
The Pilgrim's Teaching Lord

Psalm 25¹⁴

Russ Kennedy

There are many dangers that surround pilgrims on their journey.

Enemies seek to destroy our name and sometimes our very lives...

The consequences of the sins of past can bring deep discouragement and despair...

The ordinary pressures and problems of life pull us down, down until our faith falters...

But pilgrims have a good, gracious and forgiving God. He is near to us. We trust in Him. So we praise and pray in a way that will sound like this Psalm. We express our desire for the Lord and our dependence on Him.

Like Psalm 119, this Psalm is written as an acrostic. Each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. We cannot reproduce that in our translations but it does exhibit the skill of our Psalmist, David. It reminds that our problems should never be our primary focus. Think about this: in the midst of dangers and difficulties the king wrote a song. Not just any song, but Scripture, and using a difficult literary device.

But the focus of this Psalm is the Lord who teaches and instructs His people. His people may be going through real difficulty, but what they most is the care and instruction of the Lord.

Our Concern

(v. 1-3)

Godly pilgrims are deeply concerned to give no reason for their enemies to rejoice.

¹ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

² O my God, in you I trust;

let me not be put to shame;

let not my enemies exult over me.

³ Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;

they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

We focus our hearts on the Lord. There is much that will draw our eyes. Our problems should never be the center or our gaze. The Lord is.

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We trust that God will prevent those who oppose us to gloat over our failures.

We believe and confess two important truths:

God will vindicate those who wait for Him. We must be patient.

God will shame those who are disloyal. We must be faithful.

Our Prayer

(v. 4-5)

Humble pilgrims ask for the instruction of the Lord.

⁴ Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.

⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.

We want to know what the Lord is like. God's ways and God's paths refer to God's character. He is like this or that and therefore does this or that.

We learn to know God by being taught about God. If we are going to be lead by God through the difficulties and dangers, we must learn from the Lord.

We appeal to be taught of and to come to know the Lord based on:

He is the God to whom we go for salvation.

He is the God to whom we submit in patient waiting.

Our Plea

(v. 6-7)

Repentant pilgrims rest in the love of the Lord.

⁶ Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

⁷ Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!

In our plea we ask the Lord:

...To remember His ancient mercy and love. What a deep statement of our dependence and desire for Him. We are so small and He is so great. Take notice of me, O Lord.

...To forget our youthful sins. It seems to me that this is more an old than a new covenant prayer. We have been cleansed and our consciences cleared. Our plea is that we accept the forgiveness and forgetfulness God assures us of.

...To remember us in love. We want His Divine attention because we need His care.

We ask these things for the sake of the Lord's goodness.

Our Declaration

(v. 8-10)

Obedient pilgrims pay attention to the Lord's instruction.

⁸ Good and upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

⁹ He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.

¹⁰ All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Notice the change in audience here. This a declaration to the people. Praise and prayer have now become proclamation.

We declare the *reason* for the Lord's teaching. He is good and upright.

We declare the *requirements* to receive the Lord's teaching. We must be humble. The proud cannot and will not learn. The proud are resisted by God. But the humble learner will be instructed by the Lord.

We declare the *results* of the Lord's teaching. Those who keep faith with the Lord have a deep experience of His unfailing love and kindness. There is no genuine relationship with God apart from believing Him in an obeying way. All else is faulty and fake.

One of the ways we learn from the Lord is to be taught by His people.

Our Relationship

(v. 11-15)

Reverent pilgrims find the friendship of the Lord.

¹¹ For your name's sake, O Lord,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.

¹² Who is the man who fears the Lord?
Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.

¹³ His soul shall abide in well-being,
and his offspring shall inherit the land.

¹⁴ The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him,
and he makes known to them his covenant.

¹⁵ My eyes are ever toward the Lord,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

We turn once again to our relationship with God. The Old Covenant saints longed for a walk with God that was not entangled in their past sins. They could not see God face to face. The place where God dwelt in earth was a room that was closed off to all but the High Priest. And if you were a Gentile, you worshipped from the parking lot.

But that did not keep them from longing and sometimes experiencing fellowship and friendship with God. We though have fellowship with God. We can call ourselves the friends of God. None of this is grounded in our covenant keeping. We have fellowship and

friendship with God because Jesus has kept the covenant for us. He has brought us into the New Covenant. All that is required of the pilgrim here is simply provided for us by Christ.

Yet, we are still to be a respectful, obedient, dependent, confessing, learning people. We *become* these because God has come to us in Christ. We *do not do* those in order to gain access to God.

Therefore, we are a people:

- ...Who have our guilt pardoned.
- ...Who approach learning from God in a respectful and reverent manner.
- ...Who are calm and confident in the surety of God's promises.
- ...Who enjoy the privilege of friendship with God.
- ...Who are regularly rescued by God.

So pilgrims set their eyes in the Lord who walks with them as their heavenly Friend.

Our Requests

(v. 16-18)

Afflicted pilgrims seek the Lord's help in their troubles.

¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.

¹⁷ The troubles of my heart are enlarged;
bring me out of my distresses.

¹⁸ Consider my affliction and my trouble,
and forgive all my sins.

Make no mistake, life will not be easy for God's people. We live in a fallen world in which we may suffer physical afflictions and hardships. Add to it the consequences of sin, the reversals of our failures and the opposition of the evil one. All of these can weigh heavily on our souls.

When we feel lonely, we ask the Lord to turn His gaze on us so we feel His care for us.

When we feel overwhelmed and anxious, we ask the Lord to take us out of our troubles.

When we feel how our sins have contributed to our troubles, we ask the Lord to lighten our chastening.

Lift up your requests to the Lord in your afflictions. He will lift up your hearts in your troubles.

Our Danger

(v. 19-21)

Attacked pilgrims seek refuge in God.

¹⁹ Consider how many are my foes,
and with what violent hatred they hate me.

²⁰ Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me!
Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

²¹ May integrity and uprightness preserve me,
for I wait for you.

Sometimes it is hard for us to identify with these sentiments. We are little opposed. The larger spiritual battles don't press on us personally. So we do not feel in danger.

What is it like to be hated for being one of God's people?

What is it like to be desperately need the protection of God?

What is like to have to be patient and persevere while being attacked by others?

I don't wish on us that this stanza one day rings with reality. But if that day comes, will you seek your refuge in God?

Our Hope

(v. 22)

Homeward bound pilgrims have joined the Christological trajectory.

²² Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all **his** troubles.

Save (the true) Israel out of His Troubles (v. 22)

This final stanza is not in the sequence of the acrostic. It stands alone. The Psalmist prays that God will redeem Israel. Here is His concern for his people, his nation. As he often did, King David gathers up the people of God into his own experience and needs.

The Holy Spirit inspired one simple pronoun here that points to Christ. Yes, Israel and David are being closely identified as one. But that is not all. The One who was to come and be final king is pointed to as well. Jesus was the new Israel, God's son. So Jesus and His people are being closely connected. He is their Redeemer. They are His redeemed.

Reflect and Respond

Godly pilgrims are deeply concerned to give no reason for their enemies to rejoice.

Humble pilgrims ask for the instruction of the Lord.

Repentant pilgrims rest in the love of the Lord.

Obedient pilgrims pay attention to the Lord's instruction.

Reverent pilgrims find the friendship of the Lord.

Afflicted pilgrims seek the Lord's help in their troubles.

Attacked pilgrims seek refuge in God.

Homeward bound pilgrims have joined the Christological trajectory.

May we be taught of the Lord as we journey through this life as the Lord's people.