

Prayer and Praise

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Elaine, for reading today's passage. Good morning. My name is Benjamin, and I'm one of the elders here in BEMKAC. And it's my privilege to try to unpack this portion of scripture today.

Now we have been in between series, and we are going through another psalm. So as we begin, let me tell you a story of mine when I was younger.

So when I was younger, maybe in primary school, there were times where I didn't want to go to school. It could be a test of some sort that I had to do, but I just didn't want to do it.

I wanted something to happen to school so that it would be cancelled, so that I did what I thought a good Christian boy would do. I prayed. I prayed, dear God, let it rain, let it flood, so that there will be no more school tomorrow.

Of course, it never happened the way I wanted it to. Much to my disappointment, but even then, I knew that I was praying for things that were self-centred, not in line with God.

[1 : 0 9] Something that I wanted, but not necessarily what God wanted. I approached prayer wrongly. As the passage was read in the sermon title alludes to, we will see how King David approaches one of his prayers, and see how and why praise erupts from it.

While we are seeing how David prays to God, perhaps we will glean some biblical truths to prayer, a reminder of our life, and how this passage points us to Christ.

Now let me just give us a short prayer to start us off. Father in heaven, I pray that as I preach this morning, that I pray that what I preach is true, is from you, glorifies you, and edifies your church.

And in your name I pray. Amen. Now David opens this psalm with these two verses. Verse 1, Now from how David opens, we know straight away it's a psalm about prayer.

He's praying. He's calling out to God. He's crying out to God. In these two verses, we can learn two things here, church. Firstly, we know partly the reason why he's crying out.

[2 : 3 7] He's in some sort of trouble. In his cries, he petitions poetically two things, which may sound the same, or at least in our brains we just say to be the same, but they contain different meanings.

The words are being deaf and silent. We may take it to be the same, but here he specifically phrases it as such. Deafness is not hearing.

And being silent is not responding. Deafness is, does David truly think that God does not hear him, that God is deaf to him?

Now we will see more on this later, but now he opens with this petition to God to hear him and help him. Now at this point, I would like to point out that there is an element of Hebrew poetry that is going on in the Psalms.

Just as how we sing songs that are melodically, that melodically rhyme, there are words that David used that do the same thing. Okay? We do miss out on some creative aspects of the Psalms, but its content and its meaning remains true.

[3 : 43] I just thought that you should know that as we are going through this Psalm especially. So he asks God not to turn a deaf ear or remain silent to him because he's in trouble. And it's not the, oops, I forgot to take out the trash type trouble, but the trouble with the risk of death.

Now in verse 1 again, it says, I will be like those going into the pit. Now the pit here literally means a hole in the ground. Basically, he's describing a grave that a dead person would be buried in.

Now this is more significant to David in his time than us today because this death is a death with disgrace or shame. Now you see, the common practice of the ancient Israelites or upper class royalty was to bury their dead in tomb-like structures with multiple shelves where you place the dead, like a catacomb.

I think you can imagine or remember like the tomb that Jesus is depicted to be portrayed, depicted to be buried in. It's a tomb and not like the ground or the grave that we bury our dead today.

There are phrases in scripture that dying individuals are asked to be buried with their fathers in a family tomb, in a generational tomb. So being tossed in a pit shows not only death but disgrace after death.

[5 : 07] So this is his worry. Now he feels despair and the dread of death and shame is near. He is troubled and he cries out. But his troubles aren't the only thing that we can observe from David.

We also can see something else in his cries. So the second thing we can learn is David's posture as he cries out. His posture towards God and trouble.

Yes, he's in trouble but what does he do? He trusts God. He trusts God. You are my rock, David says.

A word synonymously used for a foundation, for stability, for security. It's a phrase that's reserved for only the divine and nothing else.

He invokes the Lord and identifies him as his rock. His immovable stronghold that will support him when he faces the danger around him. He trusts God as his rock.

[6 : 08] Now going further, we observed the very verse earlier that shows us David's troubles and dread. It not only shows the trouble he faces but it also shows his trust.

Remember this isn't the shepherd boy, David, but the king of Israel, David. He has his generals, he has his army, his walls, his counsellors but he acknowledges that God has control over his situation.

Now if you stay silent, God, I am done for. God is his bastion of hope. And David knows and trusts God that God is fully capable of delivering him from danger.

He cries out to God, trusting in who God is. And again at the end of verse 2, as king, we can see David continues to lift his hands, crying out to the most holy place in the temple.

Not even David is permitted to enter. He is looking to where God's presence resides in Israel. He expresses faith in his lifting of hands to God.

[7 : 12] He humbles himself. He trusts in the God of his people and the God who has been with him since his youth. He expresses his faith in humility in his prayer.

So ultimately, the two verses about David crying out in faith, trusting in God amidst his trouble. He acknowledges who God is to him and we can see the posture that David takes as he prays.

David trusts God. I'm moving on to verse 3 to 5. It reads, in verse 3, So we've heard David's opening posture, and now we hear more about David's problem and situation.

The reasons for his lament in verses 3 to 5. His lament starts off with another plea and it brings us more context to his troubles. He is troubled and threatened by wicked people, by evil people.

Now it can be inferred that these wicked and evil people aren't the savage Gentiles that surround Israel or the enemies of Israel but actually Jews or Israelites themselves, his own people.

[8 : 46] We can see this from David's plea, not to be dragged away with the wicked. If God is going to unleash his punishment upon the wicked, it is very likely that the entire nation will experience judgment from God.

Now it can be seen for Deuteronomy 28, verse 15 onwards, the consequences of disobedience. I will read to you a few verses and you can read the rest for yourself later about the consequences of disobedience in Deuteronomy 28 but this is just to highlight David's thinking at the time.

Verse 15, it says, However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you.

You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading dough will be cursed. A kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed.

The crops of your land and the calves of your herds and the lamb of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. Now just these verses give an idea of what David is expecting the consequences to be.

[9 : 54] So what David is asking here in regard to this wicked man is in keeping with the curses that God had promised through Moses. Curses that Israel would experience if they were unfaithful to the covenant that God made with them.

It seems to be a national type punishment and we can see that play out throughout Israel's history and for example the exile to Babylon where the few who were faithful, who were righteous were caught up with the sinfulness of the many.

So he is right to be worried that he would be in a sense collateral damage to these people who are wicked and evil in the eyes of God. He does not want to be killed because of their wickedness but at the same time David understands and acknowledges that this punishment is a fair wage or consequence for these wicked people the workers of evil and therefore he pleads that he be exempted from such a fate.

Now David continues by expounding on who the wicked ones are. There are many people who are actively engaged in sin. They do evil and they are also known as workers of evil or workers of iniquity but one activity in particular is highlighted by David.

In verse 3 he specifies there are those who speak cordially with their neighbours but harbour malice in their hearts. They say one thing with their mouths but the heart does the opposite.

[11 : 27] Their mouths and hearts are unaligned or misaligned. Very likely these are people who are supposedly close to David saying one thing to him but conspiring behind his back maliciously.

Saying peace or shalom but inwardly planning evil schemes against God's anointed and his people. God sees the heart and David and God both recognise that this mouth that pays lip service and a heart that is full of malice is wicked and evil and deserving of punishment.

But it's not just the heart and mouth that manifest evil but as we also see in verses 4 and 5 is that there are deeds or the things they do with their hands that are also seen as wicked.

Now there's a form of repetition here and David emphasises and hammers down on this repetition. There are deeds there are evil work what their hands have done and what they deserve. all repetitions of what they do to indicate the seriousness of the actions of the wicked people.

They're actively doing evil deeds. Now going back to Deuteronomy 28 in verse 20 it reads Now the words the evil you have done in Deuteronomy 28 20 it's the same in Hebrew as in Psalm 24 28 verse 4 in verse 4.

[13 : 01] So again in poetic fashion David draws a comparison between himself and the wicked people. Remember before what David did with his hands. He was lifting up his hands to God in submission and now in comparison the wicked hands aren't used to be raised to the Lord but used to commit all sorts of evil.

David calls upon the Lord with his mouth and comes with a trusting heart whereas the wicked speaks one thing with their mouths and schemes in their heart. David here is in a way showcasing himself being separate from those who are wicked.

David draws this comparison and also at the same time he draws and connects the evil deeds of the wicked people here in Psalm 28 and the punishment God promised in Deuteronomy 28.

With the punishment promised by God he therefore pleads in repetition that God in verse 4 repay them for their deeds for their evil work repay them for their hands what their hands have done and bring back on them what they deserve.

Repay them repay them and bring back on them what they deserve. These workers of iniquity deserve their wages of sin. So in verses 3 and 4 David is essentially surrounded by these wicked people that he can't do anything about and fully knowing their wickedness would bring famine destruction suffering and death to Israel and his people but David places his hope in God his rock trusted that God will do what is just what is good and be merciful to those who trust in him.

[14 : 40] Again even in his lament towards those who are actively wicked and conspiring against him he is showing his trust in God when he is in trouble. David trusts in God.

At this point it may perhaps be a good time to reflect on ourselves for a moment how has this psalm related to you right now as we have gone through it.

Perhaps we understand David's position. Many times we have been in trouble surrounded by problems and in despair we cry out to God help me. That could be true. I remember in my university days where prayers increased the closer it gets to our exams the less I studied the more I prayed.

But perhaps we may be too easily see ourselves in David. David is usually the protagonist the good guy in scripture the hero in the biblical story and we may think that we are also David in our story.

But I just want to flip this narrative and cause us to self-reflect a bit because if not most times if not sometimes most times we are closer to the wicked people than we might think.

[15 : 54] So let me ask you this question are our mouths hearts hands aligned with God? Now ask again are our mouths hearts and hands aligned with God?

Again what will please God is the example set by David with his mouth crying out to God with his heart trusting him and his hands lifted up in prayer all aligned towards God. You might think or say Ben I'm not evil I don't plan to dethrone any kings recently I'm generally a nice person.

Now you might be but in verse 3 what God is displeased with is not the mere fact that there were people who were not nice who were hostile towards David but there were people who went against his anointed king.

They were not interested in what God was doing what God's plans and promises were for Israel. We can see this in verse 5 in fact it reads that they have no regards for the deeds of the Lord and what his hands have done.

So you can imagine these Israelites who knew of God and their history refusing to acknowledge what God has done but instead worked to satisfy their own desires their self desires and for themselves.

[17 : 11] This reminds me of what Jesus said in Matthew 23-24 as he rebukes the teachers of the law and Pharisees. In verse 23 Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees you hypocrites you are like whitewashed tombs which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of bones of the dead and everything unclean.

In the same way on the outside you appear to be people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. These Pharisees are hypocrites. They speak niceties through their religious phrases or religiosity but on the inside as the verse says they are full of bones of the dead and everything unclean of hypocrisy and wickedness.

These are people who pretended to love God people who said they love God but their hearts have no regard for what God has done. Sounds just like the people that David was surrounded with, right?

So I ask again this question Are our mouths, hearts and hands aligned with God? Have we behaved more like a Pharisee in our relationship with God?

Have we said things with our mouths as lip service but deep in our hearts we don't believe the things that we say or follow up with our hands? Do we sing my Jesus, my God, my Saviour on Sunday but our hearts are elsewhere and our hands are on our phones?

[18 : 35] Do we put on a facade on Sundays and show our real self on every other day? Do we care about the things and the deeds of God? Do we truly trust God?

Now this is important to think because there is a consequence. Just as we've gone through David's petition to God, the repayment for wickedness is evil. There is tearing down and receiving the punishment of what our hands have done.

If we continue to do what is wicked in the eyes of God. So again, are our mouths, hearts and hands align with God.

Even as we reflect on this and hopefully be challenged by this, I would like us to see how David continues in his psalm and see what else he petitions for. So in verses 6 to 9, it reads, Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy.

The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trusts in him and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy and with my song I praise him. The Lord is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.

[19 : 50] Save your people and bless your inheritance. Be their shepherd and carry them forever. Now the tone of the psalm has changed pretty drastically starting in verse 6.

So instead of lamenting in prayer, instead of worrying and wallowing in his troubles, David is now rejoicing. He is now praising God. And why is David praising God? Because in verse 6 it says, God heard his cry for mercy.

Now what is interesting here, I want to point out, and maybe something our minds may have closed over too quickly, is that what David says is he is rejoicing that God heard his cry for mercy and not necessarily God answered his cry for mercy.

It's not to say that God didn't answer David's prayer here, but he makes it clear that he praises God because his prayers were heard. We see this posture and expectation from other Psalms of David, mainly in here in Psalms 5 and Psalms 6, which I'll read to you.

In Psalms 5, verse 1 to 3, he says in verse 1, Listen to my words, Lord, consider my lament, hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray. In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice.

[21 : 01] In the morning, I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly. Psalms 6, 8 to 9, away from me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping, the Lord has heard my cry for mercy, the Lord accepts my prayer.

So the Lord hears David's prayer and his cries for mercy, and David is assured of that. He knows and trusts that the Lord is good, and his prayers are not actually falling on deaf ears.

God is hearing, God is listening to his prayer, prayer. And that is enough for David because David trusts in God and not the outcome he prays for.

I'll say it again, David trusts in God, not because of the outcome he prays for. He does not pray. I praise you because you have answered my prayers.

Whatever the outcome, I will rejoice and be glad that he hears me. And here perhaps this is something that we have a tendency to do as well. Perhaps this is David's reminder to us on how we approach prayer.

[22 : 10] We focus so much on the outcome of our prayer that it makes prayer a bit transactional. My trust depends on whether God answers my prayers or not. Just like how I prayed when I was younger for my school to flood, I was looking and hoping for the outcome to happen and I was disappointed that my prayers weren't answered the way I wanted it too.

Now one of the problems with solely focusing on the outcome of prayer is sometimes we can't see or we can't experience the positive outcome. When God answers our prayers with a yes, it's easy to see, it's easy to rejoice.

But if his answer is no or not yet, we can easily become discouraged or disillusioned or disheartened thinking that God is not hearing me or he is not listening to my problems. Not really realizing perhaps we are praying for things that are ultimately bad for us or that is self-serving rather than being God aligned or perhaps it's just not the right time.

Just like how I prayed, my prayer for a flood was self-centered and nothing to do with God and therefore should I be surprised that my prayers weren't answered. We therefore ought not to let our trust be anchored or dependent on the outcome rather like David trust in the character of God.

God. So if you've been praying about something for someone, for some situation and you feel disheartened and you're wondering if God is there and he's listening, this is a reminder from the example of David that when we come to God in prayer, we have 100% assurance that God hears you.

[23 : 44] God hears us as we pray. Just like David, we ought to trust in the character of God, a God who loves us, a God who wants the best for us. we should therefore trust in God's good and holy character.

Now with this trust, David then expresses his confidence in the Lord in verse 7. The Lord is my strength in verse 7 and my shield. My heart trusts in him and he helps me.

My heart leaps for joy and with my song I praise him. David expresses his trust in the Lord, a trust that comes from deep within his heart. The words strength and shield shows David is consistent with his reliance and trust in God.

God is his rock and now his strength and shield. For the showing us his dependence and hope that he has in God. Again, the alignment of David's mouth, hearts and hands, or in this case his action, is clear for us to see.

His heart trusts and leaps for joy as he praises God. He trusts in God and he knows he will be protected. He trusts that he is heard and he trusts that he is being helped.

[24 : 56] In verses 8 and 9, David continues not only expressing and declaring confidence in God, but expresses it in a corporate sense or a national sense.

It is not just my strength and my shield, but it says in verse 8, the Lord is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one. save your people and bless your inheritance.

Be their shepherd and carry them forever. God is not only David's strength, but the strength of his people, the faithful Israelites. They are still God's covenantal people and his inheritance.

They are unlike the wicked ones, the first half of the passage, but true believers who are humble, faithful, and love the Lord. Again, he repeats God's blessing on himself, where he says a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.

In this verse, David refers to himself. He is the king and anointed one of God, and he declares that in God, he is saved.

[26 : 01] In verse 9, he concludes his psalm with a petition that God saves his people, blesses them, and be their shepherd forever. He prays for something that he believes his people need and long for.

Here, David says the same thing in a different way. Save your people, bless your inheritance. Salvation is a blessing that David pleads for, and his people are also God's inheritance. And being the shepherd, a term we hear quite often, shows that he wants God to continue to care, guide Israel, just as a shepherd cares and guides his flock.

Now, coming to the end of this passage, we can actually start to see that the prayer that David prays in this petition, that he prays to God to save his people, to save his inheritance, was actually fulfilled in full in Jesus Christ and what flows from Jesus Christ.

In verse 8, where at that time David was the anointed one, we know that the true anointed king that came after is Jesus. And just as God was the fortress of salvation for David, God raised Christ from the dead and brought us salvation.

salvation. He brought salvation to not only his people, the Israelites, but now to all peoples of the world. If he could raise Jesus from the dead, what more of us? If you believe and place our trust in Christ, we are now the new Israel and we have received this blessing and therefore we are also part of his holy inheritance.

[27 : 32] And that David prays for God to be their shepherd and Jesus who calls himself the good shepherd, in John 10, 9 to 10 reads, in verse 9, I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved.

They will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, have it to the full. Jesus is our good shepherd.

He will lead us to pastures and he will ultimately lay down his life for the sheep. In him we have life and have life to the full. Now David prayed this prayer trusting in God.

He hoped that God would save his people and guide his people. Now there is over a thousand years between when King David prayed this prayer and the first coming of Jesus.

So after a thousand years Jesus comes and fulfills this prayer. Remember before when I talked about how sometimes it's difficult when it comes to prayer because sometimes we don't see the outcome of our prayers or God answering our prayers right away.

[28 : 38] David never saw in full what God's plan was for his people. He didn't know who Jesus was but he trusted that God would do so. He trusted that God would be true to his covenantal promise and save his people.

It took a thousand years for his prayer to be fulfilled and this remains true for another two thousand years after that till this day. David ultimately trusted in God in his prayer.

he trusted in God in his troubles and he trusted in God in hearing and fulfilling his prayer. And this prayer again was fulfilled in Jesus.

Not only do we see similarities between David and Jesus in the end but earlier in David's prayer we see more of it. Just like David or even better than David Jesus' mouth, heart and hands were always perfectly aligned with the Father.

just like David who was surrounded by wicked men who said one thing with their mouths but their hands and their hearts were unaligned and so was Jesus surrounded by such people.

[29 : 46] So David was surrounded by wicked men, Jesus was surrounded by wicked men as well. Remember Matthew 23 verse, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees that were like whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside but rotten and wicked on the inside.

When Jesus called them out for their hypocrisy, remember what they did? They plotted to kill Jesus. They schemed against him, claiming that they were obedient to God the Father but schemed to kill Jesus the Son.

He was schemed against just like David. Just like David's circumstance, Jesus faced the threat of death. He knew death was coming but unlike David's prayer or expectation that God would pay these hypocrites and these wicked people their wages of death and punishment and also redeem the faithful to God, Jesus dies instead.

Jesus was not rescued from the plots and schemes like David was but he did so willingly and purposefully. He received the wages that his enemies worked for.

or deserved. He dies for their sins. He dies for our sins. Maybe you have not heard about this gospel before but this is good news for us and everyone who recognizes how misaligned our hearts and actions can be.

[31 : 11] Now if before during our time of self-reflection he perhaps came to the realization that we have been maybe hypocritical, we have been wicked, we have sinned, this is good news for us.

Remember the seriousness of the consequence of the wicked heart is death? Remember when I said that the wages of sin is real? While the correct payment for our wickedness and hypocrisy is death, Jesus does not pay us what we are owed.

We are not paid what we deserve. While the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life in our Lord Jesus Christ if we come to trust him, if we come to believe in him, if we place our hope in him.

Because of what Jesus did on the cross, he took our wages of sin on himself. Because of that we have the opportunity to come before the throne of grace with the same attitude of David, to call out to God in mercy, recognizing that we have gone our own way and misaligned ourselves with God.

And in humbleness, we come to continue to place our trust in our God that is holy, our God that is just, our God that is good. Just like the King David of old, won't you place your trust in God today?

[32 : 37] Now let me pray as we close. Our Father, even as we've seen how David prays in the psalm, we want to emulate David in his posture of trust. To be able to trust you in times of trouble, to trust in your good and holy character and trust that you hear our prayers.

To be able to see your faithfulness towards your servants of all played out throughout scripture, it gives us assurance in your promises. To know through your Son, Jesus, that we have a fortress of salvation.

We have become your people, becoming an inheritance and having a good shepherd that will guide and care for us until the end of time. Lord, help us come to you, to rely on you, trust you, and to realize how much we need you in our lives.

We praise you, Lord, what you've done for us. In Jesus' most precious name we pray.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.