

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm is a prayer. It is the prayer of King David, as he cries out to God. It is a prayer that well may be much like prayers you have prayed. In his prayer David confesses his frailty, his imperfection, and his fallenness to God. He prays in Words that very likely describe what you too have felt: “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my many transgressions.”

The sins of youth are impetuous, reckless, driven by lust unrestrained in inexperience and naiveté. Youth often stumbles into sin unaware, so easily succumbs to the devil’s attacks. Youth is lured into transgression because of immaturity. But as he prays, David is no longer young.

His Words reveal that the sins he has committed in his old age surpass those of his youth. He is haunted by the things that he has done. He laments his wrongdoing. He knows that he has sinned. He knows the consequences of sin.

And he knows that the sins he has committed against others are really first sins against God. He feels the weight of his sin, the overwhelming burden of wrongdoing, the nagging memory of having selfishly hurt others. And he knows that his sin is too great for him to correct, the debts too overwhelming for him to make amends.

“I am desolate and afflicted” He prays. Perhaps you have prayed the same. He knows the emptiness of having yielded to temptation, the spiritual poverty and remorse that remain long after the lusts of the flesh are satisfied. He feels hopelessness. “The troubles of my heart have enlarged”, he confesses to God, “bring me out of my distresses”, he begs. For he knows the due penalty for his sin, the eternal penalty, is far worse than the temporal suffering that his sin has caused him.

Every man who wears Adam’s flesh knows the weight of sin, the nagging memory of wrongdoing, the lingering spiritual discomfort of guilt, the unavoidable conviction of shame. The ashes that you wore not long ago testified to the due penalty for sin. So you stand next to David, having sinned. And you too ought to plead to God “Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, For I am desolate and afflicted. Look on my affliction and my pain...”

But David, a sinner, yes, and a Prophet and God-appointed King, does not in fear run away from God. He runs to God. That’s what faith does. For only there, only in the One True God, is there mercy. Only in the One True God is there forgiveness for sin. So David prays, trusting in God’s mercy, asking that God remember him.

For God’s remembrance is an active remembrance. It is more than just a calling to mind. Asking God for His remembrance is asking for His intervention, His presence, His deliverance. So it is that David prays “Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.” He prays “And forgive all my sins.”

God is omniscient. Praying that God would forget is futile. But David doesn’t ask God to forget his sin. He prays that He would forgive his sins, remembering rather His great mercy. He prays “According to Your mercy remember me, For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.” He prays God’s

active remembrance, not according to His wrath, but according to His mercy, according to His goodness, according to His surpassing love. And in that there is great comfort, great hope for you. For God has promised the same for you.

God has seen your sin. But He has given His Son to atone for your sin. He gave His Son to be crucified to pay the price for your sin. Because Christ was shown no mercy, you may pray with David “Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses, For they are from of old.”

By grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, what God remembers about you is that you are covered with the shed Blood of His Faithful Son. It is in Christ that God has done as David prays: “For Your name's sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it *is* great.” And that God has done for you. He has pardoned your iniquity, your great iniquity, for His Name's sake, which is to say for the sake of Jesus.

It is ours this night to especially remember His precious suffering and death, the horrors that He endured on our behalf. For in His active and passive obedience, in His perfect faithfulness and holiness, in His willing submission to suffering, in His yielding to be nailed to the tree, in His death enveloped in darkness, He who was truly desolate and afflicted had mercy on you.

He who suffered affliction and pain did so to free you from the ancient curse. In Him, in the One who never sinned, are all your sins forgiven. In Christ, David's Son and David's Lord, David's prayer is answered. In Christ, your prayer is answered.

He brings His forgiveness to you that you not perish in your sins. He gives you His Word, His Holy, inerrant, Spirit-inspired Word, that you live by it, that in this wilderness you be fed and sustained. He washes you into His Kingdom, making you His child, making you an heir to the riches of the Kingdom of Heaven, even as you endure the poverty of this fallen world.

He sends unworthy servants to you, unworthy servants that He Calls, to proclaim the forgiveness of all your sins for Christ's sake. He sends sinners declared saints into your midst to be the *viva Vox Christi*, the living voice of Christ in this place, that you may hear and believe the glorious saving Gospel.

And that Gospel comes to you in concrete forms, Mysteries of God wrapped in earthly signs, as the Christ who died and rose for you places His Body with Bread and His Blood with wine, that you may eat and drink; and God does what you have prayed for: He forgives you all your sins.

Thanks be to God, He has heard your prayer. He has heard the prayer “Redeem us, O God.” And in His mercy, in His great love for you, He has granted it. In Christ you are the redeemed of God. So you may pray with confidence the Words of Psalm 25, David's Words of trust and hope: “To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed.”

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