

THE PREACHER'S PRAYER

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Psalm 4:1-8

David was a preacher, a royal preacher, as was Solomon; many of his psalms are doctrinal and practical as well as devotional. Men are called in this psalm to attend upon its instruction.

He intended that this psalm be used by the choir director in leading the choristers in singing unto the Lord. We learn from this and other psalms that stringed instruments were employed in the worship of God. They did not have pianos or organs but they used hand held instruments.

David addresses God in verse 1 **Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! Thou hast relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.**

Whether the sons of men to whom he will speak will hear, or whether they will not, he hopes and prays that God will give him a gracious audience and an answer of peace.

David comes into the Lord's presence humbly. He does not come relying on his own righteousness but acknowledges that his righteousness is from God Himself. Justification is all of grace. We have no righteousness of our own and if we are to come before the Lord it must be with a righteousness imputed to us by God Himself. David understood this.

He employs a most useful means of aiding his own faith in calling upon God. He recalls that God has relieved him in his distress in times past. Prayer is a means of grace whereby each of us can find relief during

times of trouble and adversity of any sort whatsoever.

We cannot live in this world and not go through downtimes. None of us can stay trouble-free all the time. What was your trouble most recently? Was it physical infirmity? Was it trouble in your home? Was it trouble on the highway? Was it trouble in your car? Was it trouble at school? Was it trouble in your job or business? Was it trouble with another person? Was it trouble with the law? Was it trouble with your finances? We have many kinds of trouble in this world. David had his share; maybe more than you or I because of the call he had to be a prophet and a king. You can have enough trouble in either one of those callings but he had a double-barreled call that made him a target and an enemy to many.

God had relieved David in all of his times of trouble, and this remembrance strengthened him to believe that he could depend on God to relieve him once again.

David's words are an expression of gratitude as well as a means of reminding himself of how God had brought him through troubles in the past. So he is emboldened to say, **be gracious to me and hear my prayer.**

In verse 2 David addresses the world, O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception?

David was the Lord's anointed and a type of Christ, therefore his words refer to his honor as the anointed king. When men oppose the Lord's anointed they are opposing the Lord who made the appointment.

David says men do themselves a grave disservice by choosing unbelief and rejection of the Lord and His Christ. When they dishonor Christ they bring reproach upon themselves, not Christ. Men of the world seek to get ahead by the use of lies and by treachery. They do that which debases and demeans them.

The question on the job application read, have you

ever been arrested? The applicant printed the word no. in the space. The next question was a follow-up to the first. It asked, why? Not realizing he did not have to answer this part because he had answered no to the previous question, one applicant wrote honestly, I guess because I never got caught.

A Jeff Danziger cartoon shows a company president announcing to his staff, Gentlemen, this year the trick is honesty. From one side of the conference table a vice president gasps, Brilliant. Across the table another V.P. mutters, But so risky!

In a cartoon in the *New Yorker* magazine: Two clean-shaven, middle-aged men are sitting together in a jail cell. One inmate turns to the other and says: All along, I thought our level of corruption fell well within community standards.

David had the same sort of men to preach to as we have in the world today. Men have not changed over the centuries. Sin is still with us and men practice deception even when they know that if they are caught they will go to jail and be disgraced. Men behave unrighteously and in doing so they dishonor God and themselves.

In verse 3 David makes the point that godly living brings its own reward. He says, **But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him.**

Men seem to buy the idea that cheating and lying pay off. But in point of fact they do not. A 1987 CNN poll showed that the quality which Americans think is most important in a friend is honesty. It was considered to be more than twice as important as sharing common interests or having a sense of humor. Think how terrible it is to have a friend, or a son or daughter, or a parent, or a spouse, whom you cannot trust.

I heard the story of a farmer whose melon crop was disappearing fast from his field. Thieves were continually

stealing the melons under the cover of night's darkness. The farmer finally became desperate and in an attempt to save his crop he decided to put up a sign.

The sign had on it a skull and crossbones, and it read: **ONE OF THESE MELONS IS POISONED** -- only the farmer knew that it was not true.

Sure enough, for two nights not a melon was missing. But, after the third night, the farmer noticed that his sign had been altered. Someone had scratched out the word One and replaced it with another word so that the sign now read: **TWO OF THESE MELONS ARE POISONED.**

Thinking to save his whole crop through deception, he lost it all, which just goes to illustrate Sir Walter Scott's observation:

Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive!

He said likewise:

That a lie which is half a truth is ever
the blackest of lies,
That a lie which is all a lie may be met
and fought outright,
But a lie which is part a truth is a
harder matter to fight.

Alfred Lord Tennyson
The Grandmother

One of the qualities a person should look for when seeking a potential mate for marriage is integrity. Can this person be trusted? That is surely another argument for saying no to sex before marriage. If a young person can handle this temptation, then he or she can handle almost any integrity-buster that comes along.

People of integrity are more successful in every aspect of their lives. In the long run it pays to do the right thing. According to a 1988 *Newsweek* article more and more large American corporations are enrolling their employees in business ethics courses. These corporations realize that the success of their businesses depends upon the personal integrity of each of their employees.

Let me cite one example. A company in Phoenix, Arizona during the 70's was shut off from the Mexican market because they refused to give pay-offs to Mexican government officials. Something remarkable happened, however. The company's ethical behavior in refusing the pay-offs increased its stature in the eyes of some Mexican business people. Impressed by an American business that was bold enough to go against the system, a group of influential Mexicans lobbied the Mexican government to allow the company to open two Mexican dealerships. They are doing a booming business. One reason is that people know they can trust them.

What is true on the corporate level is true on the personal level. It pays to be a person of integrity, as David teaches in this psalm. It may not appear so at times, but just keep on and you will find it to be so. But the cheat or the liar will sooner or later be exposed.

David asked the question in verse 2, **O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception?** How long will you keep doing this? Will you never be wise for yourselves, never consider your duty and interest. The God of heaven thinks sinners who persist in lying and cheating and deceiving are self-deceived because they are ruining themselves.

David recommends a spiritual exercise **{4}Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still.** We are to take time to meditate and commune with our own heart. Our conscience will

convict us when we sin. We need to examine ourselves and reflect upon the words and actions of our lives. Repentance is necessary. It belongs to faith to want to turn away from all forms of sin. We will only repent if we do what David preaches in verse 4. The forgiveness of God comes as we repent and offer up to God the sacrifice of His righteousness.

David and the Old Testament believers had a sacrificial system in place that had to be followed. We are not under that same system but we do have a sacrifice and an altar. Jesus Christ is our one perfect sacrifice. We read in **Hebrews 10:19-22** ¹⁹**Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,** ²⁰**by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,** ²¹**and since we have a great priest over the house of God,** ²²**let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**

So as we are told by David in verse 5, **"Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD."** When we offer the one perfect sacrifice of Christ for us and through repentance and faith in the Lord's provision, we are accepted and forgiven.

David answers the question men ask in verse 6,

"Who will show us *any* good?"

Unless men look to the Lord for their good they must look to themselves, or to some organization, some business, some enterprise, or to the government. People are looking for someone or something to do them good. They want the good life, the happy life. The wanting is not wrong. The wrong is only in choosing to find the good in anything or anyone other than David's God.

David answers by saying in Verses 6-8, **Lift up the**

**light of Thy countenance upon us, O LORD!
 {7}Thou hast put gladness in my heart, More
 than when their grain and new wine abound.
 {8}In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For
 Thou alone, O LORD, dost make me to dwell in
 safety."**

Good can only come from God. We look with the eye of faith to our Creator/Redeemer Jesus Christ to supply all our needs. Men of the world seek only the outward good, the things of this life, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good home to live in, a good car to drive, a good sized bank account, good health, good associations and good times. Material good will satisfy men of the world but David and the people of God desire God's blessing for only that good enables a person to lie down and sleep in safety. Material possessions do not cleanse the conscience of guilt and give the peace that comes when God forgives sin.

David has better and higher good in mind than the unsaved men of this life. He and all who follow his teaching in this psalm seek that higher good that comes only from God. It is when God lifts up His countenance upon us that we find the good that endures and meets our every need of both body and soul. He puts gladness in the heart more than when the sons of men abound with new wine and grain. On top of that he sleeps peaceably every night, for God alone makes us dwell in safety.

David not only preached the gospel, he lived in out and men could look to him and see the fruits of it in his life. He shares his experience of joy and peace in trusting in the Lord.

God is the source of all our joys and blessings. We are told to look to him as David did and we too find that not only are all of our needs fully met; we have a peace that passes understanding. We have the security of the Lord and we can face both life and death without fear.

David teaches by word and example that by casting

all our cares upon him we have divine favor, divine provision and divine protection. God's salvation includes all these things. Providence is ever and always smiling upon those who trust in the Lord. Cast all your cares upon Him for He careth for you.