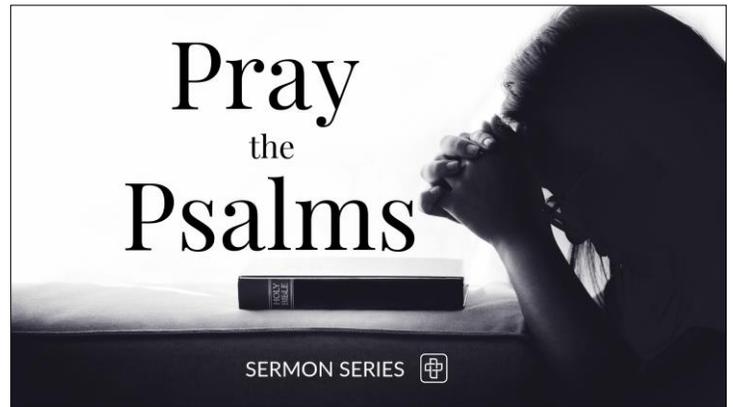


A Prayer of Dependence

Psalm 25

David Sunday June 9, 2019



Father, thank You that as I step into this pulpit, I can come here saying, “I believe in the Holy Spirit and that You are with me through Your Spirit.” Thank You for being with us, to enliven us and give us ears and give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation, that we might know You better. I pray that would happen as we open Your Word today.

I pray for those who aren’t with us today. I pray for Heather Porcaro as she’s listening on livestream right now in a hospital room in Texas with her dad, Jeff, and her stepmom Maryann. We pray Lord that You would draw near to them, comfort them and draw Jeff close to you today. We pray that You would help them in the midst of their need.

I thank You that You will help us now as we open Your Word. May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer, we pray, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Please open your Bibles to Psalm 25, a Psalm of David and a prayer of dependence on the Lord. Let’s continue in worship as we listen to God’s Holy Word together. Psalm 25:

- ¹ To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.*
- ² O my God, in you I trust;
let me not be put to shame;
let not my enemies exult over me.*
- ³ Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.*
- 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, 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!*

- ⁸ *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.*
- ¹⁰ *All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.*
- ¹¹ *For your name's sake, O LORD,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.*
- ¹² *Who is the man who fears the LORD?
Him 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.*
- ¹⁵ *My eyes are ever toward the LORD,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.*
- ¹⁶ *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.*

This is God's Word to us, given that we might pray it back to Him. Thanks be to God for His living Word.

I didn't like salad when I was a kid. Growing up in Wisconsin in the '70s and '80s, we didn't know what arugula was. Kale was something you fed your rabbit. Quinoa? We wouldn't even have known how to pronounce that. The closest I got to salad was at my Nana Joyce's house on Sunday afternoons, where we would go almost weekly. She would start out a deliciously calorie-laden, fresh-baked, high-carb feast with her version of salad, which was a single leaf of lettuce on a plate, covered with a big glob of homemade caramel, with a pineapple wedge on top, then another glob of whipped cream to cover the pineapple, with a maraschino cherry on top. Eating the lettuce was optional. Most of us treated it like parsley. I loved Nana Joyce's salads.

Sometime in my 20s, Kate started making much healthier salads with just about every meal and now I love to eat them. One of the neat things about salads is you can blend a bunch of ingredients together that wouldn't necessarily taste good on their own, like walnuts. I don't really like to eat walnuts alone, but if you put some cranberries and goat cheese with them, along with the right dressing, they can be delicious.

I am telling you all this because some Psalms are like a salad and Psalm 25 is one of them. When you first read it, it can look like the writer has just tossed together a hodge-podge of ingredients without a unifying theme. But if you could see this Psalm in the Hebrew language, you'd know immediately that there is a clue, that this is more than just stream of consciousness, where the writer is saying whatever pops into his mind without any plan or purpose.

No, this is acrostic psalm—the type of poem where each line begins with a new letter, from A to Z, through the alphabet. David is a poet who is crafting a masterpiece here. But if you read it in the Hebrew, you'd also notice there are a couple letters from the Hebrew alphabet that are missing. It's what literary critics call a "broken acrostic." That's significant too, because David is writing out of his own brokenness. He's living in a fallen world where life is messy and the troubles we face don't fit into neat categories with simple answers.

Behind these broken pieces, there is a flavor that starts to emerge. Here's the flavor God wants His people to take away from this Psalm: "If you depend on the Lord, He will never, ever let you down." That's the flavor God wants us to take in as these broken pieces start to blend together.

I know some of you today are wondering, "Is it really true that if I depend on the Lord, He will never, ever let me down?" Some of you are feeling like a jilted lover, like Lady Edith on Downton Abbey. You've been led down the aisle to the altar, all eyes are on you, then just as the minister starts the ceremony—"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here together..."—the bridegroom says, "I can't do this" and he walks away. He leaves you standing there, publicly shamed, humiliated and disgraced.

In the Bible, shame is about more than being embarrassed or feeling foolish. Shame is about being rejected and abandoned by someone you were deeply depending on. Some of you have been put to shame or disgrace by your own spouse, others by a friend who stabbed you in the back and humiliated you. Maybe you feel like at the time you most needed the people in your life, not a friend was to be found and you were left abandoned and alone.

Or maybe you are feeling the stinging shame of your own sin. As shame rises and stifles your sense of dignity, value and worth, you're wondering, "Who can I trust? Where can I find stability when it feels like I'm standing on the San Andreas Fault in the middle of an earthquake?"

Well, if that's you, King David knows what you're feeling. He describes four emotions that are tossing around in his heart here. He's afraid, confused, guilty and lonely. He's afraid in verse two. He speaks about, "My enemies—don't let them exult over me." And verse 19 says they are many and violent. "They hate me with violent hatred." He's afraid.

He's also confused. This often happens when you're facing a lot of enemies, when you're facing a lot of turmoil in life. You start to get disoriented. So in verses four and five, we see David praying, "Which way should I go? What path should I take?"

And he's guilty. He's very aware in verses six and seven of sins he had done long ago in his past—the sins of his youth. But he can't forget them.

Then in verse 11, we see that he's also very aware of great iniquity in his life. He feels the perversity of his own heart—and sometimes it feels like it's increasing.

Pastor Robin Weekes pointed out something really important here. He said, "Don't think that the Bible was written by good people for good people. No. The Bible was written for sinners by sinners." That's what we see in this Psalm. David is afraid, confused, guilty and he's lonely. Look at verse 16: "*Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.*"

Can you identify with King David? Maybe you're not feeling all these things today, but someday you will. I hate to break it to you, graduates. I doubt anybody at any of your schools gave a commencement speech that sounded like this: "Welcome to a life of fear, confusion, guilt and loneliness. See what you have to look forward to." In addition to all the exciting things you will experience as you launch out into the next season of your life—college, a new job, new relationships—I need to tell you today, as a shepherd who cares for your soul, that these four emotions will be woven into the tapestry of your life.

You will feel afraid at times. You will feel confused, guilty or lonely, as you navigate your way through life in a storm-tossed world. I think the college years are often when we really start to grapple with these kinds of emotions. I'm not here to pop your bubble today. I'm here to tell you where to anchor your soul when you're going through these things. And I'm here to assure you that the anchor will hold. If you depend on the God of faithful covenant love that David prays to in this Psalm, you can be sure of this: He will never, ever let you down.

You can depend on the Lord when you're afraid.

The first thing we see in this Psalm is that you can depend on the Lord when you're afraid. How do you do that? Look at verse one: "*To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.*" Or the Christian Standard Bible says, "*Lord, I appeal to you,*" helping us to understand the soul is not just some part of me. The soul is the essence of life. To lift up the soul to God is to bring all that you are and

all that you have before the Lord in total dependency on Him. “Lord, You alone are the solution to every need I have. You’re the court of highest appeal. I will rely completely on You. Come to my defense, my Maker, my Defender, my Redeemer, my Friend.” Verse two: “*My God...*” You are my God. Like we sang this morning, “I am Yours and You are mine.” You are my God.

“*I trust in you,*” he says in verse two (CSB). “*Do not let me be disgraced; do not let my enemies gloat over me.*” Enemies are all around me, seeking to destroy me. Don’t let them ridicule me and make a public spectacle out of me like they did Hester Prynne in the Scarlet Letter. She was forced to wear a scarlet “A” for her adultery and have a drummer boy follow her out in public so everyone could look down on her when she appeared. That’s what our enemy wants to do. He wants to expose us to disgrace.

Brothers and sisters, we need to be watchful, sober-minded, alert, because we have an adversary like this. The devil prowls like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He’s an accuser who wants to expose us to public ridicule and shame. But our struggle is not against flesh and blood, the Bible says, but against rulers and authorities and cosmic powers of this darkness, against the evil spiritual forces in the heavens (Ephesians 6:12).

Do you think the spiritual battle is less intense here in 21st century Fox Valley than it was in the first century? Do you think there’s not really that much spiritual warfare going on here? If you do, that’s exactly what the enemy wants you to think. He wants to lull you into a spiritual slumber, while the forces of evil gather outside the camp of your mind and set up their platoons to take you down.

Graduates, every day you step into the university, you need to be armed for battle. You need to put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). Your mind and heart need to be lifted up to the Lord in prayer, because people are going to hate you just because you’re a Christian. The devil wants to destroy you. He wants you to be ashamed—ashamed of who you are, ashamed of Christ and His gospel. In order to fight that, you need to begin your day in prayer, call on the Lord and appeal to Him to defend you.

Here’s a little prayer that I pray first thing in the morning: “Unto You, O Lord, I offer my heart, promptly and sincerely. I give myself to You. I call on You.” We need to begin our day like that, then express our confidence in His protection and deliverance. That’s what David is doing in verse three. Look at what he says. “*Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame.*” Then he says this phrase: “*Those who act treacherously without cause will be disgraced*” (CSB).

Friends, there are going to be people in your life who are going to be treacherous toward you, but it’s not because of anything in you. For no reason in yourself. God will not let you down. He will bring shame and disgrace on all the enemies of His people if they do not repent, but He will

not let you down. You might not see it right away. You might not see His vindication, so that's why it says in verse three that you need to wait on Him.

Look toward the end of this Psalm, in verse 17, and we see that David is still in this same predicament toward the end. The New Living Translation puts verse 17 like this: "*My problems go from bad to worse.*" And in verse 19 his enemies are numerous. They hate him violently. But notice that David's confidence has not wavered. He continues to pray at the end of the Psalm just as he did at the beginning. Verse 20: "*Guard me and rescue me; do not let me put to shame.*" Why? "*For I take refuge in you*" (CSB).

Now practically, what does it mean to believe that you can depend on the Lord when you're afraid, when you have enemies who are accusing you and surrounding you? What does it mean? I like how J.D. Greear put it: "It's kind of like this. It means we need to trust that other people cannot derail God's will for your life." No one has the power to do that. They can't derail God's good purposes for you.

Maybe you're looking back on your life right now, rehearsing how someone has messed you up—a dad, a mom, a brother, a friend, a teacher, a coworker, a business partner. You just can't get it out of your mind. "They ruined my life." David had people like that too. What is he doing here in this Psalm? He's saying, "God, Your presence, promises and power will overrule all their evil intentions against me. They're not going to be able to ruin my life, because You are my God."

Just think of Joseph. What enabled Joseph to forgive his brothers after they sold him into slavery and all that Joseph suffered? What he went through was horrible. But Joseph recognized their evil could not undo God's good plan for his life. At the end of his life he said to his brothers, "All these evil things you did to me—you intended it for evil, but God meant it for good" (Exodus 50:20). He's worked it out for good.

When you realize this, you can release the bitterness that comes from thinking someone else has ruined your life. What if today you went and wrote down the name or the names of those people who you really think did you wrong? They acted treacherously against you without cause. Then what if you wrote next to each name, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good"?

Instead of being afraid that your life is a big train wreck, what if you said to the Lord today, "No one who waits for You will be disgraced, so I will wait for You, Lord. I will depend on You when I'm afraid. When my enemies are many and they hate me violently, I will trust that You will guard and rescue me. I will trust that, You will not let me be put to shame, that You will redeem me from all my troubles and I will take refuge in You." That's what David is doing here.

What does it really look like to wait for the Lord? Well, let's continue by looking at David's prayer in verses four and five. It's a wonderful prayer for us to pray. "*Make me to know your*

ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.” David is recognizing this world is a confusing place and living for God in this world can just be puzzling at times, even bewildering. And then we’ve got our own hearts that are prone to wander and to lose our way and to get confused.

You can depend on the Lord when you’re confused.

But David is showing us here, secondly, that you can depend on the Lord when you’re confused, when you don’t know which way is up and which way is down. If you’ve ever wondered, “How do I find God’s will for my life?” or “What if I miss God’s will for my life?” this prayer in verses four and five is for you. Notice David doesn’t say, “God, show me my way.” He doesn’t say, “God, I need You to tell me right now what I’m supposed to do and what Your plan for me is.”

No, he says, “Show me Your ways. Make Your ways known to me, God. Show me and teach me Your paths.” David is showing us here that sometimes we want guidance from God, but we don’t want the Guide. David wants the Guide. David wants God’s ways in his life. He wants God’s paths. The Bible is teaching us here, in the words of Tim Keller: “Guidance is not something God gives you; it’s something He does for you.” He guides you. He’s your Guide.

J.I. Packer told a story to illustrate it like this. Imagine you’re driving around in a rural area without GPS, so you can’t look on Apple Maps. You drive up to a corner and see someone who looks like he’s local and would know his way around. You’re trying to get somewhere, but you can’t find it. You say to the guy, “I’m trying to go to X,” and the guy looks at you and says, “Oh, boy. That’s going to be really difficult. That’s a hard place to get to.”

So he draws you this unbelievable map and you look at the thing—turn here, there, everywhere, over the river and through the woods—and you’re dazed and confused. Finally he says, “I’ll tell you what. I’m going that way myself. What if I just get in the car?” So he gets in the car with you. He doesn’t just give you guidance; he becomes your guide. He leads you.

That’s what David is saying he wants God to do for Him. “God, be my Guide. Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak, but You are mighty. Hold me with Your powerful hand.” That’s what David is saying here.

And what does this Psalm teach us about the Guide? Look at the way David describes the character of his guide in verses eight to ten (CSB): “*The Lord is good and upright...*” Believe that today, friends. “*Therefore he shows sinners the way.*” He doesn’t demand that you be perfect to be guided by Him. No, He’ll show sinners the way. Here’s what He wants from you—humility. He wants you to recognize you need Him to guide you. “*He leads the humble in what is right and*

teaches them his way. All the Lord's ways show faithful love and truth to those who keep his covenant and decrees."

Just think about that. This is Who is guiding my life, if I trust Him. He's good. He's upright. He knows how to show me the way. He'll lead me. He won't despise my weakness. He draws near to the humble. And every way of the Lord is full of faithful love and truth. That's beautiful. It's beautiful because a lot of people feel like God's plan is kind of like a train ride. Maybe there are eight stops along the way, but if you miss the first stop, boy, you're stuck. You're dead. You're never going to get there. You're on plan B now.

I talk to people in their 40s who think, "Somewhere along the way I made the wrong choice, married the wrong person, took the wrong job, went to the wrong school. I'm just kind of doomed now. My life is a wreck. My life's a failure." Verse ten says no, "*All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness...*" Even your mistakes—everything you have done wrong—God can take that. It won't be pleasant. There are going to be consequences. But God is able to take what you have unraveled through your sin, and in His love and faithfulness, He's able to weave that into something that is good and beautiful. His paths are full of steadfast love and faithfulness "*...for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.*"

So how do you find God's will for your life, according to this Psalm?

First, you've got to get to know Who God is. "Show me Your ways, Lord." You do that by saturating yourself in Scripture, not just pulling verses out of thin air, not just saying, "Oh, I need to know God's will today, so I'm going to open my Bible to wherever and point to whatever verse—and that's God's will for me." No. The Bible says, "*Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil*" (Hebrews 5:14). So you immerse yourself in the Word. You get to know God and Who He is;

Then you commit yourself to obey Him. That's what it means to be humble. He leads the humble in what is right, in how they should live. It means to be teachable and complaint, ready to do what He shows you.

Let's put it like this. You're really concerned about what your decision in life should be, so you're asking God for guidance. But you know there's an area of your life where you will not obey. Maybe you're bitter toward someone and you refuse to forgive them. Maybe you're sleeping with someone that you shouldn't be sleeping with. Maybe you are not giving your money generously and you know you're supposed to be. Maybe you are not obeying God in your thoughts, but you keep cultivating evil thoughts in spite of what He's showing you in His Word.

If you are not obeying the guidance He's already given you, don't ask for more. He leads the humble, it says, in what is right. He teaches the humble His way. To be humble means to say,

“God, I want to be obedient to what You’ve shown me.” We shouldn’t be afraid of doing what is right. We shouldn’t be afraid of good works. We shouldn’t be afraid of obedience, as if that somehow is against the gospel of grace.

We see God’s grace throughout this Psalm, but we also see that His grace leads us in paths of righteousness. I love how Martyn Lloyd-Jones described this: “The opposite of justification by works is not doing nothing, but doing everything while trusting in none of it.” It’s saying, “God, I want to be obedient to You. I want to do what is right. I want to walk in Your ways, so I’m not going to depend for a moment on what I do. I depend entirely on Your grace and mercy.” You can depend on the Lord to guide you. That’s what this is saying.

So verses four and five are a model prayer. When you don’t know which way to go, college students, I urge you to pray this often. Then let’s look at the wonderful promise for those who pray this in verse 12: “*Who is the one who fears the Lord?*” Who is the one who looks to Him for guidance, is humble and teachable, wanting to please Him? Do you fear the Lord? This is the promise: “*Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.*” If you fear the Lord, God will show you the way you need to take when you need to take it.

But, someone might be thinking, what about my sin, my disobedience, my rebellion? Is it possible a day will come when God will get fed up with what a sinner I am, all I’ve done in my past, all I still struggle with in my present? Will there ever come a day when God will just say, “I’m done with you. I’m going to abandon you.” Will He leave me at the altar? David wants us to know will never happen.

You can depend on the Lord when you’re guilty.

Throughout this Psalm, notice what happens. In verses four and five, David is praying for guidance. He’s praying that he would know the Guide. Then in verses six and seven, he’s confessing his sin. In verses eight through ten, he’s talking some more about how the Lord guides and instructs His people. Then what’s he doing in verse 11? He is confessing his sin and asking for forgiveness.

This pattern continues throughout the Psalm. David looks to God, then he looks at himself and realizes, “Oh, how I need Your grace and mercy.” He depends on the Lord with his guilt. Look at verses six and seven. These are some of the most astonishing and beautiful words in the whole Bible. They speak of God’s mercy. Three times the word “remember” is used. “*Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.*” This is the way You’ve always been, Lord. Then in verse seven, “*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!” Three times:

- Remember Your compassion and faithful love in verse six.
- Remember me in keeping with Your steadfast love, at the end of verse seven.
- But, in the middle, “Don’t remember this, God. There are some things I want You to remember and there are some things I want You to forget. Don’t remember the sins of my youth.”

The God to Whom he’s praying in verse six is the LORD, in all capitals. This is the covenant name of God. The whole way God relates to us in the Bible is through His covenant. This is the way the Bible is structured. A covenant in Scripture is a binding relationship of love that cannot be broken and it’s sealed by blood. Here’s the astonishing truth of verses six and seven. God enters into covenant with sinners. For those who trust in Him, God promises in His covenant, “I will be merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” He is a God of *cheched*, that great Hebrew word that speaks of His loyal, faithful, steadfast, unchangeable love. “When the person from whom I have a right to expect nothing instead gives me everything—that’s God’s *cheched*,” according to Michael Card.

So there are things about David that he cannot forget. He’s so ashamed of things he’s done in his youth. He’s so ashamed of his rebellion. Even here in verse 11, he’s profoundly aware of his iniquity. He says, “My perversion and rebelliousness are immense.” But in spite of all that, he is depending on God’s covenant mercy. He’s trusting that whenever God looks at him, God is looking at him through three windows.

- First, the window of His compassion.
- Second, the window of His steadfast love.
- Third, the window of His goodness.

See that in verse six? “Your mercy and compassion—remember me there, Lord. Remember me according to Your steadfast love and the sake of Your goodness, Lord” (verse seven). So every time God looks at David, he’s confident God is looking through these three windows: compassion, steadfast love and goodness.

Friends, every time God looks at you who trust in Jesus, He’s uses those three lenses. He’s looking at you through His compassion. He’s looking at you through His steadfast love. He’s looking at you through His goodness. And God never will look at you without those lenses on. He’ll never take that away. That’s how He sees you in Christ. All His ways toward us are full of faithful love and truth, because He’s entered into covenant with us, a binding relationship of love,

sealed by blood. That's why David can pray so confidently in verse 11, "*Lord, for the sake of your name, forgive my iniquity, for it is immense*" (CSB).

He's confident because this is Who God is. This is His character. This is His way for those who trust in Him. If David could be confident of God revealed Himself under the old covenant, how much more confident can we be in the new covenant? In the new covenant, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory (John 1:14). And what was He full of? Grace and truth. It's the same thing we see in verse ten: "*All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness*"—full of grace and truth. That's Who Jesus is.

The reason God can forgive your lawless deeds and remember your sins no more is because Jesus died and rose again. He Himself bore your sins in His body on the tree so that you might die to sin, live to righteousness and be healed by His wounds. Friends, if you minimize your guilt, if you don't feel the way David felt in this Psalm, then the cross of Jesus is just going to seem pretty small to you.

Think about it like this. When Kate and I go to the University of Chicago Hospital every six months to get her cancer screening and see her oncologist, we have to wait in a little room after the CAT scan. Sometimes we have to wait for a while for that oncologist to come and we're thinking, "I wonder what she's going to say." If Dr. Patel came into the room and looked at me and said, "I have good news for you, David. You don't have cancer," I'd think, "Hmm. Well, that's nice. But I didn't come in here thinking I had cancer to begin with." But when she says, like she did a month ago, "Kate, I've examined your scans. Good news—there is no evidence of disease. There's not a trace of cancer in your body," we're elated! When you've been at stage four cancer, the words "no evidence of disease" become precious.

When you realize your iniquity is immense and that Jesus is a Savior Who can not only handle small sinners, but His blood has infinite power to save the greatest of sinners, then you're amazed.

What love could remember no wrongs I have done
Omniscient, all-knowing, He counts not their sum
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

[From "His Mercy is More" by Matt Papa]

Praise the Lord! That's what David is trusting in and experiencing in this Psalm. The God of steadfast love and mercy has a name: Jesus. And He's full of grace and truth to save sinners. You can depend on Him to forgive your sin and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. We need to be constantly reminded of this truth.

I read about a pastor who was called to visit a godly man who was 90 years old. He sent for his pastor with these words: “Everything seems so dark.” So his pastor came to him and asked, “What’s wrong?” The man said, “Since I have been lying here so weak, my memory keeps on bringing up the sins of my youth. I can’t get them out of my mind. They keep crowding in upon me. I can’t help thinking of them.” The pastor took him to these words in Psalm 25:6-7: *“Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love... 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!”*

He told the man, “Remember, God looks at you through compassion. He looks at you through steadfast love. He looks at you through the eyes of goodness. When you came to God 70 years ago, you confessed your sin and put your trust in Jesus Christ. Don’t you remember that when you confessed your sins, God said, “Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more”? If God has forgotten them, why should you think about them? The man relaxed and said, “I’m an old fool, remembering what God has forgotten.”

I wonder if that describes some of us today. Are we remembering what God has long since forgotten? Is that keeping us from depending on God and drawing near to Him, because we’re so aware of our sin and guilt? We should realize from this Psalm that actually being aware of sin and guilt drives us to God. He’s not telling you to stay at a distance. He’s saying, “Come to Me with this. You can depend on Me when you’re guilty.”

You can depend on the Lord when you’re lonely.

Look at verse 16: *“Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.”* And verse 17: *“The distresses of my heart increase; bring me out of my sufferings”* (CSB). There’s no one else David can turn to, so he’s crying out to the Lord to turn to him. Why? Because he knows verse 14 is true. He knows that God is his friend. Look at verse 14: *“The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.”*

I want to leave you with those words today. The friendship of the Lord is with you who fear Him. Some versions say, “The secret counsel of the Lord...” The idea is that God holds you as His confidant. He brings you into a relationship of intimate communion with Himself. And when no one else is hitting “like” on your latest post, when all your Instagram pictures are going unseen, when all your friends unfriend you, remember this:

One there is, above all others
Who well deserves the name of Friend
His is love beyond a brother’s

Costly, free, who knows no end.
They who once His kindness prove
Find it everlasting love

Which of all our friends to save us
Could or would have shed their blood?
But our Jesus died to have us
Reconciled in Him to God
This is boundless love indeed
Jesus is a Friend in need.

[From "One There Is, Above All Others" by John Newton]

Fear, confusion, guilt, loneliness—all of this you'll experience in this fallen world. But there is a Friend Who will never leave you, Who will never forsake you, Who has bound Himself to you in covenant love. Through all these adversities, notice what David does. Notice where David turns. He doesn't have a different answer for each adversity. No, he keeps going back to the one source of healing. Verse 15: *"My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he will pluck my feet out of the net."* That's where he turns every time. He doesn't say, "God, give me better circumstances." He casts himself on God.

Dane Ortlund states: "When life overwhelms us, when the bottom is falling out, this is where Scripture takes us." It's taking us to God Himself. We're not going to get calm inside by making sure that all our circumstances are set right. No, we find the calm inside by looking to the God of the covenant Who is our Friend. That's what He's calling us to do.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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