

A Tutorial in Prayer

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[0:00] Psalm 5 this morning. The Psalms will teach us to pray. And it's no easy thing to pray. It's an easy thing to say your prayers, but it's a difficult thing to really pray.

And we need the Holy Spirit to help us or we'll not really pray. Well, the best posture to take in prayer is that humble posture that says, Lord, teach me to pray.

I don't know how to pray as I ought. Teach me to pray. Remember, that was the disciples' response upon hearing Jesus pray. They later said, after hearing him, teach us to pray.

And Psalm 5 is a great teaching aid in giving us instruction on praying. Now, the prayer itself and the lessons itself carry needful instruction to us, but our author, Dale Ralph Davis, author of this study, is saying, let's take this Psalm as a tutorial, a prayer tutorial, and learn some things about prayer as we work our way through this Psalm.

Now, again, as we found in these opening Psalms, this is a Psalm for praying in dangerous and lousy circumstances, as Davis says.

[1:32] And have you noticed how much trouble there is in these Psalms, the opening Psalms? And we're not done yet.

We'll find that same thing running right on through our study of the Psalms. What does that teach us itself? Just that fact.

That these prayers of David and other saints of old are filled with praying about trouble in their life. What are some of the lessons we can draw from that reality?

Anything strike you? Becky? Okay. Isn't that what Peter said? Don't be surprised at the great trials that are coming upon you.

And yet, what are we? We're often surprised, or act surprised. Can you believe what happened?

Can you believe this is happening to me? No, we ought to expect trouble. Surely that's one lesson.

[2:29] Ed? I'm thinking in Hebrews 12, troubles could be a discipline of the Lord. Amen. Troubles.

We find them all over the Psalms. Well, surely the thing that's on the surface is that we ought to pray in our troubles, right? That's something that we're learning, is that they were a troubled lot, and they took their troubles to the Lord in prayer.

And we need to do that as well. Have our troubles be the trigger to prayer. The fact that we're in the world that crucified our Savior should alert us to the reality that we should expect troubles.

Remember the great controversy, the great, in Psalm 2, you've got God and His Christ and His people on the one side, and you've got all the nations of the world conspiring against them.

So if that's the case, and this is the worldview that we live with, then we should expect to find trouble in the world. And what I think it should teach us in America is that we're living in something of a bubble of reality in America, that the people of God, for the most part, have suffered a lot more trouble than we have in America.

[3:53] So we shouldn't just take our experience as if that's the way believers live in this world.

Well, that's the way God has blessed us to live in this world, but what I'm telling you is this isn't normal.

What's normal is what we read in the Psalms, and what we see Jesus telling His disciples, if they persecuted me, they'll persecute you, and so on. So we need to realize that God's people elsewhere are suffering much worse than we are.

We need to get that global experience, and then when troubles come to us, we need to realize, oh, it's so much less than what God's people elsewhere are suffering, and how are they learning to deal with their troubles, and how can I learn to pray through dangerous and lousy circumstances myself? Have you found that you pray differently when you're in trouble? Well, that could be the very reason God has ordained for there to be so many troubles for the believer, that it draws us to Him and lifts

our eyes heavenward, and we seek Him, and we keep our eyes on Him in trouble.

So, take your troubles to the Lord, and take Psalm 3, 4, and 5 as we're studying them. Take them and personalize those.

[5:15] Use them as your prayer. Pray those prayers back to the Lord, and pour your own troubles into them. But I think there's some critical lessons.

David's prayer in Psalm 5, then. We're going to look at four lessons about prayer, and some of these will be repetition of the earlier Psalms.

And if you find repetition here, it's because we need it. Indeed, I find I need it. I haven't started praying like this yet, by second nature, by habit.

I still have to remind myself of some of these things. And so, until we're praying this way, we have every reason for the repetition, and even then, to keep us on track.

So, number one, prepare your prayer. Prepare your prayer. Look at verses 1 to 3. Give ear to my words, O Lord.

[6:10] Consider my sign. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God. For to you I pray. In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice.

In the morning, I lay my requests before you, and wait in expectation. Now, notice how David describes his prayer.

He says, my words. My words. So, prayer expresses itself in spoken words. Notice, we saw last week how the psalms served us in this way, that the psalms give us words that we need in prayer. And so, that's why I tell you, if you're in trouble, you can take this psalm, and it will give you words to express yourself before God in prayer. But even the psalmist did not always find words to express himself.

Notice the next way he describes prayer. Not only my words, but what? My sighing. My groaning. There are evidently these concerns that are unable to be put into words.

[7:22] And yet, there are those longings for holiness. Those groanings to be set free from our sin altogether. Those hungerings and thirstings for righteousness.

You know what it is to have your stomach growl when you're hungry. And David says, the believer has that growling of his spirit. He's hungering for righteousness.

We want to be done altogether with sin. And so, the Lord not only hears our words, but he actually hears our sighings. Sighing is a language that God understands.

David expects God to consider his signs, to understand them, and to answer them. And then the third description of his prayer is, my cry for help.

And I think we saw this much last week, but a cry for help is a desperate word. It's the urgent situation. And it's just squeezed out by the sore circumstances pressing in.

[8:29] It's like Peter when he's walking on the water, and suddenly he starts to sink. He doesn't have time to lay out a long prepared prayer. He just cries out, Lord, save me.

And that's the kind of prayer that sometimes we pray. It's just a short cry for help. Do you find yourself doing that? Lord, help me. You may not even know the kind of help you need, but you know you need help.

The Lord knows that prayer, and he knows exactly how to answer it. That's to our comfort as well. But then, there's a fourth way that David describes his praying.

Not just words, signs, urgent cries for help, but prepared words. And it's not so obvious in our translation. In the morning, I lay my requests before you.

But that word for lay my requests before you is a word that means to set out in order, to arrange something, to set in rows.

[9:34] Someone has laid out these chairs. They haven't been thrown in here randomly. They've been orderly set here. The word is used in the book of Leviticus of the priest arranging the wood on the altar fire and then arranging the chunks of the sacrificial animal on the altar itself.

So, as the priest was worshiping God and making this sacrifice, he didn't just throw wood on there and throw the sacrifice on, but he laid it out in order.

And it's the same word that's used of the arranging of the showbread. Remember, Pastor Paul Martin talked to us about what's in the holy place and there was the table with the showbread, the twelve loaves.

They weren't just thrown in there. They were laid out in order. That's the word then before us here in verse 3. David says it's an orderly verb. And so, we are to think of the priest getting the morning

sacrifice ready and he lays the wood on the altar and then he lays the chunks of the sacrifice on the altar in a very orderly prepared way.

Now, sometimes that's the way we should pray too. Not just chaotically. There are times when that's all we can do is chaotically cry, Help, Lord. But there are also other times when we ought to lay out our request in an orderly fashion before the Lord.

[11 : 10] If you had 30 minutes with the president, do you think you'd think ahead of time how you were going to make your request of him? What you were going to say and the order in which you would speak?

Well, how much more when we're coming before the King of Kings? If we really believe that and haven't just sunk into some routine of just praying and not even thinking who we're talking to, if we really believe that, should we not, if possible, think about what should I say to the King?

Let me be sure that there's more than just requests. Let me be sure that I adore him, that I confess my sins to him, that I thank him, and then that I make my supplication.

So there's this orderliness to prayer. But then think as well, or look as well at the last phrase.

So there he is, laying out his morning prayers before the Lord, and then he waits in expectation.

Isn't that a beautiful picture?

[12 : 18] So he's been before the Lord before he heads into his office, his work day. She's laid out before the Lord the things of the day and what she needs help, and then she goes into her day.

And as she's going into her day, she's looking to see the Lord giving her help with the things that she prayed for. There's a connection between her life and her prayers.

She's expecting to see God do something here in her life according to the things that she prayed for. And so what a beautiful way to live. Waiting in expectation for the Lord's help.

The English Puritan Thomas Goodwin wrote a book called The Return of Prayers, and he illustrates this point in a very helpful way. He's talking about the merchant men of his day.

They would load up their ships down at the docks with their own products and then send them over the sea to go and trade in far-off markets.

[13 : 26] Now the merchant man didn't send his ships off with no thoughts to their return. Rather, he expected his ships not only to return, but to return laden down with other goods that they had traded for.

And we don't or near the time of their expected return, the merchant man would have his eye then toward the sea.

And perhaps many times during the day waiting to see his ships coming in. And isn't that a beautiful picture of prayer? We don't just send our ships of prayer off into the harbor of heaven and forget about them.

I trust. I must say I do it far too often. But I ought to be looking heavenward and I ought to be looking for that answer to those prayers, expecting them.

The return of prayers that the God in heaven is real. He hears my cries, my words, my signs. And it's because of who he is that we can wait in expectation.

[14 : 34] He's the God who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. So that's the first three verses. Prepare your prayer. The second section of the psalm is know your God.

Know your God. Why is it that we can wait in expectation of help? It's because we know the God to whom we speak. He's the ground of our expectation. So how well do you know God?

Well, your expectation will rise no higher than your knowledge of God. When you ask someone to do something for you, their character affects your expectation.

So you ask somebody to do something and if they've not proven themselves faithful, you've got to keep checking up on them because you're not quite sure what to expect will happen.

But if you know the person you've asked something of, you don't even have to worry about it. You expect it to be done. Why? Because you know them and so it is with God.

[15 : 42] How well do we know him? That will determine how well we can expect from him an answer to our prayers. Is he faithful? Does he mean what he says when he says ask and you will receive and so on?

So our knowledge of God is important if we would expect him to answer our prayers and wait in that expecting mood. Now in a word David knows his God to be holy.

That's the emphasis of this psalm. He's going to portray God in his prayer as this holy sinner hating God. Now look at verses four to six.

You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil. with you the wicked cannot dwell. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence.

You hate all who do wrong. You destroy those who tell lies. Bloodthirsty and deceitful men the Lord abhors.

[16 : 46] They're disgusting to them. They're an abomination to the Lord. Now this is not the popular God of the 21st century and these aren't the popular prayers of the 21st century.

A God of love and he's nothing but love for all people everywhere. He has nothing of this hatred that the Old Testament God had.

That's what we hear today. But rather when we turn to the Psalms we see God being adored for his love, his loving kindness, his mercy, his grace, but we also see him being appealed to and adored and feared for his holiness and his hatred of sin.

So this is no tame deity, it's no safe God that David's praying to and it pretty much shatters the idea of God being someone who hates sin but loves the sinner.

Now he loves the sinner but he also hates the sinner. And that's difficult to put together but it's true whereas the other is false. Look at verse 5.

[17 : 54] Does God love the sinner, only love the sinner and just hate his sin? No. Verse 5 at the end says you hate all who do wrong.

Now it's just not murder that the Lord abhors, it's bloodthirsty men that he abhors. It's the people with blood on their hands that he hates.

And it's not just lies that the Lord hates but it's deceitful men who tells the lies that he hates. That's the way God is and David knows it.

And it fills his prayer life. Do we know it? And does it fill our prayers? this is the way David prays. He praises God for his hatred of sinners. It's because David knows what his holy God loves and he knows what his holy God hates that after he has laid his petition on the altar he can wait in expectation.

[19 : 06] He knows God hates sin and sinners. He knows God loves righteousness and the righteous and so he waits in expectation upon him.

Now he's ascribing to the Lord the glory due his name in prayer. So what we say what we have to say in prayer is greatly colored by the one we are speaking to in prayer.

We need to know what the one we pray to his life that we might ask a right and we might lay praises before him a right. Davis says biblical prayer seems to ponder God a good deal more than we are prone to.

And that's the thing that I find. That's why I find I need this repetition that we're meeting in these early Psalms. What we find is that in the appeals to God it's more than just a trite phrase our father in heaven.

I don't mean that that's trite it's full of meaning but it can become trite when we just throw that name out there for God and what we find in the Psalms is that the psalmist in his prayers is thinking about the character of God here it's his holiness isn't it his holy hatred of sin well we've seen it in the other petitions of the other Psalms as well how he's a shield Lord you are the lifter up of my head you're the one who gives grace his view of God is expansive and is much broader than mine and as Davis says biblical prayer seems to ponder God a great deal more than we are prone to you know that acrostic acts a c t s a helpful tool in prayer I find I run off into the s and make my supplications to God father in heaven do this and do that and please do this and and

[21 : 16] I've got to work at adoring God a that's what we have David doing here God you are amazing you're awesome you're so holy sinners can't stand in your presence and on he goes adoring God confessing our sins thanking God those elements are found far more in the Psalms than they are in my prayer life and so this is why this is a tutorial experience to read the Psalms and to pray the Psalms it's to be stretched in our praying and to see our prayers take in and ponder more of who God is so because verses 4 to 6 because that's the way God is therefore we can make petitions in line with his character we can ask according to his will and we'll see that later on in verses 10 and 11 when David's asking for God to deal with wicked men how can we pray for oppressive governments of the world to be dismantled for communism to be dismantled in China if we don't know that

God hates sinful murderers God hates and abhors bloodthirsty men liars you see once we know the God we're dealing with then we can ask for petitions in line with who he is and that's what David

does so know your God now that's just a review remember we saw the the illustration last time a couple weeks ago about the mother who knew just from one picture in the paper that that was her son sticking the end of the flag into Iwo Jima and she said I know my boy I know my boy do we know our God that well do we know him and therefore can expect him to answer petitions in line with his character the third part of the psalm is then make your request make your request notice then how he comes to make his petition before God he does so by his mercy and in great reverence now he starts with but I but I remember what he's just said he's just been talking about how God hates all who do wrong how he hates lies and liars and bloodthirsty men we might expect David to say but I'm not like them Lord and that would not be true because David too is a bloodthirsty man as we'll see if we read the account and he too is a liar and a deceiver and a cover uppper so it's not Lord they're the bad guys and I'm the good guy so sweep in and save me no it isn't that notice what he says verse 7 but I by your great mercy will come into your house so none of us are allowed into this holy God except by the great mercy of God and that's how David approaches not on the basis of his own merit but on the basis of God's mercy mercy to him in Christ the Christ that would come we look back and it's mercies that have come in Christ but I by your great mercy will come into your house God listens to the prayer of any sinner who cries for mercy and this is David's approach so we come hanging on the welcome of God's mercy pleading mercy at the mercy seat but it's not only in mercy that he draws near it's also in reverence as the rest of the verse says in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple have you not just heard some things about God that would make you tremble what he abhors and hates and destroys God it's it's only the natural response for David as he adores God for who he is in his holiness to come now before that God in mercy clinging to mercy and to come before that God with a healthy sense of fear reverence and awe trembling now the petition And notice we're halfway through the psalm before we meet the petition. Isn't that interesting? You won't find that in my study often. But it needs to be.

[25 : 57] Halfway through the prayer until we find the petition. And here it is, verse 8. Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies.

Make straight your way before me. Now this prayer is being driven by danger, remember? His enemies are all around. They're lurking for him.

They're intent on destroying him. Even with sugar-coated words of deception. Verse 9. Not a word from their mouth can be trusted. Their heart is filled with destruction.

Their throat is an open grave. With their tongues they speak deceit. Remember, God hates deceit and liars and bloodthirsty men. And that's who he's praying against.

But they're flattering him and they're praising him. And yet beneath their flattering lips is an open grave. Just waiting to swallow him alive.

[27 : 02] So he's being pursued unjustly. These men are trying to trick him. They're flattering him and buttering him up. Only to stick a knife in his back.

And in such danger, he prays, Lead me in your righteousness. Lead me in the right way you want me to go. Lead me in the righteousness that you require of me.

That's the way of conduct. That there is a way of conduct that is right to God. And David wants to walk in that way. Dangerous times are tempting times to abandon God's righteous ways.

Perhaps to escape the danger, We think of unrighteous things to do. And we're willing to sin in order to get out of trouble.

We're willing to pay back evil with evil or whatever. David realizes that and he pleads in his troubles, Lord, don't let me take a step outside of righteousness.

[28 : 06] Lead me in your righteousness. Because of my enemies. Even more important to David than safety is to be led, Is to walk and be kept in a way of righteousness.

He realizes that when evil comes upon him, There's this pressure to step outside of righteousness. Maybe to handle things in his own strength. And to get even. Oh Lord, lead me in your righteousness.

He pleads. Isn't that what Paul is teaching in Romans 12? Isn't that why we're not to pay back evil for evil? Because that is to be overcome by evil.

And we're to not be overcome by evil, But overcome evil with good. When people do evil to you, When people are out to get you, And it's unjust and unfair, There is a natural tendency to step outside of the path of righteousness To get even.

And David's praying against any such thing. Lead me in your righteousness because of my enemies. And isn't that what the Good Shepherd Psalm says?

[29 : 15] He leads me in paths of righteousness. For his great name's sake. Even in the presence of my enemies. He leads me in righteous paths. That's what David wants here.

To be kept in the way of the righteous. Not to be drawn off. And so we find ourselves in these situations, Not knowing the next step to take. And fearing that the next step might be away from God and his righteousness.

And David wants to be kept in the righteous way. And so we can pray with David, Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness. Make straight your way before me. That's a prayer that's in line with God's commandments.

It's similar to the Lord's prayer where he teaches us to pray, Lead me not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Lead me in your righteousness, Lord.

Not into temptation and under the evil one's ways. So then, lastly, Not only prepare your prayer, know your God, Make your requests, but then declare your confidence.

[30 : 29] Verses 10 through 12. We'll see how David gains confidence as he prays. He first prays against his and God's enemies, And then he prays for God's people.

Against God's enemies in verse 10, And then for God's people in verse 11. And the two are related, as we'll see. Verse 10. Declare them guilty, O God. Let their intrigues be their downfall.

In other words, let them be caught in their own net, Their own intrigues. Banish them for their many sins, For they have rebelled against you. But let all who take refuge in you be glad.

Let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, That those who love your name may rejoice in you. So right away we learn these enemies of David Are not just his personal enemies. Rather, they're enemies of God. They have rebelled against you, David says. So these are part of those in rebellion against the Lord And his anointed and against his people.

[31 : 32] And they're in rebellion against God. Those who, if they do not repent and kiss the sun, Will be crushed under an iron rod, As Psalm 2 said. Even as Jesus himself said, Those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, Bring them here and kill them in front of me.

Luke 19, 27. They're enemies of the Lord. And David prays against them in that light. Is it hard to pray this way?

Yes, it is. But we don't have any choice in a world that's up in arms against God, His Christ, and His people. If we want the petition of verse 11 to be answered, That is, if we want to see Those who take refuge in the Lord being glad And singing for joy, Then God must answer verse 10.

God must Let their intrigues cause their traps To be their own downfall And to banish them for their many sins. How can a community rest easy As long as a murdering rapist Is on the loose committing his crimes?

We see the same kind of thing in 2 Thessalonians 1 That we've been studying through on Sunday nights. Battered Thessalonians Whose enemies have been troubling them Are told that God will give them relief.

[33 : 01] When and how? Well, when the Lord comes. And what, how? Well, because At Jesus' coming God will pay back trouble To those who trouble them.

And so when God pays back the wicked He will give relief to His saints. And we might wish prayer was not so messy But this is part of living in an evil world Under the curse Where there are only two sides God's side And all who are against Him Now I'll let you in on a family secret.

Many, many, many years ago My mother was a cheerleader. A cheerleader for the Remington Riflemen. And she taught us one of her cheers. And we'll never forget it It goes like this Give Him the axe The axe The axe Give Him the axe The axe The axe Give Him the axe Give Him the axe Give Him the axe Where?

Right in the neck The neck The neck Right in the neck The neck The neck Right in the neck Right in the neck Right in the neck There Now that was a long time ago It's before there was ever such a thing As political correctness People in Remington knew nothing about that But they knew one thing And they knew it very well And that's that if the Remington Riflemen Were going to defeat The Rensselaer bombers It would be by the axe Going to their neck Proverbially In other words For one to win The other must lose Right?

In any contest That's true And that's the picture That drives the psalmist When he prays for God's enemies To be destroyed It's because he wants to see Jesus receive the glory God's anointed king

To be exalted And he'll only be exalted As his enemies Are crushed beneath his feet That's where history's going He's simply praying In light of reality And that's why the psalmist Is so ecstatic About the Lord Coming to judge the earth We sing it in Psalm 98 Verses 7 through 9 Let the sea resound And everything in it The world And all who live in it Let the rivers clap their hands And let the mountains Sing together for joy Let them sing before the Lord For he comes To judge the earth He will judge the world In righteousness And the peoples With equity So why Can we rejoice [35 : 45] In the judge Of all the earth Coming and Destroying his enemies Because it means He'll put everything right He will right every wrong He'll judge the world In righteousness And only then Can the cosmic party Rightfully begin And rivers clap their hands And mountains sing for joy The world at long last again The home of righteousness So yes We pray for the enemies of God To kiss the sun To bow the neck But if they will not bow We have no other alternative But to rejoice That King Jesus Is coming And he'll put all Of his enemies Under his feet And this gives David confidence For praying this way Verse 12 For surely You see the confidence here Surely oh Lord You bless the righteous You surround them With your favor As with a shield You see the shield That surrounds the righteous

Is the favor of the Lord The loving kindness of God Shields the righteous Do we understand our privilege? We ought to be over here Being destroyed with the wicked But in his great mercy He's brought us near Through the blood of Jesus And now his favor Shields all around us So David knows it's God And he can pray with confidence Because of it He doesn't know when Or how the righteous Will be blessed But he's sure of it Isn't he?

He's sure of it This is the way God is And he acts consistently With his character So in the meantime As we live in a world Full of dangers And pitfalls And enemies That surround us David says I can confide in the fact That God's favor surrounds me And protects me And I can pray Lord Help me that my next step Be a righteous one Lead me in your righteousness Because of my enemies Make my way straight Before me Any comments Questions Before we dismiss this morning?

Well then Let's go and worship this God Today Thank you Thank you