

Calling on the Lord

Psalm 5

Introduction

William Tyndale was a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation

He was a scholar who knew the biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew - - and wanted English speaking people to have the Bible in their own language

He proceeded to translate the NT into English - - - but his work was seen as a threat to the RCC - - and they eventually arrested him and executed him in 1536 before he could finish the OT

His last words before he died – became one of the most famous prayers to come out of the Protestant Reformation

William Tyndale: 'Lord, open the king of England's eyes.'

Not long after his death - - - Henry VIII – did come around to support the Protestant Reformation and the work of translating the bible into English - - - that in turn, fueled the Reformation in England and produced the Puritans – a group of Christians fiercely committed to following the Scriptures in their faith

As we come to Psalm 5 this morning – we come to one of the great prayers of David

As we read the Psalms - - - we discover: many of them are prayers directed to God [not all]

Psalm 5:1, 2 - 'Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to Thee do I pray.'

One cannot do a study on the Psalms without recognizing the tremendous value they have for us in giving instruction on prayer

Many Christians struggle with prayer - - - or they wonder what they should say to God when they do pray

How does one pray to God?

James Hamilton: 'The Psalms are a school of prayer.'

Richard Phillips says that he often advises those struggling with prayer – to begin by reading the Psalms and praying thru the words of the Psalmist

In Psalm 5 – we see David at prayer / seeking God / calling on His Name

I. Morning Devotion - vv. 1-3

This is a psalm of David - - - composed to be sung with the flute

In this psalm – David is facing some distressing circumstances which he takes to God in prayer

That is one of the great benefits of trials and afflictions is that they can potentially lead us to a deeper prayer life

J.C. Ryle: 'If afflictions drive us nearer to Christ, the Bible, and prayer, they are positive blessings.'

David reminds us of this great truth

If you are in a trial - - - facing a difficulty - - - stop and consider the silver lining

Behind every cloud or trial – is the potential to grow closer to God thru that trial

Don't waste your trials - - - make them serve you for spiritual ends

Thomas Watson: 'God makes adversity our university and afflictions our preacher.'

We don't know for certain the circumstances when David wrote this Psalm - - - clearly he is distressed - - - there is a strong tradition associating this psalm with the rebellion of Absalom - - - when David had to flee for his life - - - while Absalom proclaimed himself king for a short period of time

It was definitely a low point in David's life

That explains his plaintive cry – 'O Lord, consider my groaning'

This is David saying – 'Life is hard right now!' - - - it's a mess - - - God - - - I need you

David knows where to turn in time of need or trouble
He prays to His king and His God

We are exhorted and encouraged to pray in the Scriptures all over the place

Jer. 33:3 - 'Call unto Me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.'

Matthew 7:7, 8 - 'Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.'

Prayer is a great resource for the Christian – we cannot neglect it without doing great harm to our spiritual lives

James 4:2 – ‘You do not have because you do not ask.’

Thomas Brooks: ‘Oh, how strong in grace! Oh, how victorious over sin! Oh, how dead to the world! Oh, how alive to Christ! Oh, how fit to live! Oh, how prepared to die! - might many a Christian have been, had they been but more frequent, serious, and conscientious in the discharge of closet duties [prayer].’

To not pray – is essentially looking up to heaven and saying: ‘God – I really don’t need you.’

I don’t need your wisdom

I don’t need your guidance

I don’t need your blessings - - - I have all I need on my own

Look out – if you think that way - - - because pride comes before a Fall

The truth is: We do need God / we are dependent creatures

People of faith pray – they sense their need before God - - - they know that thru prayer burdens can be lifted

John Bunyan: ‘Faith makes great burdens light, but unbelief makes light ones heavy.’

We have a mechanism to lighten our load: prayer

When God calls us to prayer - - - He says – ‘Come in here – let me take that from you’

We see David’s faith on display here – both in the praying and in the eager expectation of answer

Psalm 5:3 - ‘In the morning, O Lord, Thou wilt hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to Thee and eagerly watch.’

I love the picture he paints here - - - He offers up his prayers – and then runs out to eagerly watch how God responds to his prayers

He expects God to answer His prayers - - - according to God’s own wisdom

God may have a better plan than ours - - - but we pray – and then we watch what he does

Phillip Yancey: 'Like Paul we may pray for healing and get humility. We may ask relief from trials and instead get patience to bear them. We may pray for release from prison and instead get strength to redeem the time while there.'

God may not always change the circumstances – but He will change our hearts so that we can have peace in the midst of our circumstances – and that is what we need more than different circumstances

C.S. Lewis: 'I don't pray so that I can change God. I pray so that God can change me.'

We should also note David's reference to the morning

Order my prayer – *order* is a technical term often used of the priests arranging the wood on the altar [Gen. 22:9]

David is viewing his prayers as a kind of morning sacrifice / this is part of his worship

In the great hymn – 'Holy, Holy, Holy'

'Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.'

Our songs / our prayers – are worship offered early in the day

Jesus prayed early in the morning

Mark 1:35 - 'And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there.'

David seems to be saying – as soon as I awake - - - my thoughts turn to God in prayer

Graham Scroggie: 'The first hour is to the day what the rudder is to the ship. Therefore, pray in the morning. Then look up or keep watch for the answer.'

*** Every day is a good day – if it begins with God!

We have to choose - - - 'What kind of a day do I want to have?'

If we would have a good day – let it begin with God

John Bunyan: 'He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day.'

Offer up a prayer to God - - - 'God help me to honor you this day!' / show me how to serve you / help me to walk in humility / faithfulness / etc.

There is an emphasis on *first things* in Scripture

We should have priorities in life - - - otherwise – we can fritter our time and days away - - - neglecting things of importance

John Piper: "One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the Last Day that prayerlessness was not from lack of time."

We need priorities

Before you do anything else - - - pray and ask God to sanctify you / purify you / direct your steps

That comes first!

Matthew 6:33 - 'But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.'

We worship God on the first day of the week

Adrian Rogers: 'Sunday is not the last day of your weekend; it is the first day of the week, and you start it right by being in the house of God. The disciples met together to break bread, preach the Word, observe the Lord's supper, and collect their offerings all on the first day of the week.'

We put God first in the morning / first in our week / first in our priorities / first in our thoughts

Bobby Bowden – once hit an inside the park homerun in college [or so the thought] - - - but missed touching the bag at first base - - - he was celebrating his home run with his teammates -- - and the other team threw the ball to first - - - and the ump called him out

He learned a vital lesson that day – he later shared

Bobby Bowden: "If you don't take care of first base, it doesn't matter what you do. If you don't honor the Lord first, it doesn't matter what else you do."

Honor the Lord first

David goes to prayer - - - because he is burdened with cares

Psalm 55:22 - 'Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.'

Swindoll: 'David refused to stumble about stoop shouldered, carrying his burdens throughout the day. On the contrary, he took his needs to the Lord each morning.'

Of course – we should call upon God on a regular basis - - - whether circumstances are dire or not

David was in a life or death situation - - - many of our trials are not life or death - - - but we should still pray about them

For one - - - we develop habits of prayer

If we don't know how to pray over the little things - - - we might find ourselves ill-equipped to pray when the big storms come [and they will]

Some people use prayer lists:

Thank God for your daily bread

Thank Him for your marriage / your kids / your church / your job

Ask Him to forgive you of your sin and lead you in paths of righteousness

Pray for others' spiritual life / spiritual growth / salvation

Pray for those in our congregation facing difficulties

There is no shortage of topics that are prayer worthy - - - there is no reason we should draw a blank when it comes to prayer! – but we may need to make a list to help us at times

Pray Scripture – pray the Lord's Prayer / pray the prayers of Paul / of David / etc.

II. A Holy God - vv. 4-7

We see something here in the content of David's prayer – we might note that he really hasn't asked for anything yet

Before he gets to his request – he reminds himself of who God is

David praises God for His holiness and hatred of sin

God is a God who hates sin and evil

The gospel does not change that

I John 1:5 - 'And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.'

Sometimes people act like – because they claim to be a Christian or have prayed a prayer that their sin is no big deal to God

Somehow – because Jesus died -- all of a sudden – God is in favor of sin

The reality is: He hates it – always has – always will

He disciplines His own for sin – [Heb. 12]

Hebrews 12:10 - 'He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.'

And He will eventually send the wicked to hell for their sin - - - that is why we read in the letters of Paul

Ephesians 4:30 - 'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.'

Ephesians 5:11 - 'And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.'

Why? God takes no delight in sin

If we think little of sin – we think little of Jesus – and the price paid for our salvation

When God is at work in our lives - - - His Spirit works to cause us to hate sin / to sanctify us – to root out sin

Thomas Brooks: 'God cannot love nor delight in anything but righteousness. God is a holy God, a righteous God, and therefore can only love and take pleasure in those that are righteous, both by a righteousness imputed, and a righteousness imparted.'

Righteousness imputed – is the righteousness credited to our account by faith in Christ
Righteousness imparted - - - the righteousness we begin to show as we follow Christ

When we pray - - why should God listen to us?

v. 7 – Because of His steadfast love = [Hesed = God's covenant love] – He is the faithful God

God swings open the door to His throne - - - thru the blood of Jesus

Jesus told us to pray in His Name – [that is an appeal to God's steadfast love]

John 14:13 - 'And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.'

III. A Request for Guidance - vv. 8-10

Here we come to David's request

His main request is for guidance - - - for God to show him how to handle the situation

Many people agonize over guidance - - - should I do this or do that?

God – give me a sign!

Oftentimes what we really need is simply to obey the will of God revealed to us in Scripture

Micah 6:8 - 'He has told you, O man, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?'

God said to Israel – 'I told you what I want you to do'

It makes little sense to ask God to show us what job to take - - - which house to buy / who to marry - - - if we are ignoring Him in clearly written commands

God says – "I have told you what I expect of you!"

Obey God with what we know He wants us to do today - - and we can expect Him to lead us tomorrow as well

If we want God's leading – He will lead us

IV. Joy in the Lord - vv. 11, 12

The pattern of many of David's psalms begin with a problem or difficulty of some kind / some trial - - - and end on a note of hopefulness or joy or confidence in the Lord

There is tension in the air when he begins his prayer - - his cry for help / his groaning

He ends on a note of joy and confidence

In that - - - we are reminded of one of the great outcomes of prayer

Burdens are lifted at Calvary

The outcome of prayer – should be a lifted spirit

When we rejoice here in this world – we begin the song of heaven which we will be singing for all eternity – for heaven will be a place of unfettered joy

Chuck Swindoll: 'Joy is a choice. It is a matter of attitude that stems from one's confidence in God - that He is at work, that He is in full control, that He is in the midst of whatever has happened, is happening, and will happen.'

When we pray – we remind ourselves that God is in control / He's got this – He is over all

Conclusion

*** The Psalms remind us of the great place of prayer in the life of the Christian

Will you make it a point to pray this week? / every day – first thing in the morning?

Will you pray for God to make you a holy person – to root out sin out of your life

Somebody said we need to pray for our nation to repent [that is true]

John MacArthur said we need to pray for the church to repent [that is true as well]

Maybe you are burdened down with cares - - - take those cares to God - - - ask God to give you His joy – set your feet on a firm path

Corrie Ten Boom: "The wonderful thing about praying is that you leave a world of not being able to do something, and enter God's realm where everything is possible. He specializes in the impossible. Nothing is too great for His almighty power. Nothing is too small for His love."

I love the picture the author of Hebrews paints for us

Hebrews 4:14-16 - 'Since then we have a great high priest who has passed thru the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.'

In prayer – we come to the throne of grace – we find grace to help in time of need

We come thru the precious blood of Jesus