

For His Goodness

Psalm 25

This psalm was written in distress later in David's life. It consists of meditations and prayers, showing us how to think and call upon the Lord in times of trouble. Although sorrow and fear are temptations to sin, they need not be occasions for it. Spurgeon said, "It is the mark of a true saint that his sorrows remind him of his sins, and his sorrow for sin drives him to his God." David asks for deliverance for the best reason possible, for His goodness' sake.

Summary of the Text

This is the second of seven penitential psalms and the first set as an acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet. It alternates prayer (vv. 1-7), meditation (vv. 8-10), prayer (v. 11), meditation (vv. 12-15), and finishes in prayer (vv. 16-22). David lifts his downcast soul up to the Lord, not wanting himself or anyone trusting God to be ashamed (vv. 2-3). He pleads for Yahweh to show him His ways, teach him His paths, and lead him in truth as he waits upon the God of his salvation all day (vv. 4-5). He wants the Lord to remember His ancient mercies, to forget the sins of his youth, and to remember him for His goodness' sake (vv. 6-7). The Lord is good, so He will teach sinners and guide the humble (vv. 8-9). Those who keep covenant walk in His mercy and truth, so David seeks forgiveness for great iniquity (vv. 10-11). God instructs the one who fears Him (v. 12). That man dwells in prosperity and his descendant inherit the earth (v. 13). Those who fear God know His secret; He reveals His covenant to them (v. 14). He will pluck David from the net (v. 15). David pleads for relief from loneliness, affliction, and the troubles growing in his heart (v. 16-17). Would that the Lord would look on his pain, forgive his sins, and consider his numerous enemies and their cruel hatred (vv. 18-19). He wants to be kept by God, unashamed, steadfastly trusting with his integrity and uprightness intact as he waits (vv. 20-21). He concludes asking for redemption for all Israel from their troubles (v. 22).

Ancient Lovingkindness

David has built his life on the Lord's mercy and lovingkindness, so he can pray for God to defeat his enemies who are also God's enemies (vv. 2-3). So should we. When they come for him, he looks instinctively to the one who can deliver him. He needs the Lord to show, teach, and lead, and he so he waits all the day on Him (vv. 4-5). David is not passive or unthinking. We know he was a decisive leader of matchless ability. When he saw Goliath taunting the Israelites and blaspheming, he told Saul that he had killed lions and bears that had threatened his flock and intended to do the same thing to this uncircumcised Philistine (1 Sam. 17:36). Then he did it. But there's no clear path out of the issues facing him now. Rather than indulging self-pity and laziness, or careening into rashness, anger, ungodly violence or a thousand other easy-rationalized options, he thinks about who God is and faithfully argues with Him: "*Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses, for they are from of old*" (v. 6). The word "lovingkindnesses" comes from *chesed*, a word used for God's covenant love, His promises to be faith to show mercy. David says these are "of old", which is "from forever." It's one thing to remember that God loves you, but another to remember that He has loved you from eternity: "*just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*" (Eph. 1:4). This is a permanent, foundational love. If the whole house gets scraped, the foundation remains unmoved. He isn't blaming God or arguing against Him, but arguing with Him, calling on Him to act according to who He is. Thinking the worst will happen, that God won't provide, that He is most likely isn't going to help you is to argue against who He is rather with who He is (cf. Dan. 3:18).

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The Secret of the Lord

The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and the thing they learn is His covenant (v. 14). This is not secret, esoteric, PhD knowledge for varsity Christians. The covenant is not about credentials and accomplishments as conceived by self-respected men. There are certain secret things that we have no access to, but others are given in abundance to those who fear God: *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law”* (Deut. 29:29). We don’t know the decretal will of God—the things He plans to come to pass—until they happen. We don’t know what will happen tomorrow and can’t make one hair white or black. In regard to our ideas, businesses, plans, hopes and dreams, we should say *“If the Lord wills...”* (cf. Jms. 4:15). But so far as He tells us what to do, how to live, how to think, what to believe, the way to obey Him and teach our children to do the same, these things are revealed in His word so that we would keep all the words of His law. This is what fearing God means—wanting to please and honor Him. Confessing sin and trusting Him. The results are dwelling in His goodness and prosperity, and our descendants inheriting the earth (v. 13). Covenant life with God receives all of His blessings in personal, family, business, and public life as given through His grace and mercy alone. How many times in this psalm does David acknowledge his sinfulness (vv. 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 22)? This is how he is able to stand faithfully, radiant and unashamed. Those who ask, receive, and the humble are lifted up.

For His Goodness’ Sake

God’s mercy is like an ocean with no bottom and no shores. You can throw the biggest volcano into it and every flame goes out. This is what it means to say that Jesus died for the sins of the world. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (Is. 53:4). It is true that we still have sorrow and pain as a result of our sin, our unbelief, our refusal to love God and our neighbor. But if we are in Christ, none of these consequences are for punishment or atonement. Justice has already been met on Christ. The consequences are good for us and teach us to hate sin and turn from it, which is what David is doing. Pride leads to a fall, but you have to turn away not just from the pain that occurred when you hit the ground, but from the thing that caused the fall, that displeased God in the first place—the pride. David asks God to forgive Him, to have mercy, to free him from the fears growing in his heart, *“for Your goodness’ sake”* (v. 7). God is the ultimate good. He is goodness itself and there is none apart from Him. This is why we can be forgiven and redeemed out of all our troubles, us and all Israel.