reflected on

the omnipresence of God, "Where can I flee from Your presence? Anywhere I go, You're there, and so You know me and You are with me." He reflects on the omnipotence of God to have formed him in his mother's womb and to appoint all of the days of David's life before there was one of them, just magnificent theological reflection that he is engaging in, but he's not speaking, he's not writing as a dry theologian, he's not writing for the sake of abstract principle here, he is worshiping God and he's worshiping God not only in ascribing praise to God, but submitting his soul to the sanctifying influence of God and asking God to keep him from sin and to cause him to grow in grace. And so he closes that magnificent, that magnificent meditation in the, you know, in the heart of Psalm 139, he closes it with these two verses there, beginning in verse 23 where he says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."

This is an ongoing prayer of David where he recognizes the temptation for his mouth to speak out of turn, he realizes that his tongue is a threat to godliness, that he can do damage to men with what he says, and that he can sin against God vertically by what comes out of his lips. And so David, before there even was a New Testament, recognized a very important New Testament principle, that our mouths can be instruments for sin, instruments of evil, particularly when we are under provocation of adverse circumstances or the provocation of people who are opposed to us for some reason. So we read in James 3:6, again, you don't need to turn there but just to remind you of the familiar verse, James said, "the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell."

So we see this Old Testament, we see this New Testament. We realize that our tongues are a problem. What comes out of our mouth is often the source of of much conflict. It inflicts much hurt on those that are near us. And so if we are aware of this, then it affects the way that we pray and I don't think it's too much to say all that we would ask for God's help in this matter like David did, we would ask for help more often if we were more conscious of the threat or if we took the threat more seriously. The problem is that we tend toward self-righteousness and self-justification and therefore, you know, I'm going to say what's on my mind. I'll speak my piece here without regard to what the effect of it is or without regard to the the need to say the truth in love. And so we are, you know, we're challenged by what we see here. David, under provocation, David, in the presence of his enemies, the first words that are coming out of his mouth is, "God, keep me from speaking wrongly in in what comes in the near future of my life." And so David here is asking for, here's a little summary of it, David is asking God for supernatural help to overcome his spiritual vulnerability to sin with his speech. He's asking God to give him supernatural help. He's praying to a supernatural God, so he's asking for supernatural help to overcome his spiritual vulnerability to sinning with his speech.

Now, you know, some of us are, you know, we talk a lot. That's okay. It's okay to be a verbal person, but the more verbal you are, the more important it is to have a a sense of dependence on God and looking to God to help you guard your lips so that you would not sin in your speech because the Scriptures make it clear that spiritual force can be set

aflame with a spark that comes from a careless lip. And for those of us that love Christ, that love his church, that love his people, that love our families, how important it is for us to be saying, "God, give me wisdom. God sanctify me. God, I pray that Your Spirit would develop more His fruit in my life, love and joy and peace and patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. God, that's what I want. I want You to work out that in me." That's the kind of thing that David is praying about.

And then he goes further, as we go on into verse 4, he's asking God in verse 4 to direct his heart to godly things and he's just going to the very core of his being, just laying his heart out before the Lord and he says in verse 4,

4 Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.

You know, this verse where he's asking God to incline his heart in the direction of righteousness, it reminds me of the Lord's instruction in what's known as the Lord's Prayer where the Lord taught us to pray, "Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil." And you see, beloved, and I say this, I say this to you gently, I say it to help you, to encourage you, and knowing that for the decades in which I've been a Christian that I've failed in this more than I have succeeded, but for us to recognize that this is the way that God tells us to pray, he's instructing us to pray in a way that would increase our sanctification and that we would be mindful of our hearts that are prone to wander, our hearts which are so easily tempted to sin, our hearts which are so easy to betray trust and to sin against others and sin against God in a multitude of ways, recognizing that we have a heart that still, even as believers, has remnants of sin like that, that can flare up at anytime, Scripture teaches us to proactively ask for God's help in advance saying, "God, keep me away from that sin and increase righteousness in me." This is the mark of true godly praying, this is the mark of those who are walking with God that they desire that enough to pray for it.

And so you see, as I've said many times when I've taught on prayer, when it comes, you know, a lot of times when people realize, "Oh, I've fallen into a time of prayerlessness. I need to pray more." I've said for years, and I'll say it again tonight, that's not where you really want to start, to just start praying more. What you need to do is to step back and consider the entire attitude of your heart, what should be the priorities in prayer, not simply to go in and start repeating the same rote prayers or memorized prayers, or just going through the same prayer list again and again and again as if simply punching the prayer time clock was enough to satisfy what God requires from us and wants from us, and invites from us in prayer. No, we have to go and say, "Okay, what are the priorities of God here? And where am I, you know what are the vulnerabilities? What did the Lord teach us to pray?" He taught us to praise God and, you know, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed would be Your name. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done." A prayer of worship, a prayer of submission, submitting ourselves to the will of God. And then going on, "Lord, provide for my needs today. Forgive my sins as we forgive our debtors, and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil." You see, my whole

point in that extended sidebar there is that God has taught us how to pray, and we need to contemplate that and internalize it and let it come out back out of our mouth after we've internalized it in the way that we pray to him. It's obvious that David had meditated deeply on the holiness of God, the law of God, and that this is what we see coming out in the inspired writings that the Spirit of God has left for us.

And so go back to verse 4 with those things said. David here, again we're in the middle of a prayer for sanctification. Verse 3, "God, keep me from sinning with my mouth. And then, God, going deeper work in my heart, work in my affections, work in my inner man, work in my conscience, make my conscience sensitive to sin. Even if it's already very sensitive. Lord, keep my conscience pure and clean, that I would not be inclined to break Your law." And so verse 4, "4 Do not incline my heart to practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity." And, you know, just to clarify here, David is not concerned that God would prompt him to do something evil, "So God, instead of leading me into evil, instead lead me into something righteous." That's not it at all. James says that God does not tempt anyone to sin, and so it's not that we don't need to pray that God would, you know, would prompt us to do evil things, rather what David is saying in a negative way is this, he's simply asking God to control the first motions of his heart; that the impulses of his heart would be inclined toward godliness and not toward sin. And so he's asking God, "Work in my heart, sanctify my heart in the deepest recesses of who I am. God, I ask that Your Spirit would be creating righteous desires in me, creating godly affections in me so that the course of my life is guided by an inner control center that is pursuing after You." In other words, "God, here's my heart. Oh, take and seal it. Seal it for Your courts above." That's the spirit of what David is praying here.

And so as he goes on there in verse 4, he says, "Don't incline me to be with men who do iniquity. Do not let me eat of their delicacies." What's he saying there? Well, often the wicked prosper, the wicked become wealthy and enjoy some of the finer things of life, and those sensual luxuries that they sometimes enjoy can be outwardly appealing. Saying, "Oh, if only I had that. Look how they eat, or look at what they drive, or look at where they live." Divorced from the prosperity of the wicked that we see described in Psalm 73, that's where the psalmist in Psalm 73 went astray. He saw the prosperity of the wicked and he was jealous of them and he started to want that, and he nearly stumbled badly as you read in Psalm 73. David is ahead of the game here in Psalm 141. He's ahead of the curve of where Psalm 73 came in and he says, "God, I want You to incline me away from all of that." Like Daniel, when he was taken off to Babylon, he said he didn't want to eat the king's luxuries. He said, "Just feed me the vegetables. I'll be fine with that." And so David here in verse 4, he is renouncing, he is rejecting the carnal lifestyle that would tempt him away from obedience and sanctification. He's saying, "God, my heart might be otherwise inclined to go after the things that wicked people enjoy," and there's a certain sensual appeal to it, there is a passing pleasure to sin that the book of Hebrews describes. David says, "I don't want that passing pleasure. I want to live a life that is righteous and pleasing in Your sight."

And so you see just the deep godliness that was marking David as he's praying in this way, and he's mindful of the fact that in the language of 1 Corinthians 15, that bad

company corrupts good morals. Bad company corrupts good morals. David says, "Keep me away from the people that would corrupt my morality." And you know, we hardly need any illustration of the fact that this is a very real danger for young and old alike. You need to guard who your friends are, especially you young people as you're kind of setting the course for your future life, you need to choose your friends wisely. You need to avoid those that are obviously loving evil, that are disobedient and outwardly defiant to their parents, you need to stay away from friends like that and not drink it in. Scripture warns us not to associate those that are given to anger lest you learn their ways and become like them. So we need to be discerning in our friendships, discerning in our relationships, discerning over what we choose to pursue with our life.

David goes on and he takes it even a step further as we read in verse 5. He says,

5 Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it, For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds.

What David is saying here is, "God, I am willing to receive correction from godly people." He says, "Let righteous people smite me in kindness and reprove me> If there is something wicked in my life, if there is something that is askew in me spiritually, O God, I pray that there would be righteous people in my life who would reprove me and rebuke me for it. They will be doing me a benefit. They will be giving me a blessing if they recognize sin in my life and reprove it in a way that restores me to the path of righteousness." That's what he's praying here and what we see in this is that part of sanctification and, you know, if you remember David, you remember when Nathan came and rebuked him about his sin with Bathsheba and David heard it and repented, the prophet came and rebuked the king, and the king responded to it. Well, part of sanctification is accountability to spiritual authority, beloved, and Scripture speaks about this often even in the New Testament.

Look over at Proverbs 1:7. This is actually an essential element of the fear of the Lord which we so recently studied. "The fear of the LORD," it says in Proverbs 1:7, "is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction." You want to be able to identify a fool? It's someone who gets angry when he's corrected, someone who lashes out when spiritual accountability is brought to his or her life.

Proverbs 10:17 states it in the positive and the negative. Verse 17, "He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, But he who ignores reproof goes astray." And this is fundamental to the entire Bible, beloved. If you'll over at 2 Timothy 3, let me show you something significant from 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17. 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17, such a familiar text, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." Beloved, part of biblical instruction and part of the purpose of God giving us the Scripture is to teach us in the right ways of doctrine and of godly living but it's not just that. Scripture is given to reprove us when we go astray, to correct us, in other words, what you're doing is wrong, here is the right way to live, here is the right thing to believe so that it trains us to walk in righteousness.

Fundamental, essential to Scripture in a signature text about the authority of the Bible, the apostle writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us why God gave us the Bible and it is not only to teach us but to reprove us and correct us morally so that we would grow in sanctification and sometimes that correction comes through reading Scripture itself but it also occurs, beloved, in the body of Christ and it's one of the key responsibilities of elders to lead people and to exercise pastoral care and oversight in that way.

It's worth expanding on this thought just a little bit. You know, look, I say this more often than I should probably. I've been in ministry for, you know, almost three decades now. There's a lot of history in a lot of places that cause me to say what I'm about to say. Outwardly, outwardly the pattern in every church that I've been in, is that people come and they say that they want Bible teaching and they want fellowship and it seems like that they are eager to embrace a biblical ministry, and they may even pay lip service to the importance of unity in the church but the truth comes out when they resist accountability, when they reject reproof, when they refuse correction that comes to them through Scripture, through elders, through fellow believers in the body. This happens all the time, beloved, and it is a serious problem in the church of Jesus Christ. We need to recognize that Scripture is given in order to reprove and correct us and the mark of one growing in godliness is one who, like David in Psalm 141, has the humility to say, "I will receive the correction from the righteous." Who are you to question me is not words that come from the mouth of a sanctified heart.

We're still in 2 Timothy 4, and for those that are in leadership, there is a grave responsibility to take these kinds of matters seriously. 2 Timothy 4:1. After having just said what he said about the inspiration of Scripture, Paul tells Timothy in what are essentially his dying words biblically, he looks at Timothy as he's handing the spiritual baton to the next generation, as he's handing the baton, is apostolic ministry is coming to an end, Timothy will not be an apostle, he just has to build on biblical principles, and he receives the baton from the hand of the Apostle Paul and this is not a, you know, a lighthearted event. Paul says, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season." in other words, at all times. And what is the minister of the word of God, what does Paul tell this minister of the word of God to do with it? He says, "you reprove, you rebuke, you exhort with great patience and instruction." He says, "Timothy, it's vital that you do this. The advance of the kingdom depends upon you doing this." Why? Verse 3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." "Timothy, rebuke them, reprove them, exhort them." There is a biblical responsibility upon spiritual leadership to exercise that function among the people of God. Now Scripture balances that, tells us in 1 Peter chapter 5 that leaders are not to lord it over the flock, but there is a difference between lording it over and just abandoning the responsibility altogether. And so we have a responsibility as believers, that we see illustrated in the life of David, to receive correction as part of living the Godly life.

With that said, go back to Psalm 141. How does David describe that kind of rebuke coming to him? Well, remember, he wants to be sanctified. That at the core of what he's saying here. "God, I want to be a holy person. I want to be godly and so anything that contributes to my godliness is something that I welcome, even if it's when someone is confronting me." And so he says, "It's like oil upon the head. Don't let my head refuse it, For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds." He says, "This rebuke is like oil upon my head." In the day, that oil would have had healing power, it would have had restorative power, it was medicinal. It improved, you know, when a head wound was treated with oil, it had a healing function, it smoothed it over, it softened the wound and aided the restoration of the flesh. What David is saying is, is that, "In my desire for godliness, this kind of rebuke that encourages me in the direction of righteousness, it has a healing effect on me. I realize that the Lord is at work sanctifying me." And he embraces it. And while the rebuke might initially sting, David says, "Lord, don't let me reject it. Don't let me harden my heart. Don't let me be a fool who despises instruction. Don't let me be like that, O God, because at the heart of it, I want to be sanctified." And so his commitment is to reject wicked deeds of any sort, you see it there at the end of verse 5, "still my prayer is against their wicked deeds. I don't want their wicked deeds to invade my life. I don't want their ungodly attitudes to take root in my own heart. So, Lord, whatever it takes, whatever it takes to cultivate that in me, that's what I'm asking You to do. Send it through Your word, send it through a messenger to me, send it through providential circumstances, whatever it takes, Father, I want to be on the path of righteousness." So it's kind of a close personal question to ask yourself, isn't it, is that what I want? Do I somehow pray for that? Is that a trademark of the way that I submit myself to the Lord, make me godly, not make me prosperous, not not make it easy, not take away the thorn? You know, Paul prayed that way three times then the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for you." Paul said, "Okay, then I'm well content with weaknesses and insults as long as Your grace is with me, that's what I want."

So David has explored and prayed thoroughly about his own sanctification, and that's really important to remember as we go to this third and final point for this evening as he turns, it's actually the third point out of four, we see in the next section a poignant prayer for justice. A poignant prayer for justice. David is about to pray in another, you know, in another strong fashion against his enemies. Understand that you must read these following verses in light of the humble cry for sanctification that he had just made. At the same time, as we move into verse 6, the Psalm at this point becomes much more difficult to interpret. You read verse 6 and we find this. He says,

6 Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock, And they hear
my words, for they are pleasant. 7 As when one plows and breaks open the
earth, Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol.

And what does it have to do with anything that was going on beforehand? On this verse and those that follow, the 19th century commentator J. J. Stewart Peron says this, he says, "This verse, difficult in itself, is still more difficult because it has no very obvious connection either with what precedes or with what follows. The allusions are so obscure

that it is impossible to do more than guess at the meaning." In other words, he wrote a commentary, it's like this on the Psalms. He comes to this passage and he scratches his head, "I don't know what this means." Now he goes on and gives some suggestions along with other commentators and so we can't be dogmatic in what we're about to say here, but if you remember context, that in these four surrounding Psalms and even in this Psalm itself, David is praying for help against his enemies. That guides us and shines some light on the difficulty of the passage. It seems to me that in this passage David is asking for a dramatic punishment against his ungodly enemies.

Look at it there in verse 6. It's an abrupt shift from his prayer for sanctification, admittedly, but in verse 6, remember the enemies are in the background and are prompting the urgent prayer so that he says there in verse 6, "Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock." It's like he says throw him over a cliff. Throw them over a cliff and there's biblical warrant for thinking about that kind of imagery. It's what Jesus' enemies wanted to do to him in Luke 4, they wanted to throw him over a cliff. And you'll find a similar judgment taking place in 2 Chronicles 25. Actually, let's look at it. We have just a moment here. 2 Chronicles 25 just to point this out to you. Now this is in a passage that comes after David. 2 Chronicles 25:12, "The sons of Judah also captured 10,000 alive and brought them to the top of the cliff and threw them down from the top of the cliff, so that they were all dashed to pieces." They exercised judgment against their enemies and they, you know, in the course of war, this was the way that they destroyed those particular enemies. It was a judgment on those people that they were thrown over the cliff.

And so David's words here in Psalm 141:6 seem to be in a kind of a prophetic way and preparing the way for the judgment of his enemies. It's God, "Let the time come when they are thrown over a cliff. Let their judgment come. Let the wickedness that they are doing be stopped as in a manner consistent with them being thrown over the side of a cliff." That seems, to me, to be the best understanding of it. And he says, "They hear my words, my words are pleasant," his words are pleasant because they are true and they're pleasant in the sight of God. What David is saying about his enemies are true, his words are pleasant and, "Therefore, God, come to my aid, keep me and judge them."

So in verse 7 he gives the reason for the judgment, to follow this train of thought, he says, "As when one plows and breaks open the earth, Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol." What he's saying here is, is that in the past before my prayer, these enemies had inflicted carnage upon the people of God. And so he says, "God, our bones have been scattered. They've inflicted destruction upon us, and they've done so in a wicked way. So I ask You, God, to boomerang the justice on them. Deliver me and judge them and and protect Your people in the process. Let the judgment be thorough upon them." And that seems to be a good way to understand this most difficult text.

We come to our fourth and final point here and you can if you're taking notes, you can write this a closing prayer of trust. A closing prayer of trust. David, having briefly considered his enemies and asking for God's action against them, he comes full circle

once again and quiets his soul and returns to his trusting God. Look at verses 8 and 9. He says,

8 For my eyes are toward You, O GOD, the Lord; In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.

When he says "my eyes are toward You," he's expressing his faith and his dependence upon God. "I'm looking up to You. I don't have the ability to help myself here and so I look to You and I dependently wait on You to help me. God, You have the power to protect me. I'm asking You to use that power to keep me safe." And so he expands in verse 9 and he says,

9 Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me, And from the snares of those who do iniquity.

He says, "God, the wicked have many ways to endanger me and to cause me to stumble. They've set multiple traps in order to catch me in their plots." And so what he's saying here is, "God, I'm asking You to guide me safely through them all." There's just such a tender spirit to this Psalm, isn't there, as he asks God in a humble way, "Come and help me," as he humbly asks God to work in his heart and to guard his lips, "God, I want to be a godly man in the midst of this." There's the flash of judgment against the enemies, but he comes back and he, you know, this is a man that's a king. David was a king and a warrior and he entrusts his heart in such a humble way, saying, "God, I'm just looking to You for my help." He's done with self-reliance and asks the Lord to provide for him, and the deliverance will show that God has been on David's side.

Look at verse 10 as he concludes this Psalm. He says,

10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, While I pass by safely.

Once again, you see the principle of boomerang justice. He says, "God, they are wickedly planning to cause me harm. Let it fall on them." It reminds me of Haman in the book of Esther. They built up the big gallows to hang Mordecai on, Haman ended up being the one that was hanged, and Mordecai was promoted to a place of prominence. That's what God does in his providence. That's how God protects his people and that deliverance shows that God is with his people to help them even in their times of danger.

As we close, you know, and we contemplate everything that David has said and what we've seen here, let's close by turning to the book of Hebrews 4, and to just bring the Spirit of Christ to bear upon it and the blessing that is ours to see that the coming of Christ has broadened and deepened the foundation of the confidence that we have when we seek the Lord in our times of trouble and distress. Hebrews 4:14 reflecting on the work of Christ on Calvary, the fact that he's ascended into heaven where he intercedes for us at the right hand of God, we have a brother in heaven who intercedes for us continually at the right hand of God, a brother who loved us enough to lay down his life for us. That's the precious intimacy that we have with the Lord Jesus Christ, one who is

glad to be our great high priest and paid the price to do it. Verse 14, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." And here are the words that I would leave you with as we close tonight, brothers and sisters, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Let's pray together.

Father, surely we live in a world that assaults us, that causes us difficulty both within and from without. We come in this evening and ask You, Father, at the throne of grace, in the name of our Lord Jesus, who purchased access to You and Your holy presence for us, in the name of our great High Priest, in the name of our brother in heaven, in the name of our Lord, in the name of our Savior, in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, Father, I ask for each one here, each one with a different kind of need for sure, but each one feeling the need in relationships or other matters of earthly concern, Father, some struggling mightily with temptation and brought to the point of almost complete discouragement because it seems like the sin is so difficult to overcome and tender hearts crushed under the weight of the disappointment and the shame that they feel in it, Father, for each one like that, Father, in the room and outside it, we pray and draw near with confidence that You will hear our prayer and that You will grant this promised mercy and help each one to find the grace that they need in their time of respective need. We ask these things in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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