

Doing Battle in Prayer

Text: Psalm 5:1-12

Introduction:

1. The Title: The heading of the Psalm gives us a couple of details:
 - To the Chief Musician – the **administrator** of the Psalm. The “Chief Musician” was “the master or director of the sacred music of the sanctuary” (C.H. Spurgeon).
 - Nehiloth – the **accompaniment** of the Psalm. The word means “a flute”.
 - A Psalm of David – the **author** of the Psalm.
2. The Time: Psalm 3 was a morning Psalm and Psalm 4 an evening Psalm. This Psalm could be called another morning Psalm (Vs. 3). Start and finish each day with the Lord!
3. The Theme: This Psalm is a plea to the Lord for His defence and protection against vicious enemies. It could be that this Psalm, like Psalm 3, was also written during that period of David's life when He was fleeing Absalom. Allen Ross suggests the following expository idea for the Psalm: “The righteous may pray with confidence for deliverance from deceitful and malicious attacks because their God hates wickedness.”
4. We will divide the Psalm under three headings for our brief expository study – 1. The Plea of his Prayer (Vs. 1-3). 2. The Principle in his Prayer (Vs. 4-7). 2. The Petition of his Prayer (Vs. 8-12).

I. THE PLEA OF HIS PRAYER (VS. 1-3)

A. A Fervent Request (Vs. 1-2)

1. The Boldness of his request (Vs. 1-2a)
 - a. “Give ear...consider...hearken” = not the language of arrogant demand but of reverential boldness. David is fervently asking God to give consideration to His prayer.
 - b. This cry of David's includes prayer that is expressed in words and prayer that is the cry of the heart and not put into actual words.
 - i. “my words” = represents verbalised prayer; prayer put into actual words.
 - ii. ‘meditation’ = sighing. “It describes a scarcely audible utterance (such as when Hannah was praying and misunderstood).” The word “hints at unspoken prayer, at the aching longing and yearning of the innermost being.” (Ross) David is coming to God with a burdened heart.
 - iii. ‘cry’ = the shout or cry of distress. In Psalm 6:8 David uses the expression “the voice of my weeping.” Spurgeon touchingly writes, “Weeping has a voice – a melting, plaintive tone, an ear-piercing shrillness, which reaches the very heart of God.

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Sometimes we cannot put our prayers into words but the Lord can comprehend the meaning of our cries, for He hears a voice in them.”

2. The Basis of his Request (Vs. 2b)
 - a. “**my** King, and **my** God” = David can approach God with confidence on account of his relationship with God. He approaches God as one of His children.
 - b. C.H. Spurgeon calls this the “pith and marrow of the plea”, the “grand argument why God should answer our prayer – because He is our King and our God.”

B. A Faithful Resolve (Vs. 3)

Before the Lord, David resolves...

1. The Occasion for his Praying (Vs. 3a)
 - a. David commits to a definite time for prayer – “in the morning”. This verse teaches us concerning the importance of the daily walk with God (the quiet time, daily devotional time, morning watch). While we need to walk with God throughout the entire day, we need to set aside a definite time within each day to spend in focused fellowship with God in the Word and in prayer. For the majority, the best time for that is in the morning at the start of the day. No matter what time works best for you, develop the daily habit of spending time with the Lord.
 - b. Spurgeon: “Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night. Devotion should be both the morning star and the evening star.”
 - c. Illustration: Daniel met with the Lord three times a day (Dan. 6:10)
2. The Direction for his Praying (Vs. 3b)
 - a. Purpose – “will I **direct** my prayer”
 - i. The word ‘direct’ is used to depict the setting in order of pieces of wood upon an altar of sacrifice. We read that Abraham at Mount Moriah “**laid** the wood **in order**, and bound Isaac his son.” (Gen. 22:9) It is also used for the placing of the shewbread upon the table. So, it means “I will arrange my prayer before thee” (Spurgeon).
 - ii. The word implies an orderly approach to prayer. David came into God’s presence with definite needs and requests to lay before the Lord. His praying was focused.
 - b. Person – “unto thee”
 - i. David would come directly to God Himself. This was his God-given privilege as a child of God. God alone is our resort in times of need.
 - ii. In like manner, we have direct access to God through Christ our Mediator. We do not need to come through a human mediator.
3. The Expectation for his Praying (Vs. 3c)
 - a. “will look up” = the phrase “look up” means “to lean forward, peer into the distance, observe, await.” (Strong’s) The same root word is often

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translated 'watch' or 'watchman' in the O.T. (e.g., Gen. 31:49; 1 Sam. 14:16). It reveals that David would pray with a spirit of expectancy. His eyes would be upon the Lord, expectantly waiting for His Divine answer to his prayers.

- b. This highlights the need for faith in the place of prayer. Do we pray anticipating answers or simply pray and then go our way with no real expectation that our prayer will be answered? Spurgeon writes, "How can we expect the Lord to open the windows of His grace, and pour us out a blessing, if we will not open the windows of expectation and look for the promised favour? Let holy preparation link hands with patient expectation, and we shall have far larger answers to our prayers."

II. THE PRINCIPLE IN HIS PRAYER (VS. 4-7)

Before David gets to the main petitions upon his heart, he first appeals to the character of God as the basis for the petitions that will follow. "Here is a righteous man, praying to a righteous God for protection from the unrighteous." (Ross) "His argument is powerful. He begs God to put them away from him, because they were displeasing to God Himself." (Spurgeon) It is a powerful thing when our prayers are anchored in the very nature of our God. Such praying brings great answers from heaven. David pleads on the basis of:

A. God's Character and the Rebellious (Vs. 4-6)

These verses describe God's view of sin and unrepentant sinners. These verses communicate in bold, capital letters the truth that **GOD HATES SIN**. Sin is...

1. Distasteful to God (Vs. 4a)
 - a. 'pleasure' = means to be pleased with, to delight in. Sadly, our sinful nature is such that we do delight in wickedness but in the Holy Nature of God, there is not one part of Him that has even the slightest inkling towards sin.
 - b. 'wickedness' = lawlessness.
 - c. Deut. 32:4 "*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*"
 - d. Isaiah 6:1-3 "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.**"
 - e. 1 John 1:5 "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.**"
 - f. James 1:13 "...for **God cannot be tempted with evil**, neither tempteth he any man:"
2. Distant from God (Vs. 4b-5a)

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- a. Sin is separated from His Presence (Vs. 4b) – “neither shall evil dwell with thee.” God cannot and will not allow any sin into His presence in heaven. That is why we need the cleansing of the blood of Christ through salvation.
 - b. Sinners are separated from His Presence (Vs. 5a) – “The foolish shall not stand in thy sight”. The word ‘foolish’ is a description of the ungodly in the Bible. Webster defines it as follows, “Void of understanding or sound judgment...In scripture, wicked; sinful; acting without regard to the divine law and glory, or to one's own eternal happiness.” It is an apt description of the ungodly. What could be more foolish than to live a sinful life and reject the Creator God!
3. Detestable to God (Vs. 5b-6)
- There are three statements that further reveal how abominable sin is to God:
- a. God hates sinful workers (Vs. 5b). The word ‘workers’ refers to those who “do or make something habitually” (Strong's). They practice ‘iniquity’ (lawlessness) like they would a trade. It is their continual employment. The word is “not simply a reference to people who sin; the participle describes people whose characteristic activity is that of doing iniquity.” (Ross) Spurgeon writes, “It is not a little dislike, but a thorough hatred which God bears to workers of iniquity.”
 - b. God will destroy sinful liars (Vs. 6a). The word ‘leaving’ is an old English word meaning “falsehood; lies”. Lying is a serious offense in the eyes of God (Rev. 21:8). “Observe that evil speakers must be punished as well as evil workers.” (Spurgeon)
 - c. God will abhor the bloody and deceitful. The word ‘abhor’ means to loathe, detest, to hate extremely (Webster). “It is related to the well-known noun ‘abomination’.” (Ross) It is translated ‘abominable’ in Psalm 14:1, 53:1; Isaiah 14:19; Ez. 16:52. The ‘bloody’ are the violent and murderous. The word ‘bloody’ indicates they shed blood.

B. God's Character and the Righteous (Vs. 7)

This verse presents the contrasting position of the righteous with God – “But as for me”.

1. The righteous enjoy access to God (Vs. 7a). This is in the contrast to the foolish who cannot “stand” in God's sight (Vs. 5). Access into God's presence is on the basis of “the multitude of thy mercy”. He does not come by his own merits (See Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-22). “God's judgments are all numbered, but his mercies are innumerable; he gives his wrath by weight, but without weight his mercy.” (Spurgeon)
2. The righteous offer adoration to God (Vs. 7b). The “holy temple” is a reference to the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle. It is worship directed toward the place where God's presence is revealed. In the N.T. age of grace, we can not only direct our prayer to the throne, we can come into the very throne room to offer our worship and prayers.

III. THE PETITION OF HIS PRAYER (VS. 8-12)

Having committed to the discipline of prayer (Vs. 1-3) and having appealed to the character of God, David now lays out some specific requests. He prays for:

A. Direction through His Enemies (Vs. 8-9)

1. The Appeal of David's Heart (Vs. 8)
 - a. "Lead me" = "he longs for God's guidance in the midst of opposition and deceit" (Ross).
 - b. "because of mine enemies" = the reason he longed for God's guidance. The battle made him acutely aware of the need for His God to guide his every step.
 - c. "make thy way straight" = a request that the way be straight and plain (Ross). He is asking God for clear direction.
2. The Attributes of David's Enemies (Vs. 9)

"This stanza has four lines, listing the characteristics of the wicked" (Ross).

 - a. "no faithfulness in their mouth" = nothing they said was trustworthy. They were deceitful and dishonest.
 - b. "their inward part is very wickedness" = the "inward part" is a reference to their hearts. The phrase "very wickedness" means 'perverse' (Job 6:30), 'mischievous' (Ps. 38:12), 'iniquity' (Ps. 94:20) and 'naughty' (Prov. 11:6).
 - c. "their throat is an open sepulchre" = the picture is of an open grave which emits the stench of its rotting contents, polluting the atmosphere around it. The words of the wicked produce death and destruction.
 - d. "they flatter with their tongue" = the word 'flatter' means "to be smooth" (Strong's). "The verb has the idea of smoothing something over to conceal it" (Ross). Spurgeon writes, "When the wolf licks the lamb, he is preparing to wet his teeth with its blood."
 - i. Webster defines it as, "False praise; commendation bestowed for the purpose of gaining favour and influence, or to accomplish some purpose."
 - ii. Oxford Dictionary defines it as "lavish praise and compliments on someone, often insincerely and with the aim of furthering one's own interests."
 - iii. Allen Ross comments: "It certainly is the equivalent of lying, but it is done in such a way as to give the false impression of trustworthiness or truthfulness. Then in the unfolding of the event, the true intent is revealed, and it is malicious."
 - iv. Prov. 29:5 "A man that flattereth his neighbour **spreadeth a net for his feet.**" The flatterer has an ulterior motive/agenda beneath the surface.

B. Destruction of His Enemies (Vs. 10)

1. "Destroy thou them, O God" = on its own this seems a startling prayer to pray, but they were already under the just condemnation of God – "Thou

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shalt destroy them" (Vs. 6). So, in effect David says "so be it" and agrees with the justice of God.

2. "for they have rebelled against **thee**" = "against thee" not "against me". David's focus is the honour of God. These people were already under condemnation because of their persistent rebellion so the Psalmist is simply praying that God would do what he was already going to do.
3. Note: This prayer was appropriate for David within the Old Testament context where as the king of the nation of Israel he was charged with the responsibility of defending the nation against real, physical threats. In the New Testament era, while we may not use the exact words of the Psalmist "Destroy thou them", we certainly can pray according to the principle. We can pray that God would deliver us from "unreasonable and wicked men" (2 Thess. 3:2) We can pray for the destruction of the work of principalities and powers in the realm of spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12).

C. Defence from His Enemies (Vs. 11-12)

The other side of the prayer. He prays not only for the wicked to be dealt with but for the righteous to be protected.

1. The Appeal for Defence (Vs. 11)
 - a. 'defendest' = literally means "cover over".
 - b. "rejoice...shout for joy...be joyful" = the rejoicing would be in response to God's gracious deliverance of His people.
2. The Assurance of Defence (Vs. 12)
 - a. He is confident of God's blessing (Vs. 12a).
 - b. He is confident of God's favour (Vs. 12b). The 'shield' here is a large shield that protected the whole body (1 Sam. 17:7) and was usually "twice the size of the ordinary shield." (Phillips)

Conclusion:

1. Theological lessons (what we learn about God)

- God hates sin with a holy hatred and will not allow sin or unrepentant sinners in His presence.
- God's holy hatred and just retribution will be poured out upon the unrepentant.
- God views lying and deceitfulness as serious sins.
- God views violence and the shedding of innocent blood with holy abhorrence.

2. Practical lessons (what we learn about the Christian life)

- Believers can be comforted with the knowledge that God knows and understands both our spoken and unspoken prayers. We have a God to whom we can bring the deepest burdens of our hearts.
- Believers need a regular, daily devotional life in the Word and prayer if they are to flourish spiritually. Believers can enter God's presence with reverent boldness.
- Believers can pray for deliverance from the attacks of the evil one through evil men, knowing that such a prayer is in line with the just character of God.
- Believers can have confidence that God will be their defence in the battle.