

"Mine Eyes Are Ever Toward the LORD"

Psalm 25

This is the first of several psalms (some say seven and others say nine) that are known as "acrostic" psalms. These psalms are written in an alphabetical order in which the first word of every verse in Hebrew begins with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order, although that is not strictly and regularly observed. It is not abundantly clear in every case of these acrostic psalms as to the purpose of the design and even the Jews are willing to admit they don't really know on all of them.

This psalm is titled, "A Psalm of David" as are the majority of the psalms that make up what is termed, "The First Book of Psalms" which includes the first thirty-nine psalms. There is no occasion given so we are left to speculate as to what that might be. The content indicates David was under duress from some enemy or enemies but that's basically all we can determine.

In this acrostic, the divisions don't follow a strict pattern, which is evident in this case. This particular psalm might have been composed to aid in memorization, leading to its scattered divisions. Instead of examining this psalm in our usual verse-by-verse method, we will approach it by focusing on different subjects.

I. IN PRAYER - VS. 1-6

A. Prayer involves our entire being - our all - our soul - vs. 1

In verse one, we don't find David just lifting his hands or his head to the LORD, but his whole

being, his whole soul – everything that made him who he was.

If we truly want to talk to the LORD as we should, we are going to have to put more than just a passing notion into the practice of prayer. When we come before the LORD, we need to give our whole soul to the endeavor.

1 Samuel 1:15

¹⁵ And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

B. Prayer takes our trust – vs. 2-3

These verses point to another aspect of personal prayer in times of trouble: knowing we can trust the One to whom we are praying.

If we can't trust Him, there is no point in praying. We must "put" (vs. 20) our trust in Him, turning it over to Him, acknowledging He's willing and capable to answer our prayers.

Relying on the LORD's guidance during challenging times and praying with faith can prevent us from feeling ashamed or distanced from Him, ensuring we don't act in a way that brings Him dishonor. This trust in the LORD safeguarded David from actions that could have given his enemies a reason to celebrate, as they would have had something to hold against him.

The second stanza of verse three presents a contrast to the first. Just as those who wait—those who endure patiently and confidently, trusting the LORD's help—will not be ashamed of Him and are unlikely to bring Him shame, those who disregard

the LORD and violate God's laws without restraint will face shame, reproach, and destruction.

C. Prayer provides guidance and wisdom - vs. 4-5

As we learn to pray with our whole being, and as we learn to trust in the LORD, waiting patiently as He works in our lives, we will be confident to ask for the guidance and wisdom we will need to navigate our life as we follow Him

1. Vs. 4 - "Shew" and "teach" are synonymous terms in many ways. As the LORD shows us His ways, He's teaching us how to follow Him. We cannot learn what we need to learn about Him nor from Him if we're not following Him. The choice is ours but our prayers will be more fruitful if we're following Him.
2. Vs. 5 - This verse is a continuation of the previous one and points to the wisdom that comes from following the truth of the Word of God. Our prayer should be that the LORD "leads" us in His truth - that He walks with us through life pointing out the truth that we need and helping us apply that truth to our lives.

John 16:13

¹³ Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

D. In prayer, we are reminded of the tender mercies and the lovingkindness of our Savior and Lord - vs. 6.

The first word - "remember" - isn't meant to give us the impression that the LORD would ever forget or

could ever forget His mercy and love toward His children.

This portion of the prayer of David is pointing to the inability of the LORD to change: His immutability. By asking God to remember His mercies, David is seeking reassurance and expressing his reliance on God's consistent and unfailing compassion.

II. IN PRAISE - vs. 8-10

A. Praise for His goodness (in His nature) and His uprightness (His righteous conduct in His actions) - vs. 8.

Because He is good and He is righteous, He can and will teach "sinners in the way" - the way their sin is taking them and the way to come to Him in repentance and faith.

This isn't just speaking of lost sinners, but speaks of the child of God as well, a clear view that David had in mind in this psalm. He will teach us how to recover from sin and how to get victory over sin.

B. Praise for His guidance and wisdom - vs. 9.

As prayer provides guidance and wisdom (vs. 4-5), we are to praise the LORD for the same.

The "meek" in this verse seems to point back to the "sinners" of the previous one. If the "sinners" learn what they should from the LORD, the outcome will be one of "meekness," of a humble and teachable spirit.

C. Praise for His mercy and truth - vs. 10

"All the paths" - goes back to verses four and five

and points to the mercy and truth that help guide us to “keep his covenant [keep the covenants that we’ve made with Him to follow His words] and his testimonies.”

III. FOR PARDON – VS. 7, 11, 16-18

A. Pardon for past sins and current transgression – vs. 7

1. This verse begins like the previous one – “remember,” only with this one it isn’t the psalmist pointing to the same attribute of the immutability of the LORD but rather His mercy.
2. David is asking God to not “remember,” to forget and not hold against Him, the sins he committed as a young man. They are not given here but it’s clear that there was something specific on his mind in this plea for mercy. The word for “sins” (חַטָּאת) is one that means to miss the mark or lose the way, and it denotes primarily failures, errors, lapses, of frailty and is applied to the thoughtless offenses of youth.
3. The word for “transgression” (פְּשָׁע) literally means rebellions and denotes the deliberate offences of a more mature adult.
4. In contrast to his request for those sins to be not only forgiven but forgotten, David asks the LORD to remember him “according to thy mercy” and for “thy goodness’ sake.” David knew there was no good in him, but he knew there was great goodness and mercy (lovingkindness) in his LORD. It is for this that he pleads.

B. Pardon for iniquity - vs. 11

1. The word "iniquity" (עָוֹן) in this verse is one of several words for sin in the Old Testament, each having different meanings and/or applications. This word is a strong word for sin, perhaps the strongest in tone. It conveys the idea of twisting or perverting (it's literal meaning) deliberately and indicates sin that is particularly evil.
2. Something similar is found in this verse as is found at the end of verse seven: a plea for the goodness of the LORD as grounds for forgiveness - "For thy name's sake, O LORD."
3. In each of these texts on forgiveness (or pardon), we see David recognizing his sin and how great that sin is. It doesn't matter what the degree of that greatness is - all sin, any sin, no matter how small it may seem, is a great sin when it comes to our need of redemption.

C. Pardon for lack of faith in times of trouble - vs. 16-18

1. Verses sixteen and seventeen find David once again falling on the mercy of God as he confesses his weakness of mind and his apparent lack of faith in the LORD.
2. The terms "desolate," "afflicted," "troubles," "distresses," and "affliction" point to the heavy heart David had for the pain his sins had caused, both to himself, to the LORD, and to others.

3. He uses the terms "turn thee," "have mercy," "bring me out," "look upon," and "forgive" in relation to that pain he was feeling that was caused by the sins he had committed. Whether or not he had asked forgiveness for those sins before this or not is unknown. What is known is that he is pleading for it now and he has every confidence that he would be forgiven because his trust was in the LORD and in His mercy.
4. The word for "forgive" (סָפַח) is a common word in the Old Testament used almost six hundred times. It's the term that points to the substitutionary atonement of Christ. The word literally means "to lift, to carry, to take away," and that is what Christ did for us. He bore, carried, our sins to the cross and took them upon Himself - that's what forgiveness means, that's what David was pleading for. "Forgive all my sins," and although he didn't say it, we know that would include all sins - past, present, and future.

IV. FOR PROTECTION - vs. 12-15, 19-22

A. Protection made available because of a proper understanding of who the LORD is - vs. 12-15

1. Fearing the LORD is indicative of someone who understands that the LORD is God and that He is in control of all things. With that in mind, if we fear Him like we should, we will be in a place where He can "teach" us "in the way that He shall choose" (vs. 12).
2. If we let the LORD lead us, our "soul shall dwell at ease" (vs. 13) - we won't be as troubled by

the cares and concerns of this life as we might be without having a proper understanding of who He is. The word for "ease" (טָבָה) is a common word - used 566 times - and translated most often by the word "good" or "better" in various forms (467 times). In its use here, it carries the idea of happiness and well-being.

3. The second line of verse thirteen adds a truth to the first. Not only will the one that fears the LORD dwell at ease, but their descendants will also "inherit the earth." David is most likely speaking of himself and his descendants here, as well as the whole house of Israel (vs. 22), and is speaking literally - that they would inherit the earth according to the covenants God made with Israel.

For us today, the application is found in The Beatitudes of Matthew 5: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (vs. 5). The word for "meek" in the Greek means humble or mild and the etymology of the word in English helps us understand its use.

We have a compound word in English, which once fully expressed the meaning of the original, viz. gentleman; but it has now almost wholly lost its original signification. Our word meek comes from the old Anglo-saxon meca, or meccea, a companion or equal, because he who is of a meek or gentle spirit, is ever ready to associate with the meanest of those who fear God, feeling himself superior to none; and well knowing that he has nothing of spiritual or temporal good but what he has

received from the mere bounty of God, having never deserved any favor from his hand. (Adam Clarke)

4. Another benefit of the protection that the child of God has, the one that fears the LORD, is that of His close, intimate relationship with us ("secret") - "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him" (vs. 14).

There is a progression in this word "secret" (τῖο) that is of note.

It properly means a couch or cushion; and then, a divan or circle of friends sitting together; then, deliberation or consultation; then, familiar contact, intimacy; and then, a "secret," - as if it were the result of a private consultation among friends, or something which pertained to them, and which they did not wish to have known... The sense is, that those who fear the Lord are admitted to the intimacy of friendship with Him; are permitted to come into His presence, and to partake of His counsels; are allowed free access to Him; or, as it is more commonly expressed, have "fellowship" with Him. (Barnes)

5. Because David feared Him, and because his eyes were always on Him, and His will, he knew that even if he was taken in "a net," if he succumbed to some temptation or an enemy's attack, the LORD would deliver him - he was protected.

The same is true for us today.

B. Protection made available because of a proper understanding who we are supposed to be - vs. 19-22

These verses go back to the beginning and refocus on the prayer from the first few lines of the psalm, but here the emphasis is more on the desired answer than the prayer itself. This is seen in several key words:

1. "Consider" - vs. 19 - David is focused on the immediate issue at hand: his enemies and their attacks. His intent here is deliverance.
2. "Keep" and "deliver" - vs. 20 - this goes back to verse two and restates it with the answer in view.
3. "Preserve" - vs. 21 - David pleads with the LORD to preserve him, to keep him, to protect him through his own integrity and uprightness. This goes to the plea for pardon and forgiveness earlier in the psalm.
4. "Redeem" - vs. 22 - David's ultimate goal in his life as king of Israel was for the people that the LORD had him lead, as a shepherd would sheep. He cared more for others than himself.

Conclusion: Prayer, praise, pardon, and protection.

If our "eyes are ever toward the LORD," we will have a better understanding of prayer, of praise, of pardon, and of protection. If we get our eyes off the LORD, those critical areas of our life will be in danger. The only way to wait on the LORD is to keep our eyes fixed on Him.