

November 5, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Psalms
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Psalm 25.

1. What is the “soul” as the word is used in the OT?
2. Why was David concerned that his enemies would exalt over him and put him to shame?
3. What does “waiting for God all day long” look like?
4. Describe God’s “steadfast love.”
5. Describe Holy Spirit conviction and how Christian brothers should help the confessing sinner who is experiencing that conviction.

IN FORGIVENESS, GOD NEVER FAILS **Psalm 25**

In matters of forgiveness, the children of God can rejoice in the certainty that God never fails. When we confess sin to Him, He forgives it completely, forever, never to bring it up again. That is because God laid our sin on His Son Jesus Christ, who took all our sins to hell and left them there. More precisely, I am encouraged to know that the sins I have confessed to God were no surprise to Him as He offered to me the price that justifiably allows Him to dismiss all of them.

Now people . . . they aren’t God. I have often said that the problem with confessing sin is not that God doesn’t forgive, but that

people don’t. Religious people, professing Christians, too often take on the character of Pharisees in the matters of confession of sin. For some reason, we mistakenly conclude that because the confessor is obviously worse than us, it is our responsibility to see that he or she is fitly punished.

I am guilty and must confess to holding and practicing that very attitude early in my ministry. I honestly thought that the purpose of church discipline was to punish the sinner for sinning. I learned later in life that the purpose of church discipline is to help the sinner who has chosen not to confess to see that it is God’s desire and the assembly’s desire to restore the sinner. But the first step in restoration is confession. If the confession has already been made, we move on to restoration.

Russell Moore was reared in the Southeastern United States, this place we call the Bible Belt. Folks in this part of the country are pretty religious to say the least. But as Moore points out in his book titled, *Onward*, common religious practice might not be the same as Bible truth. He illustrated the problem with classic parent failure his friend shared with him. The father told of his son who stubbed his toe and began to cry. Wanting to teach the son to be tough, dad told him to quit crying because it wasn’t necessary. The next day the boy came home and proudly told dad that he learned a new response for handling hurt. When he was hurt on the playground he stood up, blamed the boy next to him, and got angry with him. But he didn’t cry. Crying over confessed sin is good. Getting angry isn’t.

David also knew what it was like to know he had failed, confessed his failure, only to have people around him desire his utter failure and ruin. The good news is that David knew God. God never responds like people respond. How blessed we are to have the testimony of David finding God ready to forgive, ready to restore, ready to protect, ready to embrace confessing David in His steadfast, unchanging love. Here we find great encouragement to trust God to welcome us and embrace us when we yield to His conviction regarding our sin.

No Shame in Trusting the LORD (vv.1-7).

When we are convicted of sin which leads to confession of the sin, it is nice to know that we are trusting in Him who will not shame us (vv.1-3). David had this confidence when he lifted up his soul to the LORD. Let's begin at the beginning. The title of the psalm is striking. It is simply *Of David*. The beauty of this title is that each of us could put our name in that spot. This psalm ought to be the story of our lives. Having recently completed a study of David's life, we will understand what David experienced here.

The Psalm of David tells us that David trusted God. He wrote, *To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul (v.1b). O my God, in you I trust (v.2a)*. This penitent sinner lifted up His soul to Yahweh. The Hebrew word for soul describes the life of the person. It is similar to the New Testament concept of "heart." The soul is the eternal part of our being. It is the personality, the being, the real self. The soul is what we think, feel, desire. It is what no one but God can see, and yet it determines all our outward expressions and actions.

The soul of a person is much like Jesus' explanation to Nicodemus about the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot see Him, but we can see the results of His work. He is like the wind in the trees, which we cannot see. But we see the leaves moving.

Like David we need to learn to carry our souls, our very being to the ever-existing, self-existing, almighty God. The opposite response to what David did is to try to fix problems ourselves. Strange how we admit that the Holy Spirit puts us under conviction of sin, but then we abandon Him and rely on human efforts, help, and comfort. Not David. He was completely transparent with God because He trusted Him. This is what Holy Spirit conviction looks like. When God's Spirit works on our Spirit, we trust God completely to fix the problem.

In David's case the problem was twofold. He had sinned, confessed the sin, and desired forgiveness and full restoration from sin. And at the same time, he desired not to give the enemy opportunity to shame the servant of God. How can that be prevented? David was of the opinion that trust in God overpowers shame. *Let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me (v.2b). Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous (v.3)*. The same idea is expressed in

verse nineteen where David wrote, *Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me (v.19)*.

The penitent sinner's request was, first, that he would not be put to shame. The word means to fall into disgrace. The common expectation is that this disgrace David wanted to avoid would be the result of the sin becoming public. That is practically quite true. However, the Bible context of David's plea indicates that his concern was that the disgrace could be the result of the object of his trust failing. Probably the emphasis here is fear of being rejected or abandoned by God, the object of David's trust. Notice that thought expressed in Psalm 42:3: *My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?" (Psalm 42:3)*.

There is no greater illustration of this issue than God the Son bearing our sin on the cross. The enemy mocked Him saying, *"He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matthew 27:43)*. What is really astonishing is that while He hung on the cross, the Son of God acknowledged that this shame was true. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34)*.

David also pled with God that the enemy would not exult over him. David was not unique in this situation. All saints have enemies. Some of the enemies are real people who desire to see you fail either because they are jealous, envious, angry, or hateful. Satan, the greatest of enemies, intentionally seeks out saints to devour (1 Peter 5:8). And the great enemy sin crouches at the door of our souls desiring to master us as it did Cain (Genesis 4:7).

The penitent sinner's confidence was that no one who trusts God will be put to shame. How can that be true? Wasn't David disgraced by consequences of his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah? Wasn't David disgraced when he tried to transport the Ark of God contrary to God's rules? Wasn't David disgraced when he numbered the people? Yes, sometimes the consequences of sin that God chooses in this life disgrace the penitent sinner. But for eternity, the penitent sinner will enjoy God's favor and blessing.

In contrast to that certainty is the fact that all treacherous people will be put to shame. Often those who attack and disgrace God's

confessing child will reap what they sow in this life. One of God's principles of life is, *Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling (Proverbs 26:27)*. Ultimately, the people who are treacherous without a cause against God's child will face eternal consequences for their own sins.

In short, David trusted God to take care of any consequences. Beginning with verse four, we discover five requests that flow from trust. First, *Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths (v.4)*. The truly penitent sinner desires to learn from God. He desires not simply acquaintance with the path, the journey of God, but he desires to experience that path as he walks along with God in daily fellowship. Picture Jesus walking along the dusty roads of Palestine with twelve curious disciples in tow. Eleven of them had various levels of desire to know, to learn, to be taught the Master's way. Penitent sinners who want to know God's ways search His Word to us continually, asking questions as we search.

The second request is, *Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long (v.5)*. Truly penitent sinners prove they desire for God to teach as they follow Him in His truth. They have learned that God alone provides eternal salvation as well as rescuing from sin in this life. So, instead of taking control of situations, we wait for long times for God to reveal His way. While we wait, we continue to trust that God is doing His will.

Third, *Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old (v.6)*. The prayer is for God to remember that He is merciful. God does not mind if we remind Him that He does not give us what we deserve. He looks on us with pity. God's mercy flows from His unchanging love. God's loyal unchanging love is not dependent on the value of the object loved. This is critical because we are not lovely or loveable creatures. God's steadfast love is built on, rooted in, flows from His covenant obligations.

This love is a bit like the love between a husband and wife based on wedding vows. We promise to love, cherish, and obey for better for worse, richer or poorer, sickness or health. And a lot more than that is implied. During the marriage there are times when both

the husband and the wife are unlovely people. But we keep showing love because we made a covenant to that end.

Fourth, *Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions (7a)*. This is not a request for God to become forgetful—which He cannot do. It is a request for God to keep His promise in the New Covenant. God promised through Jeremiah that He would build a new relationship with His people based on the New Covenant, the covenant of salvation in Christ. *“And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34)*.

Fifth, David prayed, *According to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! (v.7b)*. Here is a pretty incredible two-fold request. I, like David the penitent sinner, can ask God to focus on me according to His unchanging love. That means, “Don't look at the sin I have confessed. Please don't look at my spiritual ugliness. But look at me through your covenant to love me.” Focus on me to exalt Your goodness. We can pray, “God, forgive me, restore me, love me because You are good.” God's goodness is the reason that penitent sinners can have hope.

What We Know About God's Ways (vv.8-14).

One thing we know is that God's ways are right (vv.8-10). Because He is right He instructs sinners. *Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way (v.8)*. God does not point out sin because He is unkind. God teaches sinners that they are sinning because God is good. Without God's instruction about sin, we are hopeless. We should thank God that His instruction brought conviction and knocked down our self-confidence.

Another thing we know is that God leads the humble. *He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way (v.9)*. The first step in restoration is for God to humble the sinner. This is the process of instruction/conviction mentioned in the previous verse. Once the sinner confesses his rebellion against God, admits that he was proud and self-sufficient, then he is ready to be taught. The truly

penitent sinner joyfully embraces God's teaching, knowing it is the right way.

Third, we know that God's ways are steadfast love and faithfulness. *All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies (v.10)*. The paths of the Lord, the roadway of His will, are as unchanging as His love. God's will is always in keeping with His unchanging faithfulness to His covenant. God's covenant, His promises and our responsibilities is the meeting place between God and the penitent sinner. We do not confess sin and then negotiate with God. We rest in the certainty that God's path for us runs in His path of unchanging love and faithfulness to His covenants.

Because we have this confidence, we pray to God. David offered four specific requests, (vv.11-14). First, he asked God to "Pardon my guilt." *For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great (v.11)*. We, like David, need to admit that our guilt is great. Not that we feel guilty (though we do), but that we are in every way culpable for breaking fellowship with God and offending His holy character. Knowing that we deserve eternal punishment, we beg for God's pardon.

The word translated *pardon* has to do with removal of sin based on atonement. Because God's covenant promised forgiveness of sin based on blood sacrifice, we plead the blood of Christ for our pardon. It seems very interesting to me that this word is never used in regard to people pardoning other peoples' sins. It is only used to speak of God whose pardon is paramount.

Second, David prayed, "Instruct me." *Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose (v.12)*. True repentance longs for God's teaching. God's teaching shapes, molds, directs our choices. Sin proved to be a bad choice; repentance desires to make better choices.

Third, God prayed that He would, "Guard my soul." *His soul shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land (v.13)*. Restored sinners are abiding in fellowship with God. We have rest in our souls. Like the ancient Jews who looked forward to possessing the promised land, we possess intimate fellowship with our God. We experience some of the eternal blessings while in this life on earth. We are, as Paul described us, "already experiencing

every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3).

Fourth, David prayed, "Be my friend." *The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant (v.14)*. How odd that friendship and fear walk together in this sentence. It teaches us that a right and awesome respect of God is critical for friendship with Him. It is like walking beside Aslan the Lion that C.S. Lewis introduced us to in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, because you know that though He is mighty and powerful, He is also good. While we walk in fellowship with God, He continually unpacks more and greater truths about His covenant. This is why we often wonder how seasoned saints know so much about God. We read the same Bible, but they seem to understand the applications to real life so much better than the young saints do.

A Fitting Response (vv.15-22).

David confessed his sin. He prayed with great confidence to God. He believed that God would act like God. Therefore, he was able to respond with confidence. He prayed that God would give him grace in the time of trouble (vv.15-17). His desire was "God deliver me." *My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net (v.15)*. Oh to come to the point in life when we can honestly say that we are always focused on the Lord. Such is often the case in the time of crisis when the sinner repents of sin and is released from conviction.

But life tends to become distracting. Our flesh still desires to be pleased. The passing world offers tons of different ways to satisfy our flesh. And so it is easy to once again fall into the net from which God dragged us with cords of conviction. What a wonderful assurance that if we fall into the net, God will be gracious to pluck us out. Better to stay out of the net by keeping our eyes on the Lord.

Furthermore, David asked for God to be gracious to him. *Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted (v.16)*. It is good to ask God to show us favor that we do not deserve. We seldom realize that we need God's favor until we are in affliction. Most people of the world continually offend God with their lives and avoid loneliness by meeting with friends and staying entertained – even in

church. God is so good to direct our steps into affliction where we feel so very alone. I love God most deeply and sense His loving arms around me most vividly when I feel like I am all alone, unable to share my affliction or burden with anyone else.

Third, David prayed that God would bring him out of his distress. *The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses (v.17)*. Following this example, you will admit that you are in trouble and it is only getting worse by the day. Then beg God to bring you out of your distress. How sad it is when God leads His beloved child into distress because of sin, the child confesses the sin, and then truncates the work of God by turning to other people to bring them out of the distress. The word distress speaks of inner motivation brought on by external circumstances. This looks a lot like Holy Spirit conviction to me.

Finally David expressed his desire for God to consider his affliction and deliver him to integrity (vv.18-22). Now we find four more requests in prayer. First, "Forgive my sins." *Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins (v.18)*. This is to ask God to carefully assess your difficulty. He will help you see that the difficulty was His plan to help you see your sin. When you see the problem, confess your sin and ask God to send it away.

Second, David prayed, "Deliver me from my foes." He learned as many of God's children have learned that personal enemies are vicious. *Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me (v.19)*. The real problem is not that personal enemies are vicious, but that Satan is vicious and he uses people. Therefore, David cried out, "God guard me!" *Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you (v.20)*.

Third, David prayed "Preserve me in integrity." *May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you (v.21)*. The penitent sinner is not simply interested in having the pressure taken off. He desires to be found securely surrounded by integrity (complete innocence and simplicity) and uprightness (running straight). Being right with God is found as we wait for Him.

A fourth request almost seems odd. David asked God to do for others what God did for him. *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles (v.22)*. David was not concerned only for himself. God's

people Israel were, on the whole, always flirting with disaster. So is the Church, the members of Christ's body. We should quake in fear to realize how close we have come to disaster and apart from God's grace would have fallen into the net. We should realize that all Christians are human and pray for God to deliver them from potential failure.

This psalm addresses issues we all must deal with all the time. God's desire is that we will stay in fellowship with Him all the time. Reality is that sometimes we wander out of fellowship. In kindness, God convicts and sometimes brings affliction to get our attention. When God knocks on our door, we are wise to respond with confession and full dependance upon Him.