

Praying through the Pain

Psalm 41: 4-11

In ancient times the Hebrews divided the psalms into five separate books. We have come to the last of the first book of psalms, as divided by the Hebrews. The books were divided as such – Book one, Psalms 1-41; Book two, Psalms 42-72; Book three, Psalms 73-89; Book four, Psalms 90-106; and Book five, Psalms 107-150. All but four of the psalms within the first book are clearly attributed to David. The exceptions are Psalm 1, 2, 10, and 33.

As with the majority of David's psalms, this one also reveals an intimate look within the life and heart of David. Although he was anointed king of Israel at an early age, David faced much adversity and pain, continually crying out unto the Lord to intercede on his behalf. This psalm is much like many of the others. David is clearly at a low point in life, and he prays unto the Lord while struggling through pain and difficulty.

While our situation is much different than David's, I am sure we all can relate to this psalm. We may not like to admit it, but most of our earnest prayers are offered during a season of difficulty and pain. As we discuss the [aspects](#) of this particular prayer, I want to consider: [Praying through the Pain](#).

I. The Confession in the Prayer (4) – [I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee](#). Here we discover the honest confession of David as he prayed unto the Lord. God knows our hearts better than we know them ourselves; and if we expect Him to hear and answer our prayers, we must be open and honest with Him when we pray. Notice:

A. The Supplication (4a) – [I said, LORD, be merciful unto me](#). Clearly David is in a place beyond his ability to handle. He has recognized his need for the Lord and cried out unto Him for mercy. While we are unsure of the exact details of this encounter, David was in desperate need of the Lord's help. He pleaded with the Lord for mercy.

- Surely you would agree with me that we stand in need of the Lord's mercy and grace every day. We have discussed this before, but I want to explain the difference between the two again. God's abundant mercy withholds the judgment we rightly deserve. We all fail and miss the mark. I for one am thankful that the Lord doesn't deal with me according to what I deserve, living in a body of flesh. God's amazing grace provides what we could never deserve. It is His unmerited (unearned) favor. Mercy withholds and grace provides! Like David, we stand in need of mercy.

B. The Admission (4b) – *heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee*. Again, we don't know the particulars of this situation, but David admitted that he had sinned against God. There was something in his life that was not right. He had done something that displeased God and brought sorrow to his soul. He asked God to heal the sorrow and forgive his sin.

- This particular psalm is reminiscent of the great prayer David prayed in Psalm 51 regarding his sin with Bathsheba. *Psalm 51:3-4 – For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.* ^[4] *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* *Psalm 51:10-12 – Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* ^[11] *Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.* ^[12] *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.*

II. The Complaint in the Prayer (5-9) – Having dealt with the sin in his life, openly confessing his transgression before the Lord, David then felt justified to bring his burdens before the Lord and share his complaints. (There is a great lesson for us as we examine the sequence of David's prayer – we must first have our hearts right with God before making requests of Him.) Consider the complaints David raised unto the Lord.

A. The Scorn (5) – *Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?* David was being scorned by his enemies. These spoke evil of him, literally hoping David would die and his name be forgotten among Israel. Many agree this prayer was offered during the rebellion of Absalom, David's son. Absalom had no sons, and if he became king, it would have signaled the end of David's dynasty as king.

- While our names are not associated with kingdoms, no doubt we all have felt the sting of harsh words and evil comments being made about us. At times these comments are made by those we love, honestly believing we could trust them. Harsh words often cause the most damage and take the longest to heal.

B. The Slander (6-7) – *And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.* ^[7] *All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.* David felt vulnerable and alone at this particular moment in life. Those who came to see him were not there to offer well-wishes. They actually came to seek fodder for their accusations. These were not content to keep their disdain for David within themselves; they spread their lies of hatred and mockery to all who would listen. David felt as if countless people had turned on him due to the lies and slander that were being spread.

- This is one of the greatest tactics in the enemy's playbook. People are drawn to gossip. Often the more detail revealed, the better. We have all heard the beginning of such conversations – You aren't going to believe this, but... Unfortunately, lies and rumors spread much quicker than the truth. People are much too willing to share the gossip they have heard, whether it is true or not. Many reputations and lives have been ruined due to slanderous lies being spread.

C. The Skepticism (8) – *An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.* The rumors only added to David's misery. Apparently, he was physically ill during this time, and that too added to the hurtful rumors. Many who knew David had written him off, assuming that the sickness he had would be fatal. No doubt many viewed this as the divine hand of God working against David, only adding to their audacity in attacking him.

- Sadly, many who knew David and could have encouraged him, joined in adding misery to his difficult situation. Rather than seeking to discover the truth, many believed the lies and chose to assume David's life and reign were about over. In essence, they kicked him while he was already down. (Why is it that humanity tends to behave this way? Many Christian's have been hurt, and even left the church due to the actions of others. We must strive to build one another up, seeking to encourage rather than discourage.)

D. The Sedition (9) – *Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.* David had to admit that even a trusted friend, one who had eaten at his table, had also turned on him, seeking his hurt. Those whom he loved and trusted had engaged in actions and behavior that hurt him. Many think David may have been referring to Ahithophel, a trusted advisor and friend, who had betrayed him in the rebellion of Absalom. This surely broke David's heart having one of those he trusted to provide counsel also turning against him.

- David was certainly in good company in this regard. This served as a prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus and Judas. One He loved and trusted, having walked with Him as one of the twelve, betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. Judas led the company of the Jews to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was arrested prior to the crucifixion.
- This serves to reveal that we need not be surprised when those we loved and trusted turn against us. I have dealt with such betrayal, and such activity is difficult to handle. Thankfully we serve one who abides closer than a brother and will never forsake us in the midst of our trials and adversity.

III. The Confidence in the Prayer (10-11) – David had been betrayed by those closest to him, but he knew he could always trust in the Lord. Consider:

A. His Hope (10) – *But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.*

Even though friends, advisors, and family had betrayed him, David knew the Lord would prove faithful, showing mercy, and providing strength to endure the difficulties he faced. When all others had let him down, his hope in the Lord remained. His hope was settled in the Lord.

- This is difficult to remember, especially when we are faced with a trial, but we must always be aware that our hope rests in the Lord. Men may abandon us, friends and family may forsake and mistreat us, but we have one in whom we can always trust! We have been bought with a price through His shed blood on the cross. The saved belong to Him and He will see us through. With my hope and assurance in Christ, I know I face nothing that He is unable to handle!

B. His Help (11) – *By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.*

Through the many trials and burdens David faced, he learned much about the Lord's faithfulness. David knew he was not responsible for vindicating or even defending himself against these attacks. He had given that to the Lord and trusted His sovereign grace. In due time, the Lord would show favor toward David, revealing His pleasure in David, while giving him victory over his adversaries. David learned as a young lad that the battle wasn't his; it belonged to the Lord. He rested in the Lord's provision and grace.

- Such an approach requires great patience and wisdom, but our lives are much better if we respond as David did. The flesh wants to engage the enemy and fight the battle. There are times when we must stand, but there are other times when it is wise to pray and give the battle to the Lord. Wisdom is required to discern the difference. I have made situations much worse when I tried to handle them within my own strength and wisdom. I am learning to pray about difficulties and allow God to work through the situation, waiting on His wisdom and timing. I know if I guard my character, God will take care of my reputation. There are times when we need to rest in His grace and allow Him to fight the battle for us.

Conclusion: Are you struggling with a battle in life? Do you feel betrayed and attacked by others, maybe even those you love and trusted? Seek the Lord for wisdom and guidance. Be patient and allow Him to work in your situation. Bring your burdens before the Lord and give them to Him. He will fight for you if you are following His will for your life.

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If you have yet to come to Christ in repentance and faith for salvation, I urge you to come to Him today. There is no better time than right now to respond.