

## Trusting in All of Life's Troubles

Psalm 25

Studies in the Psalms #26

© 2016 Daniel R. Hyde

**E**VERY time we go to grammy's house she has a huge puzzle out on the table. While everyone else thinks it's too hard I always dive right in.

Psalm 25 is like a difficult puzzle. When we read it, were you thinking, "That seemed like a bunch of random pieces put together?" Don't worry; you're in good company with a lot of Old Testament scholars.

Here's where to start. I've been trying to show you that the Psalms are not just cut and pasted together but have an intentional order. We just were in Psalm 24. What was the big idea? "Who shall ascend...who shall stand?" (24:3) We saw the holiness of God and our unworthiness because to ascend and to stand it is necessary to be perfect (24:4). But then the Lord himself stepped forward and said I will ascend! And it's as we identify with Jesus Christ and are found in him that we can go on to read Psalm 25. Look at how it begins: **To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul** (v. 1). Go back to 24:4. Who is the one who can ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in his presence? The one "who does not lift up his soul to what is false," literally, to an idol. Only Jesus has loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. And I

identify with him. Now I like David can pray **To you, O LORD**—not to the idols I once served and am still tempted to serve—I **lift up my soul**. And then notice verse 12: **Who is the man who fears the Lord?** Sound familiar? “Who is this king of glory?” (24:8, 10) Again, because I am represented by the only one who ascended the heavenly hill of the Lord I am one who fears the Lord.<sup>1</sup> That’s so amazing, isn’t it? When Jesus ascended, I ascended; because he’s at the right hand of God, I already am too! So this Psalm will mean nothing to you unless you come to Christ right now!

What’s it all about? Well, it’s structured as what we call an acrostic poem, with each line beginning with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. And as it progresses through the alphabet it has a series of urgent prayers by a believer that express the truth of *Trusting in All of Life’s Troubles*. Let’s use our own acrostic with the first three letters.

### **Acknowledge Your Troubles (vv. 1–3, 19–22)**

After Psalm 24 lifted us up with Jesus Christ, Psalm 25 brings us back to *terra firma* where we all live on a day-to-day basis. It helps us answer this question: “If I have every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, why is life so full of trouble?” Children this is one of the biggest challenges you’re

---

<sup>1</sup> On this connection between Psalms 24 and 25, see Andrew A. Bonar, *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1859), 87–88.

going to face in the world. When you stand up and say you're a Christian people aren't going to argue with you about all reason why Christianity is false. What' they're going to do is attack you practically. When you're getting picked on they're going to say, "Where is your God now?" When a close family member or friend dies they're going to say, "Why didn't God heal them?" Life is full of troubles. And Psalm 25 says to us from the outset *acknowledge your troubles.*

In verses 2–3 we cry out, "God, I trust you so don't let me be ashamed in front of my enemies, instead let my enemies be ashamed for rejecting you." And then at the end in verses 19–22 he reiterates this: "God, I have so many enemies. They hate me. Don't let them shame me but you guard me because I'm waiting for you." Notice how at the beginning and end he declares his trust in the Lord (v. 1) and then prays for the Lord to **redeem all Israel...out of all his troubles** (v. 22). He's dealing with redemption in a broad sense of sanctification. Here's one of the keys to living a godly life: do you realize that as you wake up every single day of your life and go out into the world that you are fighting a spiritual battle against enemy after enemy? There are no vacations, no holidays, and no timeouts. Acknowledge your troubles to God, brothers and sisters. Acknowledge them to each other.

## **Be Open to Instruction (vv. 4–5, 8–10, 12–15)**

How does God deliver us day-to-day in the process of sanctification?

Verses 4–18 alternate between prayers for instruction and prayers for forgiveness. Let's first look at these prayers for instruction in which we learn *be open to instruction*. Look at all the ways the Lord's instruction is described: **your ways...your paths...your truth...the way...his way...the paths of the LORD...his covenant...his testimonies** (vv. 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14).

What's the connection between all my troubles and the instruction of the Lord? We have so many troubles, don't we? We're in the world and so we have troubles with other human beings at work and this causes things like anxiety and anger, depression and doubt. We have to fight our own sin natures every single day. And our sin is so selfish and always coming up with new ways to try and get its way. Satan uses this all to try and sap our spiritual strength and have us give up in the fight of faith. We need the Lord's instruction to help us know how to engage in all this fighting. It's like going onto a baseball team. You don't just show up day one and start the season. You first practice under a coach's instruction, and then you play; and after that, you're still learning throughout the process.

But don't we think of learning like we think of tests? It's such a drudgery! Or, I'm afraid I'll fail! Look at something special in verse 8: **Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.** What do you notice there about this work of instruction and sanctification? It's a gracious work! The Lord is good and upright and *therefore* because he is good and upright he instructs us. How do you think of your sanctification? Do you think of it as the opposite of justification? Justification is God's work and sanctification is your work? According to verse 8 and I would argue the rest of Scripture sanctification is a gracious work of God himself in us. Our own Heidelberg Catechism tells us we are to do good works "because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by his Holy Spirit after His own image" (Q&A 86). Who redeems us? Christ. How? By his blood. Who renews us? Christ. How? By his Spirit. And the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms teach that "sanctification is the/a work of God's grace" (Q&A 35, 75). And verse 10 expresses this when it says **all the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.** When you're on a nature hike with your kids and it's hot, there are lots of rocks in the path, the hills are going up and down, this way and that, do you stand back at the end and complain? No,

you say, “That was fun.” You enjoy the time as a family in God’s creation. The Lord’s paths are gracious for the believer.

Then this section of prayers for instruction ends with verse 15: **my eyes are ever toward the LORD** (this prayer matches verse 1: **To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul**) **for he will pluck my feet out of the net**. Isn’t that a beautiful promise? Lord, **let me not be put to shame, let not my enemies exult over me** (v. 2) and as verse 19 says, **Consider how many are my foes and with what violent hate hatred they hate me**. But I trust you because you **will pluck my feet out of the net** of all my troubles. That’s a promise, brothers and sisters, whether in this life or in the next; you will be delivered.

### **Confess Your Sins (vv. 6–7, 11, 16–18)**

And as David alternates between prayers for instruction and prayers for forgiveness, look at these prayers for forgiveness in which we learn to *confess your sins*. But here’s the problem like with the prayers for instruction: what’s the connection between all my troubles in life and my sins? I mean, we’re talking about enemies, their hatred, and my need to be taught so I can deal with them all. But then there are prayers confessing my personal sins. Don’t you find it that in whatever trouble you find yourself in that it can so easy descend into your sinning? You’re having trouble with an

unbeliever constantly questioning your abilities as a parent and you're filled with anger. You're having trouble with a neighbor who sees you walking in and out Sundays with a Bible and you try to cover it up in shame. You're around other kids and their doing or saying things and you go along because it's easy than walking away. Can you relate?

So David confesses his sins; we are encouraged to confess ours: **remember your mercy** (literally, **mercies** as this word is always in the plural), **O LORD, and your steadfast love**, (literally, **loves**, which is meant to amplify and magnify it) **for they have been from of old** (v. 6). God has always been a God of grace because that's who he is and that's who he always will be. We were just talking in our men's theology discussion Wednesday night about repentance and who the Westminster Confession of Faith says that when we confess we don't just generically confess "sins," but we confess "particular sins, particularly" (WCF 15.5). And when we confess our particularly sins, particularly now, that leads to confessing everything as in verse 7: **Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me.**

Why does God forgive? Look at the end of verse 7 again: **for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! For the sake of your goodness.** What a

thought! Why does God forgive? ***For the sake of his own goodness,*** meaning, to magnify his goodness and grace. One of my favorite verses as a pastor is 1 Timothy 1:16 where Paul says he received mercy so that “Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him.” If God can be patient and gracious to me, brothers and sisters, surely he can be to you! And Paul told the Ephesians that it was by grace that they were saved and seated with Christ—why?—“so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). ***For the sake of your goodness!***

Why does God forgive? Look at verse 11: ***For your name’s sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great. For your name’s sake!*** Wow! God forgives to glorify himself. God forgives so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:9).

Life is full of troubles, isn’t it? And as those ascend already with Christ as Psalm 24 taught us, we though, are not exempt from these troubles. But for us they are not insurmountable because we are united to Jesus Christ who encourages us to honestly acknowledge them to him because he cares for us, to ask him for instruction to engage the troubles, and to confess our sins we have committed, are committing, and will commit because of the troubles. In this way we can *trust in all of life’s troubles*. Amen.