

Psalm 25 • Let me not be put to shame

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Psalm 25: we go back to a prayer and petition here. This is a cry for help that is directed to the Lord. It is written by David, and he begins by saying, “¹ *To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.*”

In other words, that is a simple way of saying, God, to You, I'm coming. I am not going to somebody else. I am not going to a human. I'm not looking for answers elsewhere. I'm coming to You.

“² *O my God, in you I trust. Let me not be put to shame. Let not my enemies exult over me.*” And then in typical fashion, David quickly expresses a word of faith in the Lord by saying in verse 3, “*Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame. They shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.*”

With that simple statement that David makes here in verse 3, you will notice that he emphasizes his faith in God's faithfulness and God's justice.

First of all, emphasizing God's faithfulness, he says, “*None who wait for you shall be put to shame.*” You guys know how hard it is to wait for the Lord when you're praying for something, and you are not getting a ready answer? Incredibly difficult, but notice what David says in the midst of waiting –when you and I are at that place where we are wondering, is the Lord going to come through for me?

David comes back with this word of faith that says, none who waits will be put to shame. In other words, they are never going to be shamed by their having waited for the Lord.

No one is ever going to be able to look at them and say, so you waited for God, wasn't that great? He didn't show up. And suddenly you are filled with shame because you waited for something that never took place. You put your hope in a God that never came through. David is saying, that is not going to happen. That is not going to happen. You wait for the Lord, and God is going to respond, eventually.

Then he also puts his faith in God's justice by saying, You know who is going to be ashamed? It's those “*who are wantonly* (that means deliberately) *treacherous.*”

Here's a question as we pause for just a moment in the midst of this Psalm. When you pray, I want you to think for a moment about when you're praying. You're asking help from the Lord, just laying your petitions before the Lord. Do you take any time during your prayer to make a statement to the Lord in prayer that is purely of faith?

In other words, we are all good at asking for what we want: Lord, this is what I need. But do you ever in your prayer –do I?-- like David does, simply make a statement to Him, not to anybody else, but to Him. Lord, I know. I know that You're going to answer me. I know that You're going to respond.

I know that You are good, and that You hear the prayers of Your children. That's a statement of faith. And we make those statements not because we feel full of faith. We make them because they are true.

And it is the same thing with David. David is really stressed out, you can tell. He really needs the help of God. He asks for help, but then he comes back right away and makes this faith-filled statement. Nobody who trusts in You is ever going to be put to shame. I know that.

He goes on. Verse 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.*

“⁶ *Remember your mercy, O LORD* (he calls the Lord's mercy into remembrance), *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!*”

Do you see how David is appealing to the Lord? He prays that the Lord would remember that He is a God of mercy. Obviously not thinking in any way that God has forgotten that.

But he is calling that to mind, and then saying, But do not remember the way I have lived my previous life. The days of my youth when I just lived for myself and selfishly went where I wanted to go and did what I wanted to do. Don't remember. Don't remember me according to the way I lived in the past. But instead, remember me according to Your steadfast love.

Then David's words of faith rise up again in verse 8. He says: *“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.”*

David has just called out for the Lord to lead him and teach him. Now he is again responding with faith and saying, This is what God does. God does this. He teaches sinners. He instructs them. He leads the humble.

Verse 10: *“All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.”*

Verse 11: *“For your name’s sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great.”* We don't know exactly what was going on in David's life that brought out these words, but you can tell that his guilt was weighing heavily on him. And so he is crying out to the Lord to pardon his sin, saying that it is great.

Verse 12: *“Who is the man who fears the LORD? (He will) Him (excuse me) 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.”*

Again, David goes on to express faith.

Verse 15: *“My eyes are ever toward the LORD (look at this), for He will pluck my feet out of the net.”* Again. I want to encourage you that if those kinds of declarations of faith are absent from your prayer time, start putting them in, start throwing them in there as you pray and lay out your petitions.

Then speak to the Lord out of faith. And again, faith is a declaration of what is true. It is not a declaration of what you happen to be feeling at the time. If it is true, declare it. Say it. Say it in your prayer. Lord, You are good. Lord, You are merciful. You delight to show mercy. You listen to the cries of the downhearted, and so forth.

I had an opportunity just today to pray with a gentleman who has pancreatic cancer, and not doing very well. And as we were praying, I was turning to my thoughts of the Psalms often, and just how (the Lord would make that or) David would make that request to the Lord and then speak that word of faith, You are good, and I know that You hear us. I know that You're listening. I know that You know everything that is going on in this brother's life, and so on. Just speaking those words of faith is so important.

Then David turns again to his plea in verse 16. He says, “*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.*

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

Did you notice in verse 20, David calls for the Lord to guard his soul. Why is he asking this of the Lord? It helps for us to remember, what is the soul? Again, the emotions, the intellect, the will. Basically all bound up in the soul.

David says, “*Guard my soul.*” I need you to guard my soul. What's the problem? David knows all too well during times of difficulty, our emotions can spin out of control. And what happens when that takes place? Discouragement, which gives in to depression and hopelessness. And David doesn't want to go there. He knows that is an ever-present temptation when you are going through hard times, and you are waiting on the Lord.

He says to the Lord, “*Guard my soul.*” You and I might not use those words, but we might say, Lord, my emotions are very tender right now. And I see that I'm on the precipice of falling headlong into an emotional tailspin here about this situation. And tears are at the ready, and I just feel very vulnerable at this time. Lord, I'm asking you to hold my emotions in your hands and guard me against the kind of discouragement that begins to breed a hopeless attitude from my circumstances.

One other thing I want to bring out from this Psalm –and we've already touched slightly on it– but did you notice that 3 times in this Psalm David speaks of waiting on the Lord? I want to show you where they occur. I'll put these on the screen here just so you can see them in linear form:

Waiting...

:3 none who wait for you shall be put to shame.

:5 for you I wait all the day long.

:21 I wait for you

First of all, in verse 3 he says, “*None who wait for you shall be put to shame.*” That was that statement of faith. But then in verse 5 he says, “*For you I wait all the day long.*” And then in verse 21 he says simply, “*I wait for you.*”

Now, we need to look at this. When something like this occurs so regularly in one particular Psalm, it's probably a good idea for you and me to think about it for a bit. And the idea of waiting on the Lord is one that is important for us to look at because it's not just sitting around and waiting for something to happen.

It's not like waiting for somebody to come call your name or waiting for tomorrow so that we can go on vacation, or something like that. Whenever you see in the Bible the statement about waiting for the Lord, the essence of that statement is always about waiting expectantly and with hope.

When David says, I wait, what he is saying is, My hope is in You. I am watching for You. I'm waiting for You to appear, and I have an expectation that Your answer is going to come. That is what it means to wait on the Lord.

But here is what we need to understand. You are not going to wait for someone you don't trust. Okay? So important to understand that. If you aren't absolutely convinced of someone's faithfulness, then your attitude toward waiting is going to be completely different.

When we know and have a foundation of knowledge about God's character and goodness, it motivates us to wait for the Lord. If you know something good is coming, you wait expectantly. Right? I'm waiting. What am I waiting for specifically? Now, this is the rub.

Some people will lay things before the Lord, and they'll wait expectantly sometimes for a specific answer for their prayer. What we're doing is we're waiting for the Lord. God may not give you what you specifically ask for. We all know that to be true. If you're going to sit and wait for a specific answer, you might be truly disappointed. But when we wait for the Lord and His goodness to be manifested however He chooses to display it in our lives, that's a different waiting.

I understand that waiting on the Lord is hard. It's all about holding on tight. I don't want to suggest to you in any way, shape, or form that waiting on the Lord is easy. It is very difficult. And I'll tell you right now, it is one of the most difficult things in my life. I hate waiting.

I hate waiting for anything. But when we wait on the Lord, as we wait on the Lord, we have to know that the Lord isn't making us wait just to see how long we can take it. That is not what is going on, although there were times when David was worn out waiting. Can I show you?

We are going to leap ahead here to Psalm 69. Look at this. I took some of the verse out of here, but this is the essence of what David said.

Psalm 69:3 (ESV)

I am weary... waiting for my God.

I am weary... waiting for my God.

David was a man of incredible faith, and he got weary waiting for God. I wonder what makes us think that we shouldn't or should never ever feel that kind of weariness.

It is challenging waiting on God. And you know what makes the difference, I believe, is being encouraged by other believers. There is probably only one thing worse than waiting, and that is waiting alone. But when there is somebody who can come alongside and hold your hand and say, hey, let's wait together; let's pray.

Let me just pray that God would strengthen you in the midst of the wait and that we would continue to watch expectantly for the answer of the Lord that can make all the difference in the world.

But listen, when somebody comes to you and expresses their weariness in waiting, don't chastise them. David had that same experience. So, if somebody says, I'm weary of waiting, just look them in the eye and say, I know, I get it, I understand.

Maybe you can even take them to that Psalm, Psalm 69, and say, so was David, but we keep waiting. What's the alternative? We're not going to give up. We're not just going to stop, lie down, and die. We're going to keep waiting.

We're going to keep trusting. We're going to keep hoping in the Lord. But getting weary, sometimes that's part of the drill. But here's the important part about waiting that we need to understand. Waiting carries with it the idea that it is the Lord I'm waiting for and not some other form of deliverance, whether brought about by myself or someone else.

In other words, waiting on the Lord means I have abandoned every other hope of an answer. I have abandoned any other solution to my problem. I am no longer fighting to make this thing happen. I'm done. I'm finished. I'm waiting on

the Lord. I'm waiting for the Lord. And I think that is sometimes why the Lord does allow us to wait.

Because sometimes I think in the back of our minds, I have a contingency plan just in case the Lord doesn't come through. I've got an idea in my mind how I might be able to work this thing out on my own, just in case God proves to be not as faithful as I might have otherwise believed.

And when we have, and we may not even be aware sometimes of that, but the Lord knows. The Lord knows when we have those little areas in our heart and mind that we have reserved for our own personal deliverance, our own acts of deliverance. And I think the Lord will allow us to get to the end of ourselves so that our waiting is accomplished only for Him.

But understand this, people. Waiting for the Lord means the ball is in His court. It means the next action belongs to Him. And let me tell you something. That might be a scary place for some people to be. But it is one of the safest places in the world to be. Where you put your hope in the Lord. And there are no other options available.