

### Psalm 141(1-10) – Protect Me from Me

This is a prayer of David for deliverance from the sins which he was tempted with in his affliction, and from the enemies who caused it. Our enemies can tempt us by tormenting us, and we sometimes fall into sin because we feel battered, but this is not an excuse, and David knows it and is praying about it. It can be hard to be holy in the midst of adversity, but just because you are in a struggle doesn't mean you're allowed to be sinful. Just because someone else isn't doing right it is no excuse for you to do wrong. People lay traps, and we can walk into them totally unaware, or even fully aware. Yet people are not the greatest danger, wickedness itself is the greatest danger. In that case, sometimes we are our own worst enemy.

Give me attention (vs.1-2) – An urgent sense of danger: I am crying to you, God, please come quickly and hear my cry! Not just the fact that I am crying, but what is making me cry. He is saying, God, this is urgent, please be instant. David is asking that his prayer would be like a sweet aroma, like the sacrifices in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. Incense is a symbol of prayer. It was carefully prepared, and the sacrifices were strictly prescribed. Prayer is not always simple work. Indeed, prevailing prayer is not only emotion, and not only intent, but an honest look inward at our own heart, before we try and touch God's heart. David is saying that he hopes God will consider the fact that he has given serious consideration to what and how he is going to pray. David is offering consecrated prayer. He is saying, God please be pleased with my prayer.

Give me ability (vs.3-4) – he prays about his talk and his walk. The heart and the mouth are linked (Luke 6:45-46 / James 1:26). Look at vs. 3-4 as a process. Our speech can become corrupted, because our heart can be corrupted, and we do corrupt deeds because we hang out with corrupt people, who feed us corrupt food. You are enticed (by the delicacies), then you are ensnared (by the company), then you are enslaved (by the deeds), then you are endorsing it (by the mouth). You eat the bad stuff, then you hang out with the bad people, who gave you the bad stuff, then you do the bad stuff just like the bad people, then you become like one of the bad people whose heart is bad, and then you say bad things and don't care what God thinks about it.

This is a prayer for an ability to avoid sin, but the best prayers have legs, and it is hypocrisy to pray for deliverance from evil people when your heart desires to do the same evil as them. You won't break that cycle unless you break that chain. But it is no use breaking the chain of bondage if you keep linking up to it. Watch what you say, what you think, who you are with, what you allow into your life. What you consume has a way of consuming you. Is it godly or worldly? It is all here in the text: safety from sinners, safety from sin, and safety from self.

Psalm 1:1 – Walk – stand – sit" is a sequence that pictures a progression from a careless association with the wicked to complete identification with them.

James 1:14-15 – progression – enticed (own desire), ensnared (lured, dragged away), enslaved (gives birth to sin), endorsed (it brings forth death) – we are lured away, then caught up, we do the thing, and then we die for it (and willingly).

Yes David had his enemies, and he wants the enemy to be dispatched, but he is concerned with what he might do under pressure. Protect me from me; he knows he might be tempted but that he

can't avoid danger by doing the wrong thing. The greatest danger is not wicked people, but wickedness itself. Wickedness comes from the world (1 John 2:16), the flesh (1 Peter 2:11), and the devil (1 Peter 5:8). The world feeds it, the devil enflames it, the flesh indulges it, but the Bible gives us the answers to overcome it (1 John 2:17 / Galatians 5:16-18 / 1 Peter 5:6-7, 9). You need to stop gambling with you soul. You have to go all in. If you keep leaving a way out, sin will keep making sure you don't stay in. How can you pray for protection from sin when you keep making provision for sin (Romans 13:12-14)?

Give me correction (vs.5-7) – David knows it is better to have correction from godly people than indulgence from wicked people. David doesn't want the delights of the devil; he knows that the rebuke of the righteous will do him good. We are wise if we listen, we are chastened by the providence of God through His people. Oil here refers to refreshing, and we need the refreshing of repentance (Acts 3:19-20), and God often gives that through the rebuke of people who know us and love us. The correction is part of the protection. Proverbs 27:6 – *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.* Ecclesiastes 7:5 – *It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.* Proverbs 28:26 – *Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.*

Our prayer for wise counsel is a witness against the evil deeds of those who wish us evil. Judgment will come upon those who scheme evil upon the righteous, and some who are on the wrong path may even learn wisdom. If we can receive correction, our lives can bring correction to others. But you can't teach if you can't be taught. You can't lead others to God if you can't be led to God by others. Those who will have no master are those who are slaves to themselves. When you don't believe you can be deceived that's when you already are. Proverbs 29:1 – *He who is often reprovved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.* The whole landscape of life may seem to be at a dead end because of evildoers, but we can still look to the Lord and be delivered. If we will be repentant we will have revival.

Give me protection (vs.8-10) – Ultimately, David knows that all the ability that grace can provide and all the advice that providence can bring does not release us from clinging to God for mercy. He knows God is sovereign and he asks and trusts that God will limit his exposure to danger. We are not defenseless, we can wear the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). We can pray as Jesus taught us, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil".

Why does the Bible call David "a man after God's own heart"? He prepared his heart to pray to God, he felt the power of conviction and he turned at the sound of correction. To be godly means we keep a short account with sin and we keep drawing near to God instead of drawing away into sin or drawing away into self. He wanted to walk in grace and cling to mercy.

You need a breakthrough, but you need more than that, you need to follow through. A breakthrough is absolutely wonderful, but follow through is absolutely necessary. Proverbs 21:31 – *The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD.* If we will prepare, God will give us safety. If we will be consecrated in prayer, if we will be careful in practice, if we will be considerate of God's people, if we will cling to God's promises, we will find ourselves protected against wickedness, and a witness to the works of God through our lives. In these ways, I'm counting on God to protect me from me, and you should, too.