

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 25

Opening Prayer

Read Psalm 25

Overview

Psalm 25 is both an individual lament and a prayer of trust. It speaks at times from a very personal point of view and alternates that with more objective descriptions of what the Lord will do. It is almost as if the psalmist comforts himself in the midst of the prayers with occasional hearkening back to objective truths about God. Note the pattern as marked in the outline. This should be especially helpful as it is similar to what happens for Christians in the midst of suffering. We suffer and pray about it and then remember Scripture passages which tell us what God intends for us. These objective truths will often take our eyes forward to God's future promises. Thus this lament/prayer of trust found in Psalm 25 moves between the *now* of suffering and the *not yet* of deliverance. In that way it is very useful as it reflects what many often go through.

Psalm 25 is also a poetic acrostic like what we saw in Psalm 9-10. The explanation of that device is offered again here, but will not be dwelt on in our time together on the video.

Alphabet Acrostics in the Psalms

There are eight alphabet acrostics in the Psalms. (9-10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145) These psalms begin each sentence with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Here is an English example of the beginning of an Alphabet Acrostic:

All praise be to God on high.
Blow the trumpet in Zion.
Call a sacred assembly.

In this example you can see that each sentence begins with the next letter of the English alphabet. Hebrew poetry used this literary device for one of two purposes. First, it made the poetry (psalm) easier to memorize. Remember that at the time the psalms were written no one got copies to take home! Everything was committed to memory and passed down audibly. Second, this type of acrostic may have been used to send a secondary message by the arrangement of the letters at the

beginning of each sentence. Psalm 119 is the most complete example of an Alphabet Acrostic that we have in the psalter. The Book of Lamentations also uses this literary device extensively.

Outline/Structure

As mentioned in the overview the psalm moves from times of personal lament to objective declarations of trust. That pattern is reflected in this outline:

- I. Prayer that God would forgive and remember – 25:1-7
- II. Universal truths about God – 25:8-10
- III. Prayer for forgiveness – 25:11
- IV. Universal truths about God – 25:12-14
- V. Personal affirmation – 25:15
- VI. Prayer for God’s deliverance from trouble – 25:16-21
- VII. Communal request – 25:22

Prayer that God would forgive and remember – 25:1-7

:1 - “lift up my soul” – This is probably to be connected to the idea of lifting hands to God in prayer. ***Read 1 Timothy 2:8; Psalm 134:2;***

Lamentations 3:41

How does posture matter in prayer and worship?

What are the right questions to ask about our posture/actions in worship?

:2-3 - “shame” – There is a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt has to do with a forensic diagnosis of whether one is wrong, while shame has to do with a feeling generated by what was done wrong.¹

Read Jeremiah 8:8-12

What was the sin of the leaders of Israel?

What magnified their sin?

Is it wrong to shame someone? What is our goal always?

- The shame of David in the psalm has more to do with his loss at the hands of his enemies, but later in the psalm his guilt over sin is brought out and may contribute to his shame.

:4-5 - The psalmist desires to know the “ways” of the Lord. We shouldn’t take this to mean strictly the commandments or expectations of the Lord. The psalmist knows those as evidenced by his confessions later on in the psalm.

¹ People will often say “I feel guilty”, but that is just a way of speaking that really reflects shame.

Instead, here the ways or paths of the Lord probably refers to trust and reliance upon God for salvation. It may be similar to what the disciples ask of Jesus in Luke 17. **Read Luke 17:1-5**

What does the Lord tell the disciples to do?

Why does this prompt the response of needing increased faith?

How is forgiving more difficult than point out sin?

:6-7 - These verses are all about where the psalmist wants the Lord's focus to be. Notice that he wants the Lord to remember His "lovingkindness", but He wants the Lord not to remember the sins of the psalmist's youth.

Does God forget and need to be reminded?

So what is the psalmist actually asking?

Universal Truths about God – 25:8-10

:8-9 - It is God's desire that all would know Him aright. He instructs everyone in what is and is not sin. **Read Romans 2:15**

If the law is written in our hearts, how do some not know right and wrong?

Read 1 Timothy 2:4.

What is God's ultimate desire?

Then why are not all people saved?

:10 - "lovingkindness and truth" – These two ideas come together frequently in the Scriptures and summarize what God brings to us. **Read Exodus 34:5-8**

Who declares the Lord to abound in lovingkindness and truth?

What was Moses reaction?

Read John 1:14-17

Who are grace and truth from in verse 14?

Who brings them to realization?

Prayer for Forgiveness – 25:11

:11 - David appeals to God "for His name's sake"; that God would be known for His lovingkindness and have the reputation as a God of forgiveness. In our confession in the divine service when we pray for forgiveness we appeal to what Christ has done. *"For the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter, sufferings, and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ."*

Universal Truths about God – 25:12-14

- :12-13 - Fear of the Lord has come up in other psalms as well. We are reminded that the Scriptures only call upon us to fear the Lord and nothing else!²
- “abide in prosperity” – Literally “spend the night” in prosperity. The idea here being that when we fear the Lord and follow His statutes there is nothing to keep us awake at night with guilt or shame.
- :14 - “secret” or “counsel” – God reveals to people of faith His desire for all people. ***Read Genesis 18:17-19***
- Who is God talking to?*
- Why does God reason that His purposes should be revealed to Abraham?*
- What has God revealed to us and what are we to do with it?*

Personal Affirmation – 25:15

- :15 - In the midst of this back and forth between personal lament and objective truths, the psalmist has a moment of clarity and assurance. As he sees God rightly, he knows he will be delivered “out of the net”.
- How does this accurately reflect your own experience in prayer and revealed truth?*

Prayer for God’s Deliverance From Trouble – 25:16-21

- :16-17 – The psalmist’s despair does not dissipate though he knows the objective truths spoken of in 8-10 and 12-14. Now in these verses he has moved from the shame of the beginning of the psalm to feeling lonely and afflicted and the troubles at the beginning have “enlarged” in his heart.
- How does this reflect what often happens in our own life with our troubles and difficulties?*
- :18-19 – David wishes for God to see two things. He wants God to see his troubles and he wants God to see that the enemies are a cause of his troubles. His enemies hate him. The word is duplicated in the Hebrew and is translated well in the ESV as “they hate me with a violent hate”.
- :20-21 – There is some ambiguity about whose “integrity and uprightness” is referenced here. Since David has spent much of the psalm confessing his own sin, it seems more likely that it is God’s integrity and uprightness that

² See Matthew 10:28

David is calling upon. This also fits in well with the second phrase of verse 21, “For I hope in You”.³

Why is it best to understand this as God’s integrity and uprightness?

Communal request – 25:22

:22 - Many of the psalms move at the end to a more general communal response. These end responses may have been placed there earlier on for the purposes of worship.⁴ Additionally, the first letter of verse 22 does not fall naturally into the alphabetic acrostic system of the rest of the psalm.

Summary

Psalm 25 probably speaks well to us because it accurately reflects our own internal experiences. Like David, we can lament our own situations and sins, while at the same time know the objective truths of God and His lovingkindness. The lack of resolution at times to our laments and prayers is not a mark against our faith, but a recognition that we live in the now but not yet of the gospel. We have forgiveness and eternal life *now* because of Christ. Still troubles, shame, and guilt are a part of our daily lives because the final fulfillment of Christ’s redemption has *not yet* come.

Closing Prayer

³ Someone once described hope as “faith on tiptoes”.

⁴⁴ See Psalm 3:8; 31:23-24; 130:7-8; 131:3