

Praying With The Psalmists: A Study in the Psalms, Psalm 25
Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on November 2nd, 2008

*"For all of this,
there's only one thing you should know
I've put my trust in you
Pushed as far as I can go
For all this,
There's only one thing you should know
I tried so hard
And got so far
But in the end
It doesn't even matter
I had to fall
To lose it all
But in the end
It doesn't even matter"*
Linkin' Park

Intro:

In a world where nothing and no one can be trusted, and with a worldview that demands that we don't "trust" anything we can't see, taste, touch, hear or smell, it seems impossible to trust in God. Yet we are made to trust in God. It's our fallen condition that keeps us unable to make this a reality in our life. This is what the fall does to us; it forces us to act in ways that are unnatural, and subsequently lays the foundation for our fear and neurosis. We desire to be satisfied, to feel secure, and to have an understanding of "why?" But we stumble because we begin our search in a world (worldview) that can't trust, and can't believe. It's scary to place ourselves in the vulnerable position of trusting someone or something. We spoil our relationships or would-be relationships because of fear and insecurity. We continually damage our spiritual life, because we want to control it. Our Psalm today is a prayer of trust that looks to Yahweh for guidance, sustenance and identity.

From the Head...

Redirecting Our Desires to Yahweh (Psalm 25:1-3)

"*I lift up my soul*" is an idiom for "*I direct my desire*." Our desires are what kill us when they are given the ultimate position in our heart, replacing the only God that we are created to serve and worship. Misplaced desires cause hurt, anxiety, depression, fears, etc. When we place our trust in something other than God, we will be let down. Our desires have been graciously given to us by God, so our goal isn't to rid ourselves of desires but to place them in the proper place of enjoyment, and use them to point us to be thankful to God (See **Romans 14:22-23**).

Shame is a result of not trusting in God. There will be no shame for those who trust in God (See **Romans 9:33; 10:11; Isaiah 49:23; 28:16**). Why is David writing this? What is causing His shame and his fear of being abandoned by God?

First, "*our enemies*" here are real, but not necessarily enemies of flesh and blood. Our enemies are *spiritual* (see **Ephesians 6:12**). Our enemies are found in *world systems* (**1 John 2:15**) and our enemies are *ourselves* (**Matthew 15:19; Romans 5:12**). No matter if we are in Christ or not, our enemies constantly surround us. Our enemies constantly preach to us, "You aren't good enough!" or "God isn't good enough. He only wants His own glory, and doesn't care about you!" There's always another piece of fruit that will make you wise, smart, successful and satisfied!

Secondly, David is grossly aware of his sins before God. Both of these (our enemies and our sin) can keep us from trusting in God. They force us to look at our life from a different perspective, and question if God is good enough to trust with our life.

Relinquishing Our Desire to Lead Ourselves (Psalm 25:4-5)

Here we have a standard prayer asking God (Yahweh) to be our leader (see **Psalm 139:23-24**). This is an acknowledgment that we are incapable of leading ourselves; that we need to re-direct our desire to lead ourselves and give it to God. This is the heart of the gospel (see **1 John 1:7-9**). Coming to God involves dying to self, recognizing God's sovereignty, repenting from our sins, (which means an agreement that God is right and we are wrong) and turning to Him in trust that He is in control.

Leading to a Desire to Ask For Forgiveness (Psalm 25:6-7; 16-21)

Again, part of coming to God involves asking for forgiveness (see **1 John 1:9**). We have sinned against God (see too **Luke 15:18-19**) but when we come to Him with a humble heart He is faithful to forgive us. The Psalmist is not setting up a distinction between himself and his enemies; he is well aware of his own transgressions, and realizes how those sinful tendencies provoke the issues he has with his enemies.

Resulting In a New Desire to Praise Yahweh and Regard Him As a Friend (Psalm 25:8-15)

True confession and an understanding of our sin should always result in praise (see **Luke 7:44-47**). Our praise cannot be manufactured, but ought to be an overflow of the joy we have in Christ because of the great grace and mercy He has shown us! Verse eleven shows us a great desire to make His name great, and not ours.

Our identity shifts when we seek God out and ask for forgiveness. God either is seen as a judge who will hurt us, or as a friend who loves us. This perspective changes as our identity in Him changes. When we realize that He is our friend and that he is good and loves us, it changes our actions and motivation (see **2 Corinthians 2:14-16**). To those who aren't being saved by the grace of God, His judgment is an appalling and fearful reality; there is no wonder why someone would want to deny His existence.

...to the Heart

This Psalm (like much of the wisdom literature in the bible) contrasts those who are wicked with those who are righteous. The contrast has little to do with the individual's character and much to do with whom the individual puts his/hers trust. As one commentator writes, "*The essence of the road to righteousness is this; it is a road too difficult to walk without the companionship and friendship of God.*"¹ Walking with God and growing in that walk begins and ends with whom we are walking. We trust Him to guide us correctly, even when it seems like the wrong way to go. Trust is a hard thing for sinful humanity! But it is the thing that we are called to do, and the thing that will renew our souls. Here are a few places in the Psalms where trust renews us:

Psalm 2:12 = We are blessed by it!

Psalm 5:11 = It brings us joy!

Psalm 9:10 = God does not forsake those who trust (see **Psalm 22**)!

Psalm 19:7 = God shows His loving-kindness to those who trust!

In contrast, those who trust in other things to protect them and bring them joy, end in anxiety and destruction. (**Psalm 20:7; Isaiah 31:1**)

What/who is it that you are trusting? What/who is that has your heart and your desires? If it's not Jesus, why not? What/who is standing between you and Jesus?

Books for Further Study: Baker Commentary on the Old Testament, Wisdom and Psalms, Psalms Vol. 1-2, John Goldingay; Answering God: The Psalms As Tools For Prayer, Eugene Peterson; The Message of the Psalms: A theological Commentary, Walter Brueggemann, Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible, Dietrich Bonhoeffer; Praying the Psalms, Thomas Merton; Bread in the Wilderness, Thomas Merton, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1, Peter C. Craigie, New International Biblical Commentary, Psalms, Craig C. Broyles, The Book of Psalms, Robert Alter, Psalms Volume 1, James Montgomery Boice, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23, Phillip Keller

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¹ Peter C. Craigie, Word Biblical Commentary; Psalms 1-50, 222