

Fervent Words & Quiet Trust

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[0:00] The Song of the Lord O men, how long shall my honor be turned to shame?

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for Himself. The Lord hears when I call to Him.

Be angry and do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent. Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord. You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep.

For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Great psalm. A lot of different things you could focus on in there.

[1:24] And as we come to them, I will be sharing them with you. The first thing, I would like to talk about the background. Many believe this psalm was written when David was on the run from his own son Absalom.

Absalom had stolen the hearts of the people, many of the people, by spreading slander and lies and was attempting to anoint himself as king. David had fled Jerusalem and was now hiding from his pursuers.

Now, many scholars think Psalm 3 is also linked with Psalm 4. Same kind of set of circumstances. There's some language in Psalm 3 that talks about the morning.

And then there's some language in this psalm that talks about the night. So maybe an evening, morning, or morning-evening set. They thought it might go together well. But both are priceless treasures for us today.

We should follow David's example of turning a distressing situation, as he was on the run, into a song of glory to the Lord. As an expression of confidence in God, this psalm helps the reader to meditate on God's fatherly care and to leave the troubles and causes of anxiety in his hands and let him take care of it.

[2:35] So, each section I've outlined, there are words to and somebody. And you will fill in the blank. And the first one is words to the Lord. Alright?

Verse 1 says, Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness. You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. And observe first that David speaks to God first and then to man.

Surely we should all speak the more boldly to man if we had more constant converse with God. He who dares to face his maker will not tremble before men. Godly boldness develops from a proper fear of the Lord, a proper time of communion with Him.

Notice that he starts off with speaking to the Lord. Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness. I see a steadfast request here. A steadfast request.

And there's a sense of urgency and a desperation in David's prayer. And you can sense that he's in great need. Answer me. There's also a sense of confidence that the Lord really already does hear him.

[3:45] He knew God was listening. So he knows that God is listening. He's all the more urgent. I know you're listening to me, Lord. As Psalm 17.6 says, I'll turn over to it. Kind of captures again this urgency, but also the knowledge that God will answer.

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God. Incline your ear to me and hear my words. So he knows you will answer me. He's confident in the Lord on that.

So he has a steadfast request, but there's also a steadfast righteousness here. O God of my righteousness. And this implies not only that God is righteous and will do what is best, but it's also that David's righteousness came from God.

You are the God of my righteousness. You birthed it in me. Therefore, God should vindicate him. If I'm serving you, Lord, you know that I am.

You know the situation that I'm in. I'm pleading with you as I strive to serve you wholeheartedly.

Philippians 1. It's another prayer that Paul gives, verses 8-11, to the people of Philippi.

[5:00] For God is my witness how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. This is also a prayer of Paul. He recognizes your righteousness will come from no other than Christ Himself.

So, God of my righteousness is also talking about Him, about the Lord's righteousness, but also about the God of His personal righteousness as He serves the Lord. So, steadfast requests and steadfast righteousness.

Next is, You have given me relief when I was in distress. I was in distress at one point. So, there's an identified difficulty.

David had been in distress before, and he was able to diagnose his true condition. He knew that he needed relief. He needed deliverance from the evil. And we all deal with difficult circumstances.

[6:09] Maybe not as difficult as David did as he fled for his life, but we all deal with our own set of circumstances. Some of us, probably the more optimistic of us, tend to probably ignore it and move on and pretend it's not there, kind of minimize the problem.

Some of us are maybe a little more pessimistic. We maybe get overwhelmed by it and magnify the problem. It's vitally important to correctly identify the problems we face.

Don't make too much of it. Don't make too little of it. But David knew that he was in distress. He identified his difficulty, and he also identified his deliverer. David's previous experiences had driven him to his knees in prayer to the only source for deliverance.

So, David consults with the Lord, who alone could rescue him. Back in Psalms in chapter 70, verses 4 and 5, says this, May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you.

May those who love your salvation say evermore, God is great, but I am poor and needy. Hasten to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer.

[7:22] O Lord, do not delay. If you've been in the Psalms much, you hear that from David quite a bit. Deliver me, O Lord. Rescue me. You are my refuge and strength. So he recognizes that God is his deliverer.

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. There's a humble acknowledgement here. A humble acknowledgement. David is in a desperate and helpless condition.

And he does not have the resources to deliver himself. He's out in the wilderness, fleeing from Absalom, not knowing when he's going to strike, wondering about his people still back in Jerusalem where he's just fled.

And he's humbled by this. He recognizes that his heart is also prone to wander. And he knows that God's grace is undeserved.

Yet still he'll plead with a gracious God. Because God is gracious, he asks for it. Be gracious to me. I know I don't deserve it, but be gracious to me. And hear my prayer.

[8:24] The prayer is the humble appeal. He's saying, Lord, hear my prayer, though I am a mere servant in your house. Many of us think of David as one of the greats in the Bible.

But even the best of men need mercy. Even the best of men need grace. Just as much as the worst of men need. And in the first lines of his prayer, David declares God's character.

He remembers God's mercies. He presses his emergency of the situation. He focuses on God's tendencies. He remembers God's goodness. And then pleads for God's grace.

He did a bunch in just that first verse. And biblical prayer seems to ponder God a good deal more than we are prone to do. If you look at the prayers of the Bible, they are thinking, contemplating, meditating on who God is as they enter their time of prayer.

Prayer is not merely a technique for maintaining an emotional equilibrium, as it were. Well, if I pray, it makes me feel better. Prayer is worship that is both intelligent and desperate.

[9:32] There's a side of both of that. I know what I need, and I'm pleading with the One who can give it to me. Psalm 88, verses 1 and 2. Say this.

Oh Lord, God of my salvation, I cry out day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You.

Incline Your ear to my cry. And there's a lot of desperation sounding in these psalms. And many times we come so casually, we're not so desperate.

And I think it's because we don't see our great need at times. We think we have it all figured out ourselves. But there's a humble acknowledgement and appeal to the Lord here. Alright.

Well, the second and third verse, I've called these folks the detractors. It said, first phrase, O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? A rebellious dissension.

[10:34] These men that he's talking about, he says, O men, these were once loyal subjects to David as their king. They were under his rule. They honored the king.

Now they had turned and followed the voice of a rebel. And he's talking to them. O men, how long shall my honor be turned to shame? These men who once fought for peace were now promoting war and revolution.

And they were also defiant in the rebellion as well. Rebellious defiance. The authority that God had given to David was now openly defied by these men. In doing so, they did not honor their king.

And in doing so, they did not honor their God. It was a shameful act in itself, but it also brought shame to David as the king. If you think about it, surrounding nations, they see this nation is having a civil war here and they're rebelling against their king.

It's much like Gaddafi right now. We'd be thinking about, well, if they were revolting against him, he must have done something. We know he did something, but in this case, you know, the nations around him are looking.

[11:38] They're saying, what's going on with that nation? They worship this God and he's fleeing. What's going on? So it also brings shame to David in this. Hebrews gives us a good reminder what we should do with those who rule over us.

Hebrews 13, 17. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

So as God had placed David there for the people of Israel, as they revolted against him, they were actually revolting against God. So the next phrase we have here is how long will you love vain words and seek after lies?

So we have slanderous speech here. Slanderous speech. Vain words and lies damage the reputation and rule of King David. And he's warning his people to avoid such things.

This rebellion and dissension was based upon one man who started spreading slanderous speech and one by one others spread it and others believed it.

[12:49] It started with Absalom. And he just started working on them and he had a whole following. It was indeed vain though, as we know the end of the story, since God by his own power was defending David.

But also a slanderous search because if you read the verse there, how long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Not only did they receive the slander, but they were looking for it.

And they desired the latest gossip and rejoiced to spread it abroad. Question for us. How often do we seek out the latest gossip? Do we have a conversation with some folks without it?

Is it just part of your normal conversation with some folks? Do we feed on it? We should be careful what we base our relationships on or we will too be sucked in sometimes to a rebellious situation.

Ephesians 4, one of my favorite passages in Ephesians, of course I don't know the part of Ephesians I don't like, but Ephesians 4, 29 and 32 says, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

[14:07] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption, that all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. So, don't be a part of the slander of speech.

Don't be searching for it. Instead, know that the Lord has set apart the godly for Himself. The Lord hears when I call to Him. We have this divine preference here.

David boldly proclaims God's care for him. He was dependent upon the Lord and His strength was found in the power of God. Why He could so boldly say this, that the Lord hears when I call, that the Lord sets me apart for Himself, is because He has so much trust in the Lord for His power.

God does prefer His children, plain and simple. If you are one of His, He looks after you. He has set them apart for His glory and for His purpose. As we come out of the passage on slander, the weapon against slander is this, is to remember how God regards you.

[15 : 23] To hold on to what He has said about you. It's not returning in kind. It's remembering what the Lord says about you. He has the final say in the matter. When someone comes against you and slanders you, they're slandering Him.

He will take care of that. So, divine preference and then divine protection. Divine protection. Think about this. If He has saved us, He has chosen us for Himself, surely He will hear our prayers. Right? He will hear when His children speak to Him. God principally proves His faithfulness in this, that He does not forsake the work of His own hands, but continually defends those whom He has once received into His favor.

He continually defends those whom He has received. It's a great, great quote. All right, so that was the detractors. Those folks who had rebelled against David.

The next section, verses 4 and 5, are words to the devoted. Some commentators have paired verses 4 and 5 with 2 and 3 and said they're all to the folks that revolted.

[16 : 30] After further study, I'm thinking it's really more to these people who are defending David. And they're witnessing the sins of the people who revolted. So let's get into this.

It says, Be angry and do not sin. Be angry and do not sin. This is a classic phrase that we will quote and I hope we understand what it means.

Sometimes they will say, hate the sin that love the sinner. But the word angry here means to be shaken or to tremble.

And he is saying, be shaken by sin. Actually, the word in the Hebrew is ragaz or rage where we get that word.

David's supporters were furious after the wayward brothers. Sin should bother you and you should not be indifferent to it. Sin's effects should shake you to your core.

[17 : 25] It is a serious matter. Reverse this phrase here. How often do you sin and not get angry? You're not moved because you just sin.

Sin is a serious thing. I think what he's saying here is, be angry and do not sin. Do not be shaken to sin. Sin will inevitably breed more sin.

If you are slandered, the first instinct is often to slander back. Well, I can say that if you can say that. If Satan can lure you in, then the sin has accomplished its goal and that is to dishonor the Lord.

Sinful anger leads to sinful words. As the Bible says, even in the heart, you can murder somebody with your hatred. Read from Romans 12, verses 14 to the end of the chapter.

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice.

Weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.

[18 : 30] Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him.

If he is thirsty, give him something to drink, for by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

So, be shaken by sin, but don't be shaken to sin. Ponder in your own hearts, on your beds, and be silent. What's he talking about here?

Honest confession. It's easy to get angry at the sins of others and ignore your own sins. Some translate this phrase, speak to your own heart. Instead of tossing and turning in bed because of the things others are doing, take inventory and see if there aren't sins in your heart that need to be confessed.

[19 : 41] The passage that speaks about that is Matthew 7, verses 1-5. Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is the log in your own eye?

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. So confess. Confess your own sins. Take inventory. Ponder in your own hearts, in your beds, and be silent in honest contemplation. There are many times where we need to be quiet and just listen to what the Lord is telling us about a situation. Yes, it may be difficult. Yes, there may be people slandering you. But sometimes it's time for you just to be quiet. The way you can be angry and not sin is by keeping your thoughts to yourself. [20 : 41] We want to say an active response is what is needed. But the immediate response needed is for you to be quiet. And think about it. And do some personal inventory. Folks will criticize ministers of the gospel.

One such guy by her I really revere is Paul Washer. And he gets a lot of flack for the way he preaches. And he said one day, someone asked him, what do you do with all these slanderous things that people say about you? And he had such a humble response. He said, well, if they're complaining about Paul Washer, most likely they're absolutely right. Because I know me. And I know how bad I can be. I try to focus on the Lord and I don't think they're right about some of that. But it makes me pause and think, what are they seeing in me that is communicating this? It's a very unique way of answering slander about you. And I thought it was a very humble and good example. But another kind of humorous example is one of our presidents, Harry Truman. [21 : 50] He had just been thrown into the presidency after FDR had passed on. So he was real busy. And he didn't get home until right before Christmas. And Bess Truman is there and she's just furious at him and says, you might as well just go back.

You don't even care about your family. And they had a big old fight and everything. So he goes back to the office. And he said he was going to write an angry letter to his wife and send it overnight and send it home.

Well, he went to bed and pondered a little bit. In the morning he was calling his daughter, would you please intercept the postmaster and burn that letter for me? I don't want her to see that.

After a better thought he said, that's not a good thing to do. But contemplate. How are you coming across to other people? What are some things that you can change? And some people say, talk about being angry at God and it's okay to be angry at God.

It's okay. And I think what they're saying is God's big enough to handle that. But really, there's not a reason that we can have any anger at God. You would have to be omniscient to be rightly angry at God.

[22 : 59] You would have to know what's best before you could be angry at Him. He knows what's best. All right, let's move on to the next phrase. Offer right sacrifices.

Offer right sacrifices. Faithful worship. Here's your first blank there. David and his followers had left Jerusalem. Well, Jerusalem was their place of worship and sacrifice.

And this was something of a pledge to stay obedient to the proper order for worship. When we get back to Jerusalem, we're going to be getting right back to where we left off. But in relation to a previous statement, it also shows the importance of the right heart in worship.

Offer right sacrifices as from your heart. And this is in contrast to false worship where Absalom was back in Jerusalem offering insincere and hypocritical sacrifices to impress the people.

He was not worshiping the Lord, but he was rather worshiping himself. So, this is also a caution for everybody who's following David now. Offer right sacrifices.

[24 : 01] Don't be sucked into this. And put your trust in the Lord. Put your trust in the Lord. It's the dependence on God. David knew that the spiritual condition of his people was far more important than their military skill for the Lord would give victory to those who trusted and obeyed him.

David wanted his people to depend on God the way he was. And this is in contrast to dependence on man. Absalom was trusting in his own leadership, his intellect, his army, and his popularity with the people.

His plans were destined to fail because of his rejection of God. And we should ask ourselves, do the decisions we make indicate that we trust God more or that we trust man more?

As Matthew 6.24 says, No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money or mammon or man in that regard.

So depend on the Lord. Put your trust in the Lord. Alright. Verse 6. We have words to the discouraged. To the discouraged.

[25 : 15] There are many who say, Who will show us some good? This is a prevalent outlook even in our day. Many take this approach. It's not just a few people, but there are many who are discouraged today even within the church.

They don't see the goodness of God at work. Often, the good that they seek is not really the good that the Lord is offering. It may be a tough time, but He's working that out for your good.

But it's a prevalent outlook. But it's also a prevalent overreaction if you read it. That Christians would proclaim the absence of even some good is a staggering overreaction.

Right? Because Christ died for the ungodly. You've been given a great thing in the Lord. So, who will show us some good if you received many good things in Christ?

we often lose sight of the smiling providence of God over our lives because we let the difficulties of life overwhelm us. David is seeing these discouraged folks around him and he wants to point them in the right direction.

[26 : 27] So, he goes here, lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord. And, that sounds familiar from Numbers. May the Lord bless you and keep you and cause his face to shine upon you and give you peace.

It was the benediction to a worship service. And, he recalls this benediction for the people. It's a familiar thing that the priest would recite in a tabernacle worship but it should trigger in the minds of all those who would read or sing this psalm the goodness of God.

David is teaching us to have patience with those who are discouraged. Sometimes, some of us can move on and we're ready to go to the next thing and some folks are still discouraged. We'll be patient.

Faithfully remind them of the goodness of God. Help them through it because we're on this together. It's a recalled benediction but it's also a recalled benefactor. This prayer is that the Lord would remind his people of his goodness by making his presence known to them.

God had provided salvation again and again to his people and he would do the same yet again. just the phrase of that lift up the light of your face upon us O Lord.

[27 : 45] It's a great image. So, words to the discouraged be encouraged the Lord is good. Then he ends off verses 7 and 8 with words to the Lord yet again.

You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. Implanted joy joy. Well, it says, you have put more joy.

The Lord has implanted this joy. David could not muster it up on his own. This joy was from the Lord. And where did he place it? In his heart. It's an internal joy.

It was not merely an external display. I'm happy today. I'm not tomorrow. No, it was a joy deeply rooted within that he could draw from. And as a believer, we have this same joy planted in us.

It's the joy of Christ. And then the independent joy, what I mean by that is that it was not dependent on prosperity or good fortune.

[28 : 44] As I said here, you have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. He's saying this joy was present in good and bad times, radiating apart from an outside influence.

Romans 15, verse 13, kind of another benediction of Paul. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

So it's God who fills us with joy. It's God who fills us. And then, in peace I will both lie down and sleep. Contentment.

Contentment in God. Peace. Or in the Hebrew, Shalom. It speaks of the adequacy and fullness of life. It's not just I feel peace instead of conflict.

It's rather I'm content. I'm at peace. He's satisfied, David is, with the Lord. So the question for us, are you content in God?

[29 : 55] Are you in an endless spiral or pursuit of searching for something else? What are you content in? And also, there's a confidence in God.

Whether he was on the run or at home, David could lie down in his sleep because his fate was in the hands of the Lord. Those who take this approach have lies of conviction and a faith to be emulated.

I'm sure every one of you could list off people you've met who just have this peace about them. No matter what happens, they can handle it because they're tuned in with the Lord.

And we all need to strive for more of that. So when hard times come, the first thing we can do is lie down and sleep because the Lord is in control.

We can be content in what He's doing. So are you confident in God? Or are you always looking over your shoulder at the next problem that's heading your way? Think of it this way.

[30:54] The Lord's just over your shoulder right there going to take care of that situation. And we can be confident in Him. And our last phrase tonight, For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Exclusive lordship says you alone, O Lord. Only the Lord can make David safe. So God alone was his keeper. Even if man rejected him, he was in good keeping because he would be alone with God.

It's also a speaking of community with the Lord. Psalm 86 verses 8-13 says this, There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things. You alone are God.

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord, my God, with my whole heart and I will glorify your name forever.

[32:06] For great is your steadfast love toward me. You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. So only the Lord could deliver him. And then exclusive living.

You make me dwell in safety. You make me live. David's daily pursuits were guided by the Lord so he could be safe in his living and his dwelling even in the face of danger.

One commentator brought out a really interesting thing. In Deuteronomy 33:12 it says, The beloved of the Lord dwells in safety. The high God surrounds him all day long and dwells between his shoulders.

Well, that first phrase, the beloved of the Lord dwells in safety, kind of mirrors, makes me dwell in safety. And it has even further meaning when you know that the word David, the name David means beloved.

So, the beloved of the Lord dwells in safety is like he's using the words of Moses from Deuteronomy at the end of his psalm here. So, what can we take from this in application tonight?

[33:12] Remember your deliverer. Remember he who alone can deliver you. Refrain from slander. Repent from your sin before you see it in others.

Recall the goodness of the Lord and rest in the joy and peace found only in knowing Christ. So, Psalm 4, fervent words to a quiet trust.

Psalm 4,