

A Prayer for Remembrance

Book of Psalms

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Bible Text: Psalm 70

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All right. Let's take our Bible and look together at Psalm 70. It is just a short psalm with five verses, but very meaty and one that, I pray, the Lord will enable us to look at together during this time and prayerfully be taught once again of Christ by his Spirit.

Psalm 70.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.¹

Most gracious heavenly Father, as we consider these few verses, I pray that we would not be hurried in our minds because they are few and may we not presume in our hearts to have understanding just because it appears simple. I pray that as we enter in to what you Spirit directed David to write here that we would not only see how this applied to David, but as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ to his affliction, his suffering, his persecutors and how he would have looked to you, dear Father and cried unto you for sustenance and strength even in his obedience and the working out it unto death. May we be encouraged in our souls to know that even in our worst times of affliction and trial that we have a forerunner, who has gone before and I am thankful that we have your Word to encourage and strength these poor, needy hearts. And we give you the praise and all of the glory in our dear Savior's name. Amen.

Well, it is not hard to come up with a title for this psalm because it is right there in the title. This was a psalm of David and it says, "To bring to remembrance," so a psalm or prayer of remembrance. And this was written, obviously, in a time of great affliction for

¹ Psalm 70:1-5.

David. And I don't know if you remember. My memory is poor. If I didn't have the cross references in my Bible I would probably not have remembered this, but if you look back in Psalm chapter 40 this particular Psalm 70 is almost word for word from Psalm 40 as you come back here and take a look at it. And so it begs the question, particularly in Psalm 40 and verse 13.

Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.
Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.²

And so the question is? Why the repetition? Well, I believe that, first of all, on a practical level, it gives us who are the Lord's children a model, not that we are to repeat this word for word like people do with what they call the Lord's prayer, although the Lord's prayer is in John 17. What he taught is disciples is the disciples prayer.

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”³

And so it was given as a model. And I believe in that model we see a couple of things. Number one is the complete need of the one praying. That is what prayer is. We talk about a psalm of remembrance or a prayer of remembrance. It is a cry. I don't believe we truly pray until the Lord has caused us to be completely emptied of any thought of help from ourselves. True prayer is that of a needy sinner, just David says here in verse five.

“But I am poor and needy.”⁴

Poor in the sense of dead broke. And whatever the situation, I know a lot of people when they think of being poor and needy they think of materially. But how many times does the Lord show us throughout our lifetime just how poor and needy we are spiritually? When you take the Word, for example, and would open it and nothing seems to flow. There seems to be no blessing in what you read. It all seems to be as a closed door, as brass. I understand sometimes in the face of even preparing to preach how opening this Word, you know that you need to stand before a people and declare unto them the glory of Christ, but doing so with a hard heart, doing it with a cold heart, doing it with a heart of unbelief because of circumstances that you are going through and all of this seems to be as if the heavens were brass and the earth iron. That is how the Scriptures put it. The Lord brings us through those times and Moses, you know, in the face of the murmuring of the people, the first time the Lord said, “Smite the rock.” The second time he said,

² Psalm 40:13-17.

³ Matthew 6:9-10.

⁴ Psalm 70:5.

“Speak to the rock.” Well, the rock has already been smitten. And so we are to speak to the rock on behalf of the people and on behalf of people even in their worst rebellion. But anger, lashing out will in no way advance the cause of God and his righteousness. There is a humbling in those times, even when you declare the glories of Christ and sinners remain hardened. And it brings you in you unbelief even sometimes to question God. Why is it that there is not more effect of this Word or the gospel going forth. So I speak as a man before you today and say, “Those are thoughts that continually go through your mind.” There have been many times when I thought it would be best, probably, just to shut the door, turn the lights out and sell the building. And in your flesh that is how you respond. And yet we realize that the Lord has brought us to these times of need to where we look to him and we cry unto him for our own soul’s need, times where even though nobody else may be hearing or listening, and yet the Lord brings you to see if nobody else needs this, I do. I need this for my soul. And the Lord has put me in that away place, by the brook Kerith, just like he did with his prophet in order to feed, even if it is with ravens, to feed our needy soul.

So those are in the end, as you look back precious times. They are times where the Lord caused you to see had I not been put in that particular straight, then I would not have known the grace of the Lord, the refreshment of it, the mercies of the Lord, renewed, as Jeremiah said, “Great is thy faithfulness, they mercies are renewed morning after morning.”

And so David was in this particular frame of mind and heart and it was a blessing in many ways because not only to David had seen the Lord strengthening of his soul, but for us, because the Lord has purposed that if he had written in his holy Word not just once, but twice. And it is a reminder that there is no temptation, not trial that has taken us but such is common to man. Now I am thankful we have this Word. When at times we feel no one else understands. Did you ever get into that kind of mindset? No one else facing what I am facing. Well, guess what? Every situation we could ever face is already written right here in the Word, but our forerunner himself, the Lord Jesus Christ has been down this path. That is why he is the forerunner. And so in that I see, again, a double application, not only to those of us that are the Lord’s, but how it applies to our substitute, our Savior, our Redeemer.

As I read this particular psalm my mind was brought to how the Lord Jesus Christ would have addressed his Father. If we have any question as to what it was like when he went aside and sometimes told his disciples to wait and he went and addressed his Father, he would have prayed such a prayer even unto his Father, particularly in view of the cross and, again, a reminder that our Lord’s sufferings were real. They were true. And if the Scripture’s say—and they do—that he was tempted in all things such as we yet without sin, what a beautiful psalm, because David even in writing this wrote it as a sinner. When he said:

“But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God.”⁵

⁵ Psalm 70:5.

...it was for deliverance because of his sin. When Christ would have said, “I am poor and needy,” it would have been for the sin of his people. It would have been as the Scriptures say, “He who was rich for your sakes became poor that we might be made the very richness of God in him.” And so a lot in this little psalm to teach us about prayer, about how we address God, but also about our substitute and Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses one and five are a prayer for help.

“Make haste, O God.”⁶

And you will notice make haste there is in italic where as over in Psalm 40 and verse 13 it wasn't.

“O LORD, make haste to help me.”⁷

So I don't know whether the editors at this point wanted to draw the connection or not, but in the last part of the verse certainly we see that. So it is implied. “To God, oh God, to deliver me, make haste to help me,” might be a way to read that without that being written in there. But, nonetheless, it is in the particular Scripture.

And then down in verse five it is repeated again.

“But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God.”⁸

And so here is a cry for the Father to intervene. Now does God need remembrance? When it says here that it is a psalm to bring to remembrance, are we in any way informing God of something that he does not know? To hear some people pray, you would think so, just their tone of desperation is as if their God is away on a trip like Elijah said of the false prophets of Baal. “Cry louder. Perhaps he is away. Perhaps he is sleeping.”

And, but I want us to see that that is in no way the emphasis that we see here. But that being said, the Lord will bring his people to pray. He will put them in such a straight as to ... they cry to him in that urgency. You remember our Lord in the parable of the importunity of that friend that knocked at the door at midnight. Used that as an example of what it is when the Lord truly causes us to pray, to cry unto him. There is an urgency that he gives us with regard to a particular need.

You know, I have had people ask me. How do you know how you ought to pray? Well, number one the Scripture says we don't know. That is very clear in Romans chapter eight. We know not what to ask for or pray for as we ought. But I do find in my own experience, according to the Word that if the Lord burdens your heart and you can't get rid of that burden and try to cast it off and when you can't and the Lord is pleased to turn

⁶ Psalm 70:1.

⁷ Psalm 40:13.

⁸ Psalm 70:5.

your heart to him, then to me that is an indication that the Lord has given you a spirit of prayer. And certainly, I believe, that is what we see here.

Look over in Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 26. This is how the Lord himself declares it. He says, "Put me in remembrance." Now we have to realize that the Scriptures use human language to describe some of the attributes of God. It is not that God forgets, because he ordains all things. He sees the end from the beginning. He knows the end from the beginning. But so that we might understand what it is to importune God, as he gives the burden and puts us in the situation that then turns the heart to cry unto him, he says:

"Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified."⁹

So how does this work? Well, in the face of my sin. In the face of Satan's affliction, in the face of persecution from the world I asked myself in those times: Why am I in this straight? Why am I being so opposed? Well, the heart and mind, then, is turned to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. What did the Lord say? "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you. If they hated me without a cause, they will hate you without a cause."

There is a reason why those that tare the Lord's, the world stands opposed to them, just like Cain withstood Abel from the beginning and it was over a sacrifice. It was over the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and he even here in Isaiah 43 if you go back up to verse 25 that is the subject.

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."¹⁰

So complete was the work of the Lord Jesus Christ there at Calvary that upon completion of that work there remained nothing but righteousness to impute. And yet in our temptation what is it that we remember? We remember our sin. When Satan would tempt us what is it we remember? Well, we remember our fall. When the world points the finger at you and accuses you, what is it over? Well, it is never over when you have done something good according to them. It is always when you fall.

So in every instance, we are dealing with our sin and yet when the Lord says, "Put me in remembrance," it is not so much that God needs to have the remembrance, but put me in your remembrance. In other words, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Lord is pleased to draw your heart again to why is it that Christ died.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."¹¹

⁹ Isaiah 43:26.

¹⁰ Isaiah 43:25.

¹¹ 1 Timothy 1:15.

Put me in remembrance. Put me in your remembrance. Put in your remembrance. The key is it is he that blots out, has blotted out your transgression and remembers sin no more. If he remembers my sin no more, why should I remember it? Why would I dwell upon it? Why would I be brought into, as *Pilgrim's Progress* says, the slough of despond. See, there are some preachers that like to put you there and that is what John the Baptist faced in his day, that if you hadn't been through a certain experience, if you hadn't been made low enough and constantly remembering just how poor and depraved you are, that then you can't say you have head forgiveness. It is a works religion and there are some that like to do it.

“Put me in remembrance: let us plead together.”¹²

And that word plead is in a legal sense. It is not that we have to somehow plead this case again, let's come together in remembrance and remember the case that has already been plead, the case that has already been settled.

“...declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.”¹³

That in remembering the death of the Lord Jesus Christ we remember how it is that God is just to justify on behalf of the sinner. And so as we come back here to Psalm 70 I believe that David here in asking God:

“...O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.”¹⁴

It is in that sense. Draw my thoughts, draw my heart, draw my attention off of the enemy. Draw my attention of my downfalls. Draw my attention off of the mockery, because there is obviously mockery there in verse three.

“Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha.”¹⁵

Do you think there was plenty in David's life for the enemy to say, “Aah, aha”? Well, about as much as our own. If the Lord were to take even certain aspects of our life and publish it for the world to see, whether our thoughts or actions, maybe we feel better about ourselves because we have never been exposed as David was, but were we to be exposed to the world, would there be any different reaction? You say what? You know, all I hear is grace, grace, grace. Now look at you. All I hear you talking about is Christ, Christ, Christ. Now look at you. That is the way the works religion of the world will always respond in the face of the faults of one of the Lord's own. But, you know, when the Lord does that it is a mercy, because what it does, it takes any confidence off of yourself.

You know, I know that there are some people that are working hard to try to finish out

¹² Isaiah 43:26.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Psalm 70:1.

¹⁵ Psalm 70:3.

their life without a tarnish or a blemish to their name. Do you know what Christ will say to them?

“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”¹⁶

I pray, God, I don't go to my grave that way. You know, we don't need to sit and expose our sins one to another, but I know the Lord has taught me enough about myself to know that I am that needy sinner with whom it says that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners of whom I am chief. And I am thankful to be able to say that that will be my confession until my dying breath.

One of the old preachers that was being criticized of a certain habit that was attempting to preach the gospel. You know, someone came up and told him, said, “You realize what so and so is saying about you.” And you know what the preacher's response was? He said, “I am glad they don't know the half. What would they do if they knew it all?” I would just... I commend myself to the Lord.

So that is the prayer here, I believe, the sense of making haste really expresses urgency. And to be poor and needy, to be in want and distress, to have nothing spiritually, poverty, that is the sense of being poor here. What we have is the sign of a contrite heart that God himself is made to be contrite in such times we can say that we truly are praying.

So make haste. You know, there is times when it seems that God is delaying in helping his own people, but I remember years ago an elderly gentleman saying, “God is never ahead of time or behind time. He is always on time.” And he would often remind me and those of us that knew him of that whenever we began to kind of complain about things. He is always on time. And even here making haste, don't tarry. It is not that in any way David believed that God was somehow dragging his feet, but, again, the sense is the urgency is for David. You know, it is the same urgency, I trust the Lord gives us at times when we cry, “Give me Christ or I die.”

I don't know about you, but there is times when I come in even for worship together here that that is the cry of my heart. Give me Christ or I die. The thirsty soul, how the Lord has caused me to know even the dryness of my own heart and to cry unto the Lord, “Make haste,” because why? He is the all sufficient one. David is addressing the true source. Notice:

“O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.”¹⁷

And, again, two different words that are used there, one with reference to God's eternal being, oh God. And then you can see there, capital L, capital O, capital R and capital D, Jehovah. That is Christ. How is it that God the Father delivers his own, helps his own? It is through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the anointed one. And so when Christ came and said, “I am, I am the good shepherd,” he was identifying with Jehovah of

¹⁶ Matthew 7:23.

¹⁷ Psalm 70:1.

the Old Testament. And it is through him and him alone that God is pleased to hear and answer prayer.

But the second thing that we see in this prayer, you know, he prays for himself, but he prays against his enemies. Now there are some that might see a contradiction here. They say, “Well, didn’t the Lord teach us to bless our enemies and to pray for them?”

Well, here this prayer describes, I believe, the prayer of our Lord and gives us a model. There are certainly two ways of being able to read this. When it says, for example:

“Let them be ashamed...”¹⁸

...that word ashamed certainly could be in the sense of repentance. You know, let these that even though now they oppose me, let them be brought to repentance and confounded that seek after my soul. In other words, so filled with shame that the Lord would cause them then to seek him just as David was caused to seek the Lord. And certainly if the Lord burdens us for somebody who at some point is opposed to the gospel and so burdens us to pray that he might be pleased to draw them, these aren’t just words we repeat. I believe it is the Lord that put such a prayer in our heart. And he has to give us the wherewithal over time to know the difference. There was a time where the Lord told Samuel not to pray for Saul. There was a time where he told Jeremiah not to pray for this people. The Lord had purposed to deliver them up. And so the Lord took away the burden. But here definitely David is burdened to such a degree that he prays that they might be filled with shame that seek at this point after his soul. But when it says:

“...let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.”¹⁹

That word “turned backward” is the sense of being converted. So there would be here, as I said, something that we could see in the model of our Lord. Because stop for a minute and consider. Are we not all enemies as we are born into this world?

This was a radio broadcast that I prepared yesterday that is going to air next week. And it is from Romans chapter five, how God loves sinners. But what does Romans five teach us? While we were yet enemies Christ died for us. And so I see a measure of hope in this particular psalm and I believe that the title gives us a key: bring to remembrance.

The Lord is not going to cause one of his own to seek him and be burdened for him, continue to pray for one who is not his. Our Lord Jesus Christ is that example. He says:

“I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”²⁰

And just weigh your own heart. How long did you live in rebellion? How long did you live as an enemy in your mind to Christ and to God as you know him now to be? The

¹⁸ Psalm 70:2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ John 17:9.

Lord purposed that I live for some years thinking myself somebody until it pleased him to bring me low and the I was brought to see I was one of those enemies. If I had been there that day when they cried, “Crucify him, crucify him,” I would have been the one crying it out. Such was my state. The Lord brought me to see that and own it. And certainly his intercession on my behalf, his death on my behalf caused me to be ashamed and confounded. Do you see how that is? Caused me to be turned backward and put to confusion. That is a state of being lost. That is what that is described there. And to be turned back for reward of their shame that say, “Aha, aha.”

You say, “Well, where is there an example of this in then Scriptures?”

Look at Psalm 83. We are going to be cutting it put next week here, but in Psalm 83 notice verse 16. Well, begin in verse 13.

O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; So persecute [there the word is pursue] them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.²¹

So if that is all we had to read to this point we would think, well, that means he set them up for destruction. But read verse 16.

“Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.”²²

So that is how I see this particular psalm, Psalm 70, to bring to remembrance. Why would God say to bring him to remembrance for one that he had already destined to condemnation? Now here is some born in this world, born rebels, born in opposition just like we all were. And the prayer is that they might see their fault, they might see their folly in fighting against God.

I remember one old preacher described repentance that way, as laying down your arms. Wave the flag of surrender, give up. That is what God does. He brings us flat on our face before the Lord Jesus Christ and to thereby seek him. And so that is one sense, I believe, that we can read this. The other is even with regard to David. You know, whatever their designs may be against me at this particular point, let them be frustrated, let their attempts be broken. Let them be turned back from their malicious pursuits so that they are ashamed and confounded. As some of the old writings say, “Cut down in their own eyes.” And certainly I believe the publican and the temple, that was his case as the Lord brought him there. Here was this Pharisee that was really an enemy, because as he looked upon him, he thanked God he wasn't like this man. And yet the publican dared not even look heavenward, but beat upon his breast and said, “Oh, God, be merciful to me the sinner.”

Now there is a lot more here and I will come back to it next time, but I believe it transitions into verse four. If the Lord is pleased—and this is where I want us to kind of

²¹ Psalm 83:13-15.

²² Psalm 83:16.

think about this for next time—if the Lord had been pleased and is pleased to so turn back one that is born an abject rebel, an enemy in this world in his mind and yet Christ has already paid their debt and will be pleased in time to draw him, how will we know it.

Well, verse four.

“Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.”²³

You know, there are two precious states of being in mind and heart through which the Lord will bring every one of his children. The first is to be lost.

And you say, “Well, how is that blessed?”

When you are going through it, it is not easy to be lost, to be exposed, to see, our utter helplessness before a holy God is a dark hour. And yet... and then the second one is to be found. And those are the two states which every one of the Lord’s children will be brought through in their lifetime if they are the Lord’s, but in both cases do you know what such a one will declare? Let God be magnified.

I thank God he did not leave me to myself to go in the way I was going. Showed me who I was. Showed me that I was lost and caused me to be found by the Savior, by the one that ... he is the great shepherd of the sheep. And let God be magnified.

²³ Psalm 70:4.