

Psalm 25: The ABC's of Prayer



Introduction

- ❖ ** Washington's *Prayer at Valley Forge* (Arnold Friberg, 1975): Prayer—in the midst of battle?
 - **Situation:** After entering winter quarters at Valley Forge in December 1777 with 12,000 men, Washington and his group encountered lack of food, proper clothing, poor shelter and extreme cold. Disease would ravage his troops, and historians estimate between 2,000-3,000 soldiers had died. Washington begged the Continental Congress for supplies, to no avail, and by February, he was merely trying to maintain morale and prevent desertion.
 - **Quote** (Ronald Reagan): "I said before that the most sublime picture in American history is of George Washington on his knees in the snow at Valley Forge. That image personifies a people who know that it's not enough to depend on our own courage and goodness. We must also seek help from God our father and preserver."
- ❖ ** Prayer and Priorities? Lord's Prayer? ACTS? CFC Mission and Purpose Statement!
- ❖ **Text:** **Psalm 25**
- ❖ **Context:** Wisdom Literature ← Covenant/Law/Godly
 - OT Wisdom Literature → Definitions: Knowledge/Understanding/Wisdom
 - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." **Proverbs 9:10**
- ❖ **Background:** *Psalm of David* → Individual Lament (also ~ prayer of confidence) → Community Lament
- ❖ **Big Idea:** *Our prayer should reflect an understanding of God's nature and our condition.*

Exposition

(*Outline: Dr. Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, EBC)

- ❖ **(A) Prayer for Deliverance (verses 1-3)**
 - NB: ~ Acrostic (2 *resh*, no *waw/qoph*, last verse—*peh*) → Difficult Structure → Progression (~ lament)
 - Grounded in *trust/confidence* (~ O LORD/my God—relationship!) → Deliverance from *enemies*
- ❖ **(B) Prayer for Forgiveness (verses 4-7)**
 - *Show/Teach/Lead* (guidance ~ internalize God's word) ← God of Salvation → Remember (3x)!
 - **Transition:** Forgiveness → Guidance
- ❖ **(C) Assurance of Guidance (verses 8-10)**
 - Character of the LORD → Reflected: Instruction → Purpose: Godliness
- ❖ **(B') Prayer for Forgiveness (verse 11)**
 - *Your names' sake* (~ character) → Forgive! (SIN)
 - **Transition:** Forgiveness → Guidance

❖ **(C') Assurance of Guidance** (verses 12-14)

- *Fear the LORD* (~ humility) → Guidance → Benefits: Intimate Relationship (~ prosperity and land, cf. Abraham) and Knowledge of God's Covenant

❖ **(A') Prayer for Deliverance** (verses 15-22)

- Desperate plea (NB: imperatives) based on *trust* in God
- *Redeem Israel* ~ Community Lament (expansion)

So What?

❖ **Foundation** (God's Word) **and Progression:** *God's* Character and Nature → *Our* Confession (~ condition) and Prayer

- NB: *Laments* "spiral" from doubt to faith to praise ~ disorients, reorients, and orients us in *real* life!

❖ **God's Nature:** Attributes and Importance

- **Good** (v. 8) ~ Greater than mere moral quality (> "legal"!) and includes God's presence, promises, and blessings of peace, life, love, salvation, vindication, and glory → *Immutable* Character doesn't change "definition" of what is good (vs "fickle" Allah).
- **Upright** (v. 8) ~ Moral and legal *integrity*—"straight" vs crooked/scheming/perversion—reflected in His commandments and judgment (~ justice vs "equity") → *Revealed* commands should reflect doing what is right!
- **Righteous** (v. 9) ~ Greater than judicial or forensic quality and is basis of *relationship* (Kingdom!) → Imputed *righteousness* of Christ (verb "justify").
- **Just(ice)** (v. 9) ~ Consistent law and order in creation → Judgment will be *true* and "correct" ~ Biblical vs Social...
- **Compassionate** (v. 6) ~ "Parental" concern for His children (supportive/understanding/attentive) → Knows us better than we know ourselves!
- **Lovingkindness** (*hesed*—vv. 6, 7, 10) ~ Covenant love and loyalty → Faithful when we are faithless!
- **Truth** (v. 10) ~ Constancy and fidelity—*corresponds* to His nature and *reality* (vs "my truth") → Personified in Christ and revealed in Scripture!
- **Gracious** (v. 16) ~ "Grace"—Favor in material and spiritual *blessings* → Now and forever!

- ** Provides assurance (*hesed*)!
 - **Illus:** John's Letters (*Believe/Be Ready/Be Sure*) ~ "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." **1 John 5:13**

➤ **Transition:** Theology → Anthropology and Soteriology

❖ **Our Condition:** *Sinners* (vv. 7, 8)

SIN

➤ Response: Attitude? Teachable? Humility (v. 9—*fear the LORD* v. 12 ~ David)!

- **Illus:** TEDS F.A.T. Tuesdays...
- “Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” **Luke 18:9–14**

➤ Benefits: “Salvation”

GRACE

- **Forgiveness** (~ makes fellowship possible): Others? Self?
 - **(CtW)** “Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.” **Micah 7:18–20**
 - “I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.” **1 John 2:12**
 - “The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” **Psalms 103:8–14**
 - **** Lord’s Prayer Example** ~ “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” **Ephesians 4:32**
- **Deliverance** (~ many enemies...shame) < Sin and Death
 - “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” **1 Corinthians 15:25–26**
- **Guidance** (~ wisdom—NB: *ways and paths*)
 - “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all

might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” **Colossians 1:9–14**

➤ **Transition:** So, is this your prayer and experience?

❖ Conclusion

➤ **Quote** (Gerald Wilson): [Psalm 25] as a covenant for sinners...

- **Illus:** OT “Saints” (cf. Noah/Abraham/Lot/Jacob/Gideon/Samson/David)
- “When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”” **Matthew 9:12–13**

➤ **** Trust and Humility** → Salvation (“Fruit” ~ Forgiveness/Deliverance/Guidance)

JESUS

➤ **** Prayer** (~ General Washington) for the Battle! → Armor of God... “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—” **Ephesians 6:18**

➤ **Big Idea:** *Our prayer should reflect an understanding of God’s nature and our condition.*

Soli Deo Gloria