

Prayer of Anguish

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[0:00] Well, the Bible teaches us that prayer changes things. Prayer changes things, and that's a lesson that we need to remember continually, especially people of our ilk who have a very high view of God's sovereignty, who understand that God is in control of all things.

We need to remember in holding that doctrine that we also believe, the Bible also teaches that prayer changes things. But I hope as we're going through the Psalms, which if you're visiting today, we're going through Psalms 1-12 with a book by Dale Ralph Davis, and we're on Psalm 6 today. As we're going through these Psalms, you understand, or you're beginning to understand and see that the Psalms not only change things, they change us.

Prayer not only changes things around us, it changes us. And I wonder if you're beginning to see that in your own life. That as we see how the Psalmist prays, and as you take those things on board in your life, that those things have a way of changing us, the people who are praying.

As we take on the Psalms priorities, and we struggle to pray like David prayed, and it is a struggle, isn't it? We're creatures of habit, and we have just a great tendency to get into bad habits in prayer.

[1:34] And so it is a struggle. But as we strain, and as we struggle to praise God more, to adore Him more, to confess more, to argue with Him more, I think we begin to change as Christians.

R.C. Sproul said this, When I read the Psalms, I read intercession, and I read supplication, but overwhelmingly, what I read is a preoccupation with adoration, with thanksgiving, and with confession.

Take those elements of prayer, and what happens to a person who learns how to adore God? Take those elements of prayer, and what happens to a person who learns how to adore God? That person is changed.

What happens to a person who learns how to express his gratitude to God? That person will now become more and more aware of the hand of providence in his life, and will grow in a sense of gratitude toward God.

What happens to the person who spends time confessing his sins? He keeps in front of his mind the holiness of God, and the necessity of keeping short accounts with God.

[2:43] You see what Sproul is saying? That as we learn to pray, like the Psalms teach us to pray, we are changed. You are changed. You become more thankful.

You become more careful. You realize that this life that you are living is a life that is lived with God. He is with you every step of the way, and you are with him.

So I want to try something at the beginning here, and I want to ask you, perhaps if any of you could share, something of what God has been teaching you as we've looked through the first five Psalms. How has God been changing you? And the reason I'm doing this is because I think it's good for us to see that God is at work in his people and to see what he's teaching other people so that we could learn those lessons.

So it might take a little courage, but what has God been sharing or teaching you through these first five Psalms? Please feel free.

[3:50] Yes, Jackie. Okay. Yeah.

That puts your identity in a new light. That changes who you are. Thank you. Anyone else?

Well, yes, Roger. Thank you.

may I'm lying down, down to the ground. Things are all going wrong. I have that relationship with my Lord.

It's a way above. Go to nowhere to go, no direction whatsoever.

[5:25] I'm not going to go back to the road. I'm not going to go back. Hmm. Good.

There's this problem of weakness. And we're not sure if, you know, this is talking about literally, physically sick or spiritually sick.

I don't think it's necessary to even make that distinction sometimes. Because as creatures, we are whole creatures. We're body, soul creatures. And what happens to our body contributes to how we feel in our soul and vice versa.

[12:50] And so David is basically saying, I'm in anguish. I'm in bodily anguish. I'm in spiritual anguish. And it doesn't say why he's so weak.

It could be that he's under the disfavor of God. It could be some sickness. It could be the threat of enemies that he talks about later. And it just might be a combination of all those things. Sometimes just one problem doesn't bother us so much. But when they start piling up, then we really start to struggle.

And we see that David is in real pain. He's really suffering from weakness. Those are the three things that are contributing to his agony.

But I think it's the first one that is the worst. That David senses God's displeasure. And I don't know about you.

[13:50] I'm sure you're pretty much the same as me. But speaking for myself, when I'm under conviction, when I'm not right with God, that is real agony.

There's no agony like the loss of God's smile. You know, I can make it through a lot of nasty bumps and bruises in life if I sense that God is smiling on me, that I'm okay with God.

But if I'm under conviction, then everything is ruined. You know, my family isn't enjoyable. My food doesn't taste good.

My work is miserable. And life just becomes this long experience of death. It's miserable being under God's displeasure, his discipline.

And so, that's the situation that David's in. Have you been there? I'm sure you have. Where your enemies are piling up.

[14:55] The problems are piling up against you. And, you know, you feel that God is angry with you for some reason. Well, what do you do in that situation?

What do you do when you're not right with God? Well, you do what David did. And he prays in verse 2, Be merciful to me.

Be merciful to me. Show me grace. And see, where else can we go? If we continue to walk away from God, continue to wallow in our weakness, and just look at those things and feel, experience that displeasure, but we don't actually go to God, it only increases our alienation.

It only increases our misery. And so, the thing to do is to go to God, even when we're feeling God's displeasure. Because the hand that strikes us will be also the hand that heals us.

Well, Dale Davis, the author of our study, tells the story of how his dad one time spanked his older brother, Walt. And Walt was just a little two-year-old, and he had done something wrong.

[16:05] Well, Dale and Walt's father was a pastor, and his study was at home, and so he worked from home. And so, after spanking Walt, he went back and do his study, and a little while later, Walt kind of toddled around the corner.

He crawled up into his dad's lap, and he said, Papa, I love you. And instead of saying, how cute and precious that is, which it is, we should ask, what was Walt thinking?

What was little two-year-old Walt thinking? Well, he was just assuming that the hand that had spanked him was still the hand that was going to accept him, and was going to comfort him.

He sort of knew that intuitively. And that same heart that was in Walt is what drives David's heart. God struck him, but instinctively David knew that the Lord who spanks his children is also the Lord that will comfort him.

And so, he's ready to hear them when they pray. Just because you're under God's displeasure, under his disfavor, under conviction, it doesn't mean that he doesn't want to hear you pray.

[17:20] He's ready to hear you pray. So, this is David's agony. Well, can you find yourself there? Are you hurting?

Perhaps right now you're not. But if you are, put yourself into David's prayer. God cares for his children. And the hand that strikes is ready to welcome you.

And see, David's agony didn't drive him away from God. It drove him to God. And that's a lesson we need to learn. Sometimes, I think what happens is, when we really start to hurt, as a defense mechanism, we clam up.

We shut down. We don't want anything to do with anyone. And we don't want anything to do with God. And we're trying to tough it out on our own. And then, we lose hope in God. We stop praying.

And it only gets worse. And so, if you're suffering right now, look at Psalm 6. It holds the key to unlock that coffin. To let you out. Because David was there.

[18 : 29] And by the end of Psalm 6, you're going to see that David is in a very different place. His circumstances hasn't changed. But he's changed. Well, that's David's agony.

Now, let's look in the second place at David's argument. David's argument. In verses 4 through 7, we'll read that. Turn, O Lord, and deliver me.

Save me because of your unfailing love. No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave?

I am worn out from groaning. All night long, I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow. They fail because of all my foes.

So, look at verse 4. And let me ask you, what is David's first argument why God should deliver him?

[19 : 29] David is going to pile up three arguments why God should hear him and answer him. In verse 4, you see his first argument. What is it? Because of your unfailing love.

That's the word *chesed* that we've talked about. We've, um, it's God's never stopping. Never giving up. Unbreaking, always, and forever love. And so David rests his argument on God's love.

On God's character. And we've seen this before. David bases his prayer on what he knows about God. And this is no different here. In this point, David argues based on the revelation of who God is. Of who he's revealed himself to be. So remember, Moses. Exodus 34. He goes up to the mountain and God shows him his glory. And as part of a revelation of his character, he says, I am slow to anger.

Abounding in love. That's the word. He's abounding in love. He's abounding in covenant love. And that's David's God. And that's your God.

[20 : 39] He didn't have a small amount of love. He doesn't even have a great amount of love. He has an abounding love.

And so no matter what container you put out there, God's love overflows. So if you put the ocean out there, God's love fills the ocean. If you put the universe out there, God's love will fill that container.

It's abounding love. There's no restrictions on it. It's longer than any tape measure. It's bigger than anything that you can measure it with. And so it's beyond your deepest thoughts.

It's greater than your wildest imaginations. It's abounding love. And David knew it. And so that's how he prays. And that's the truth that David lays hold of.

And he argues with God, Oh Lord, because of your unfailing love, save me. And so we see again, he rests his plea on God's character.

[21 : 39] Theodore Roosevelt Jr. He fought in World War I. And then he came back and he fought in World War II as well.

And he was a fighting man through and through. There was very few generals like him in World War II. He had been in North Africa. He had fought in Italy.

And then on the eve of D-Day, he demanded that General Eisenhower let him be in the first wave when they landed on Utah Beach.

So he wants to be in the first wave and he's saying, General Eisenhower, you have to let me go.

Now, to get this picture right, you have to understand, he's 57 years old.

He's crippled with arthritis. He has to use a cane in order to walk. And so what is his argument going to be?

[22 : 41] How are you going to convince General Eisenhower to let him go? Well, this is what he said. My men expected of me. I'm the son of Theodore Roosevelt.

That was his argument. And you could paraphrase it like this. I have to do this. This is who I am. I'm the son of Theodore Roosevelt.

I come from a long line of hill-charging, fighting men. And my men know it. And I know it. And you know it. And that's what's expected.

And so you have to let me go. So, he rests his plea on his character. And David rests his plea on God's character. God, you've said you're abounding in love.

You've said this. So, Lord, hear me. Remember what you've said. And deliver me because of who you are. Now, David's second argument.

[23 : 42] Do you see what that is? It's in verse 5. This one's a little... You have to read between the lines. Dad.

That's right. It comes down to worship. Now, verses like this make people antsy. I mean, because we start reading into things that David didn't really mean. Is David saying that he really has no hope past the grave? I mean, what about heaven? I mean, I sure hope I'm praising in heaven.

And there's all these questions that come up. And I... You know, I think we need to avoid those rabbit trails. That is an implication. But it is not what David is saying.

He's not talking about eternal life. People believed in eternal life. David isn't talking about eternal life. He's talking about worship. And he's saying, God, if you let my enemies get me, and I die from weakness, then I won't be able to worship you with your people.

[24 : 58] It would sort of be like us praying, God, help me. Because if you don't hear me, then there's going to be one less person at Grace Fellowship Church who will sing, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing My Great Redeemer's Praise.

There's going to be one less person there if I die. See, because dead people don't sing Amazing Grace with God's people. And so do you see what David is assuming here?

He's assuming that the whole reason he's alive, the only reason he's alive, is to worship God. When he says, If I end up in Sheol, then I can't sing your praises.

He's assuming that the whole purpose of his life, is to worship God. The whole reason he's alive, is to worship God. Roger, do you have something?

Right. I think there's, that's one thing that we could say about that. There's other things that we could say, like, Why is David so intent on, I want to praise you here? David was a very public figure.

[26 : 09] And, so I think that weighs into it. So David is saying, you know, the whole purpose of I'm alive, is to praise God.

And, I think that assumption, we need to pause here, and we need to let that search us. He isn't saying these as nice words, when everything is going well.

He's saying this in the middle of agony. He's in spiritual, he's in physical agony, and agony, has a way of scraping off, a lot of the surface, and revealing our hearts, for what they are.

And so what is going on in David's heart, even in the middle, of this agony, and all this difficulty, it's still beating, with this idea, that I am here, to praise God.

And so, we need to ask, what's going on, in our own hearts? Why, why do I assume, that I am alive?

[27 : 15] And so, we do, let's ask David a question. David, what is wrong with dying? And David says, if I die, I can't praise God, in the temple, with his people anymore.

And so let's ask you, what is wrong with you dying? And the only good answer, the only correct answer, that is in tune, with what the Bible is, what the Bible says, is because, if I die, if you won't save me, then I won't be able to stand, gray cushiony chairs, at Grace Fellowship Church, and sing with God's people.

Other than that, there's no good reason. And so that's David's argument. I live to praise you. And if I die, I don't get to praise you, like that.

So God, save me. And if you save me, I will worship you. And so David is building his argument.

First, he answers, he says, God, answer me because of you, that you're loving.

And second, God, answer me because I want to praise you. Now the third we see is, God, answer me because I'm miserable. Look again at verse 6 and 7. I am worn out from groaning all night long.

[28 : 32] I flood my bed with weeping, and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weary, or grow weak with sorrow. They fail because of all my foes. So here's the toll, that this trial is taking on David.

Remember we said, that God gives his people sleep. We said that a few Psalms ago. But that isn't what is going on. David's problems have become so acute, that his bed, he just has become a torture rack.

And all he does is cry. And we have to think about who David is, and what he has been through.

He's a mighty man. But this problem is so great, that all he does is cry at night.

And so the groaning, the weeping, the exhaustion. Let me ask you, why does David rehearse that, before God?

God doesn't need to know that. So why is David saying, Lord, look at me, I'm crying, I can't stop crying, I can't sleep, I'm exhausted. Why does he say that? Mom.

[29:42] Yeah. I think we're back again, to an assumption. And the assumption is, is that, the Lord is merciful. The Lord is merciful, and he's touched, with pity, with the miseries of his people.

When Jesus saw Mary and Martha weeping, when Lazarus died, Jesus wept. And David is assuming, that, the Lord, the Father, is just like Jesus, always going around, being moved, with compassion.

And so, even in the middle of God's discipline, of his people, he has compassion for them. And I think that's something that, we need to take to heart.

Um, I think it, it reflects poorly on God, when we, look at other people's suffering, and we sort of assume, that, you know, well God is allowing that suffering, for discipline, and really he doesn't, he's kind of callous about it.

Um, I don't know if I can put into words, exactly what I'm trying to say, but, it's, the idea that, you know, when I spank my children, there's this feeling of, I don't like to do this.

[31:07] I, I would rather not do it, I have compassion on them, even as I'm disciplining them. But sometimes, we look at other people, and see them suffering, and we can think, God will remove that suffering for them, when the discipline has done its work.

And so, until that time, God is just sort of standing back, callously letting it happen, like he, it's on automatic. And really, that isn't what God is like. We're evil.

God is good. And if there's anything good in me, then there has to be so much more good in God, and how he has compassion on his children.

that's what David appeals to. God, look at me. Look at this. I, I can't sleep. I can't stop crying. I'm withering away.

Please look at me and help me. Well, those are his, those are his arguments. Dave. Very good.

[32:17] I, I think it's in the King James, it says that it's a strange work. this isn't, this doesn't, this doesn't, God doesn't enjoy punishing the wicked, in a certain sense.

Maybe these specific arguments don't work for you. Um, maybe they don't fit into your situation.

You know, but I think that we can learn a lesson, about what it means to pray.

Uh, just, that logic, and argumentation, have, everything to do with prayer. Um, so, suppose you're, you're up in the morning, you're getting ready to go to work, you're eating your bowl of cereal, and all of a sudden your teenage daughter appears in the door, and she says, Dad, I want an iPhone. And then she backs up, and that's all she says. She's gone. Now, how likely are you to give her what she wants? Probably not very likely, if all she did was show up in the door and say, Dad, I want an iPhone, and then stepped out.

But, that is how some of you pray. Um, that's how I pray sometimes. Um, you send your prayer up to heaven. You send the request, God help me, God do this. And then it's like, that's all that, all that he hears.

[33:42] Like, God is some sort of cosmic wish-grinder. he's a genie, that you just say the words, and he'll do it. And if he doesn't do what you want, then you become frustrated with him.

But, we have to remember, he's our father. He's a person. And as a person, he wants to have a relationship with you, just like, the father wants to have a relationship with his teenage daughter. And so, he wants to hear, from his teenage daughter. He wants an explanation from her. And God wants an explanation from us. He wants to hear us talk. He wants to hear, our request, and our reasons.

And so, when your daughter comes in, Dad, I want an iPhone. And this is why. You know, you could get a hold of me easier. My old phone isn't working as well.

I could listen to sermons on the bus. It's amazing how pious we become, right? You know, it has this neat feature.

[34:50] It reminds me to do my chores. And, you know, so there you go. She presents her case to you. And she shows concern. She shows maturity.

She shows that, you know what, what you think is important, not just what I want is important. Well, you're going to be a lot more inclined to give her what she wants, aren't you?

God's no different. He's a person. He wants to hear from you. He wants to hear your explanations. He wants to hear your heart. He wants to hear your reasons. And that's what David does.

He presents his argument before the Lord. And that's what we should do. Now, third, and very briefly, we've seen David's agony. We've seen David's argument.

