

Psalm 141

Prayer for help in trouble
A Psalm of David.

Psalm 141:

The occasion of this psalm may be stated generally as one of sore temptation, both internal (verses 3-4), and external (verses 9-10).

The fact that almost every verse contains the vocabulary of petition adds to the urgency of David's request.

And thus he prays for God's attention (verses 1-2), for restraint (verses 3-7), and for refuge (verses 8-10).

Verses 1-10:

Another Psalm of lament by David whose occasion is unknown.

This psalm is comprised of 4 prayers that have been combined into one.

- I. Prayer for God's Haste (141:1-2);
- II. Prayer for Personal Righteousness (141:3-5);
- III. Prayer for Justice (141:6-7);
- IV. Prayer for Deliverance (141:8-10).

Verses 1-10:

True religion is a fellowship with God that withstands all adversity; it prefers the correction that will deepen the relationship versus the superficial attractions of compromise and luxury.

Psalm 141:1 "LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee".

With great earnestness, importunity, and fervency, being in distress.

And knowing vain was the help of man, and that none could deliver him but the LORD.

And therefore, continued crying unto him for help.

"Make haste unto me":

Which shows he was in a desperate condition.

That he could not help himself, nor could any creature, only the LORD.

And he was at a distance from him, as it seemed to him, and he delayed assistance.

And therefore, desires he would immediately draw nigh and be a present help in his time of need.
And work speedy deliverance for him, his case requiring haste.

"Give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee":

A request the psalmist frequently makes, not contenting himself with prayer, without desiring and looking for an answer to it.

We see an urgency in this prayer of David.

I love the fact that even though things were bad with David, he never stopped praying.

He knew where his help would come from, when it came.

He just wanted God to hear and answer this prayer now.

God loves this type of prayer, because He realizes David's sincerity in his belief that God will help him.

When we pray, we must know in our heart that the only true help for us is in God.

Psalms 141:2 "Let my prayer be set forth before thee [as] incense; [and] the lifting up of my hands [as] the evening sacrifice."

"Incense ... evening sacrifice":

David desired that his prayers and stretching forth for God's help (Psalms 68:31; 77:2), be as disciplined and regular as the offering of incense (Exodus 30:7-8), and burnt offerings (Exodus 29:38-39), in the tabernacle.

The smoke that rose to heaven from the burning incense in the temple was symbolic of the prayers of the saints.

This is something that David would know, and that is what he is saying here.

Praise is the sacrifice that God really wants from us.

Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name."

As we said, in a previous lesson, the praise that is accompanied by the uplifting of the hands to the LORD, just emphasizes who we are praising and how sincere the praise is.

When you lift your hands to God, you are humbling yourself before Him.

You are saying, You are higher than I am.

Verses 3-4:

David was praying that God would protect him from the kind of evil that has characterized his own enemy.

Psalm 141:3 "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

That I may not say anything rashly, unadvisedly, improperly (compare Psalm 39:1).

The prayer here is; that God would guard him from the temptation to say something wrong.

To this he seems to have been prompted by the circumstances of the case, and by the advice of those who were with him.

See introduction to the psalm (compare the notes at Psalm 11:1).

"Keep the door of my lips":

That my lips or mouth may not open except when it is proper and right.

When something good and true is to be said, nothing can be more proper than "this" prayer.

Nothing more desirable than that God should keep us from saying what we ought not to say.

The same mouth is capable of doing evil or good, as we read in the next Scripture.

James 3:10 "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

David is saying, in the verse above, I do not want this mouth that praises you to say evil things.

LORD, guard what I say.

Put a bridle on my speech, LORD.

Let only the things which will be pleasing unto your ears come from this mouth.

Psalm 141:4 "Incline not my heart to [any] evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties."

Suffer it not to be inclined or led aside, either by my own errors or lusts, or by the temptations of the world or of the devil.

Thus God is frequently said to harden men's hearts.

Not positively, for he can do no evil, nor tempt any man to it (James 1:3).

But privatively, by denying softening grace.

"My heart to any evil thing":

Keep me not only from wicked speeches (Psalm 141:3).

But from all evil motions of my heart, which otherwise will draw me to many evil speeches and actions.

"To practice wicked works with men that work iniquity":

Either, to join with them in their sinful courses; or, to do wickedly, as they do.

"And let me not eat of their dainties":

Let me never enjoy or desire worldly comforts upon such terms as they do.

To wit, with God's wrath and curse, as instruments of wickedness, and then of my very own eternal destruction.

My afflictions are more desirable than such prosperity.

Let none of their sweet morsels, the pleasures or advantages which they gain by their wickedness, tempt me to approve of or imitate their ways.

This is just a plea from David for God to remove all temptation from him.

Keep me from even associating with these evil people, LORD.

This is what I teach about the flesh and the spirit.

The flesh is tempted sometimes to work with evil people, if the pay is good.

We are also, tempted to eat delicious things prepared by the evil, as well.

The flesh is an enemy of the spirit.

That is why it is so important to make the spirit ruler in our life.

Let the spirit rule and then you will not be tempted by the flesh.

The soul is the will of man.

Perhaps, it is sometimes spoken of as our innermost being.

Make the spirit the control over your will.

The only way that we can do this, is make Jesus Lord of our life.

Let Him be in charge of our spirit.

Psalm 141:5 "Let the righteous smite me; [it shall be] a kindness: and let him reprove me; [it shall be] an excellent oil, [which] shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also [shall be] in their calamities."

David acknowledges that God would use other righteous men to answer his prayer in (verses 3-4; compare Prov. 9:8; 19:25; 27:6; 27:17).

When you are in the company of the righteous, they will help you.

If you have a weak moment, they will correct you before you sin.

The righteous should fellowship with others who are righteous as well.

We help each other stay on the right path.

This reproof spoken of here, could be from the Righteous One.

This would be like a chastisement.

When He reproves us, it is in love like a father correcting a child.

It is not a harm to our head, but is a blessing like the oil of the Holy Spirit which brings peace.

Psalm 141:6 "When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet."

“Judges ... overthrown”:

That the leaders of the wicked would be punished by being thrown over a cliff (compare Luke 4:28-29), is at the heart of David’s prayer (compare verse 5).

“My words ... sweet”:

In the sense that David’s words were true.

These judges in stony places, is speaking of the evil one being overthrown, and then David will rise and speak.

David's words will be pleasing to the ears of the LORD.

Psalm 141:7 "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth [wood] upon the earth."

"Our bones":

The basis on which the judges were thrown over the cliff, they had first done this to the righteous (compare verse 10).

This reminds me of the dry bones in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 37:1-5 "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which [was] full of bones," "And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, [there were] very many in the open valley; and, lo, [they were] very dry." "And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest." "Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." "Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:"

The only way that the bones in Ezekiel or the bones mentioned above here, can live is for God to put back the life into them.

Notice (in Ezekiel chapter 37:4 above), what is said to these dead bones:

They said to hear the Word of the LORD.

The life in all of our bodies is the Spirit of God.

It is His breath (Spirit).

By the foolishness of preaching, those that believe are saved.

Psalm 141:8 "But mine eyes [are] unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute."

My hope is in thee.

I do not rely on my own power.

I do not trust in my armed forces.

I know that they are weak, dispirited, scattered, like strewed bones, like the chips and splinters lying around the place where wood is chopped.

I look, therefore, solely to God.

I believe that he "will" interpose.

And now that my enemy has placed himself into this position, I do not need to resort to various stealthful arts.

To dishonorable acts, to assassination, as my friends advise.

But the object will be accomplished, and I shall be placed on the throne by the act of God.

And in a manner that will not subject my name and memory to reproach by a base and treacherous deed.

"In thee is my trust":

I rely on thee alone.

"Leave not my soul destitute":

My life; my all.

Do not now leave me without thy gracious interposition.

Do not suffer this juncture to pass by without such an interposition as will end the war, and restore peace to me and to a distracted land.

The psalmist, here, is saying, I believe in God the LORD.

God will give him new life, because he believes.

Psalm 141:9 "Keep me from the snares [which] they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity."

Either Saul, who gave him a wife to be a snare to him, and then set men to watch his house and take him.

Or the Ziphites, who proposed to Saul to deliver him into his hands (see 1 Sam. 18:21).

"And the gins of the workers of iniquity":

The transgressions of wicked men are snares to others, by way of example.

And so are the doctrines of false teachers, and the temptations of Satan, from all which good men desire to be kept (Prov. 29:6).

And it is the LORD alone that keeps and preserves from them, or breaks the snare and delivers them (Psalm 124:7).

David is fully aware of what temptation can do.

He is asking the LORD here, to keep him from all temptation.

Satan knows what our weaknesses are, and he sets traps along the way that we might be caught in our own temptation.

David is saying to the LORD; you know I am weak.

You keep me from temptation.

Psalm 141:10 "Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape."

“Fall into their own nets”:

David prays that the wicked will be destroyed by their own devices.

The trap that the evil one has set for us would be a good trap for him to fall into.

If they live by the sword, let them die by the sword is what David is saying.

Psalm 141 Questions

1. Even though things were bad for David, he never stopped _____.
2. Why does God love this type of prayer?
3. Let my prayer be set before thee as _____.
4. What in the temple services symbolized the prayers of saints?
5. What does praise with the uplifting of the hands show?
6. What did he ask for God to do to his mouth?
7. What is verse 4 a plea for?
8. Why is it so important to make the spirit ruler in our life?
9. What is the soul?

10. How is the only way to get the spirit to rule over the flesh?
11. Let the _____ smite me.
12. What is this reproof like?
13. Who are the judges in stony places?
14. Our bones are scattered at the _____ mouth.
15. Where do we read in Ezekiel about the dry bones?
16. What makes the dry bones live?
17. By what foolishness are people saved?
18. Why will God give him new life?
19. David said, keep me from the _____.
20. Let the wicked fall into their _____.