

December 9, 2018

Six Reasons to Pray

Psalm 27

Part 2

The hardships of life can be fearful, but God grants us courage when we run to Him in prayer.

LTS: Psalm 46

In our study of Psalm 27 our focus has been on reasons (or motives) for prayer in the day of trouble. Unfortunately, for many of us, if we were completely honest, we would have to admit that we really don't pray very much. After all, it takes time to pray. It takes thought to pray. It takes Discipline, concentration and focus to really pray, especially if we intend to pray more than 5-10 minutes. Now, as I say that I sense the need to also say that I too feel the sting of Jesus' words to his disciples in the garden of Gathsemane, where he asked "What? Could you not watch [and pray] with me one hour?"

I wonder how many believers hearing my voice have prayed for a hole hour even once this year? I don't say that with an aire of condemnation, but with the desire to ask whether we would really know how to pray for more than a few minutes if we were determined to do so. I think this passage is helpful in this regard because David seems to approach God is so many different ways and with different goals in mind.

In verses 1-3, for example, David shows us what it looks like to pray because our confidence is in God.

Then in verse 4, David models for us what it looks like to Pray because we want to fellowship with God.

Today we come to the third motive for prayer; namely, that we should pray because we find refuge in God.

But before we dive into that verse and the ones that follow, let's take a moment to refresh on the Psalm as a whole.

Read Psalm 27

Today we pick up in verse five where we learn to...

III. Pray Because You Find Refuge in God (5)

Read v. 5

1. Once again, we must remember that David is facing a time of fierce trouble and he is tempted to be afraid. But David has something that the world doesn't have. He has a hiding place.

2. In the previous verse David is looking to God for One Thing; namely, that he might have the awesome privilege of actually fellowshiping with Yahweh. He wanted to "dwell in the house of the Lord" every day of his life. He wanted to behold the beauty of the of the Lord.

A. BTW: the word "behold" is a strong term. This is not a quick glance. He's not opening up his Bible in the morning to take a quick peak at God.

B. No, David desires to look deeply into the wonder and glory of God; to meditate on his attributes and consider all His infinite perfections.

C. This is the one thing David desires.

3. We learned last time that dwelling in the house of the Lord was NOT exclusively a desire to be near the physical tabernacle per se, rather it meant that he intended live as child in God's house no matter where he lived. In verse five, then, David extends the metaphor a little further.

4. The house of the Lord should be thought of NOT only as a place of fellowship with God but also as a place of safety and protection from our enemies.

5. The word "shelter" here is a clear reference to the tabernacle of God. Though David could not be physically near the tent of meeting, he could nevertheless run in the day of trouble to where his Father would take him in and conceal him [hide him] from his enemies under the cover of his tent.

6. One can hardly read this verse without recalling the story of Corrie Ten Boom (of Amsterdam) who. During the 2nd World War made it her business to hide Jews in a secret chamber of a hollow wall in her house to protect local Jews from the Nazis. The Ten Boom family risked their lives, and several of them lost their lives to hide those who were facing the "day of trouble."

7. But running to the Lord for refuge, in one sense, is dissimilar to running to the secret place in the Ten Boom house hold because, while it is true that they could hide the Jews, they had NO power to protect them against the Gestapo. God however, could not only hide David from his enemies, he could also protect and defend him as well.

8. So running to God as his refuge was like running to a mighty fortress built on a rock so high above his enemies that their arrows could not reach him. God Himself is that refuge, his hiding place, his rock.

9. In Psalm 18 David combines all of these metaphors when he writes, “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ³ I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies (Psa 18:2–3).

10. In verse 10 of that same Psalm (Psa. 18) David declares, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run to it and are safe.”

11. The application for us seems clear. The practical expression of David running to God for refuge is when he calls upon the Lord. In other words, he prays.

A. What enemies do you face today? What provokes you to fear? What robs you of courage? In the history of the church Christians have faced very real and terrible enemies

1) Nero - who...

2) Medieval princes and popes... for owning a bible, reading it in your own language, or teaching your children so much as the Lord's prayer you could be burned at the stake

3) In Corrie Ten Boom's day (1940's) it was Nazi's - who terrorized NOT only the Jews, but Christians as well (Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch Reformed Calvinistic Christian, devoted to the Lord even in the face of death.

B. Today we live in freedom from such harsh and deadly persecution (at least for now), but we still have enemies.

1) The world that tempts us to deny Christ

2) The flesh that never helps in our battle against such temptation.

3) The devil who roams about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

4) I dare say that there are likely more than a couple people hearing my voice right now who feel utterly defeated by the enemy of your soul. You have to fight! Therefore, you must pray.

C. To what do you run for refuge when the enemy of your soul tempts you to abandon God's truth and go your own way?

D. To what refuge do you run when you feel you've been betrayed by someone you trusted?

- E. To what do you run for refuge when financial crisis descends upon you?
- F. There is only one Rock, one fortress, one deliverer who is always present, always able to help, and never reluctant to come to your aid.

12. So Pray! Pray Because You Find Refuge in God.

IV. Pray because You're Thankful to God (6)

Read v. 6

1. This is the appropriate response of believers who discover that their prayers have been answered. How many times have we cried out for help in the battle against temptation, or in our financial fear or health concerns but failed to offer thanks to God for his personal care when it comes.

2. Here David is facing NOT one enemy, but a multitude of enemies "all around him." But now, God has rescued him! So, what does he do? He shouts for joy! He sings at the top of his lungs!

3. Beloved, I know many of your testimonies. I know how some of you, once upon a time, faced a particular trial that was SO bad, so hurtful, so discouraging that you felt as though life as you knew it was over! The joy was gone never to return. "But God!" That's your testimony, right! The circumstance left you hopeless, and helpless "But God!" When you least expected it, God stepped in and worked a seemingly miraculous repentance in that loved one you thought you lost, or physical recovery, or financial rescue! And now, when we meet together and sing God's praise you can't help but sing from the deepest part of your being and as loud as your lungs will sing, sometimes with hands lifted high and tears of absolute joy! David has been there! He knows what it's like to be rescued by the hand of the Lord. And in response to such providential and personal care he rejoices with bold thanksgiving and praise!

So pray, beloved! Pray because You're Thankful to God!

V. Pray Because You are Desperate for God (7-12)

Read 7-12

1. The mood changes suddenly when we get to this part of the Psalm. The first section (1-6) was all about David's confidence in God. In the following verses, however, it seems his confidence is shaken.

2. Here David is praying in desperation. Perhaps in the middle of writing this Psalm the fearful circumstance took a sudden turn for the worse. He is in a situation that is almost tempting him to panic. His enemies are numerous and powerful. Verse 12 says

that “false witnesses have risen against him, threatening violence.” He doesn’t know what to do. He is desperate. It seems like everyone but God Himself has abandoned him. So, what does he do? He cries out to God in desperation.

3. Notice his choice of words:

- A. (v. 7) “Be gracious [or Merciful] to me
- B. (v. 9) “Hide not your face from me.”
- C. Ibid. “Turn not your servant away...”
- D. Ibid. “Cast me not off...”
- E. Ibid. “forsake me not...”
- F. (v. 12) “Give me not up to my adversaries.”

4. As Gaebelien observers, “The repetitious language communicates the intensity of the soul searching, and the greatness of his need.”¹

5. When you read David’s cry for help it almost seems like he feels culpable for the trouble he is in. We can identify with that, can’t we? Sometimes our darkest days are at least partially self-inflicted. We know we have contributed to the problem (at least a little), and we are afraid God is just going to turn his back on us. But you know what? He never does.

6. Notice verse eight (8). “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’”

- A. You might ask: What does it mean to “Seek God’s face”? Obviously, he is not speaking about seeing the actual face of God. God told Moses (Ex. 10) “On the day you see my face you shall die.”
- B. On the other hand, when Moses went in to the “Tent of Meeting” (the Tabernacle) to receive instruction from God (Ex. 33:11), we are told “The Lord used to speak with Moses Face to Face as a man speaks with his friend.” I think “Face-to-face” here alludes to the intimacy of the communication, not that Moses actually saw God’s face. Even so, being in the presence of the manifest glory of God caused Moses’ face to shine; so much so, in fact, that he had to wear a veil to keep the people from being trouble by it (Ex. 34:33)
- C. There were times when the Lord, in judgment against someone who committed serious sin, would set his face against him” (Lev. 20:3)

¹ Frank Gaebelien, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, Vol 5, Psalms, -Song of Songs(Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1991), 246

- D. On the other hand, when the Jewish elders pronounced a blessing upon the people they would say, “The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (Num. 6:24-26)
- E. So, you see, having some facetime with the Lord was either a dangerous or delightful depending on one’s relationship with him. But God wanted His people to live in the circle of His blessing, so He invited them to seek His face. That is, to seek His blessing.
- F. When did God tell David to seek his face? Well, one place is found in that famous text of Scripture located in 2 Chron 7:14. You can probably quote it: “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land.”
- G. To seek God’s face means NOT only to seek His blessing, but to seek his will with the intention of obeying it. It means approaching God in prayer asking for His divine guidance.
- H. The parallel in Psalm 27 is verse 11, where David prays, “Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me...” In other words, Lord, tell me what to do and I will do it. Shepherd me, and I will follow. Rule me and I will obey. That’s what it means to seek God’s face. And for a Child of this heavenly Father, to seek His face is to find his blessing, his help, his salvation.

7. So (v. 8) in desperation David declares to the Lord, “You have said, ‘seek my face.’ My heart says to you, Your face, O Lord, do I seek. Hide NOT your face from me.”

8. Listen, No matter who you are this morning or what you have done, the Lord invites you to seek His face. And if you seek him in the day of trouble you will discover that though all else fails, your sovereign heavenly Father stands ever at the ready to receive you and be your help and salvation. How do I know? Because of verse 10. “My Father and mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.”

9. In what sense did David’s Father and Mother forsake him? We don’t know. He may simply mean that they have died. But the idea here is that, typically speaking, there are NO two people in the world who are more devoted to you, to your protection and well-being, than your Father and Mother. But even they are limited in what they can do. That’s not true of God.

10. On the other hand, many of you, your testimony is that you had a terrible relationship with your parents. They had no interest in protecting you. They were part of the Problem! If that's your story, I have good news. God is nothing like your mother and Father. They may have forsaken you when you needed them most, but the Lord will take you in. He will be your Light and your Salvation, your Hiding Place, your Refuge, your Strong Tower, your Mighty Fortress if you will seek His face in your hour of need.

11. Fanny Crosby was right when she wrote,

O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

12. Sometimes circumstances come upon us that feel nothing short of overwhelming. We don't know what to do. We don't know where to turn. We hardly even know how to pray. But in those moments, God invites us to turn to him and seek his face. He is not a reluctant Father. He is the one who initiates in this relationship.

13. So When you find yourself in the day of trouble, pray because you are desperate for God. Finally,

VI. Pray Because Your Hope is in God (13-14)

1. I see two things happening in this epilogue of the psalm. First (v. 13) David once again declares his confidence in God as his Light, Salvation, and Stronghold. He believes that His good and loving Father, who does all things for His own Glory and our good, will answer his prayer and rescue him. He writes, "I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

2. God had been his help in the past (v. 9), and he believes God will be his help again.

3. Second, (v. 14) David is either exhorting us or exhorting his own soul in prayer when he says, "Wait on the Lord; Be strong, and let your heart take courage: wait for the Lord."

4. The word for "Wait" can just as easily and appropriately be translated "Hope." Set your hope in the Lord. His ways are always perfect. And no matter what the circumstance we know for certain that that he is orchestrating things for our good.

5. Back in 18th Century there was a man who was the dear friend of John Newton, who famously wrote a hymn that we know as "Amazing Grace." Newton was a pastor at the time and one of the men in his parish needed a lot of attention. He was

fabulously wealthy, but often suicidally depressed. Newton thought it would help Cowper if he were to use his uncanny skill for writing poetry to help Newton write hymns for the church.

6. Cowper agreed to help, but really didn't finish many hymns. What he DID complete, however, was a famous poem entitled Light Shining out of Darkness. That title may not ring a bell, but one phrase of the poem probably does, "God works in mysterious ways." For many years that phrase has been part of our language and culture, but I suspect we have little idea how deep and rich was the context of that phrase. Listen to how that part of the poem reads in context.

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

David believed these truths 3,000 years before Cowper penned that poem. But they are as true for us as they ever were for the king of Israel.

So, be strong and let your heart take courage. The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

The hardships of life can be fearful, but God grants us courage when we run to Him in prayer.