

A Morning Prayer

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon emphasizes the importance of focused, expectant prayer to God, particularly in the morning, while recognizing our need for His mercy and the joy that comes from trusting Him.

Duration: 30:33

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Righteous Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Psalm 5 and the prayer of David during a time of adversity. David passionately cries out to God, pleading for His attention and asking Him to listen to his prayers. The speaker highlights the use of parallelism in the Hebrew poetic form, where David repeats his plea in different ways to intensify his desperation. The importance of directing our prayers to God and looking up with expectancy after praying is emphasized. The speaker also emphasizes that the righteousness of believers is not determined by their words, but by their trust in and love for the Lord. The sermon concludes with a challenge for believers to have a joyful walk with the Lord, reflecting a life filled with rejoicing and trust in Him.

Transcript

Our Bibles to Psalm 5. This psalm is another psalm with a title. From the title we learn a little bit about its musical accompaniment. It was to be played with flutes and that it's a psalm of David.

Psalm 5, we're going to begin here at verse 1. Give ear to my words, O Lord. Consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry, my King and my God.

For to you will I pray. My voice you shall hear in the morning, O Lord. In the morning I will direct it to you and I will look up.

This is a psalm, like many of the psalms, that comes out of time of trouble or adversity for David. It's comforting for me to know that David, a man after God's own heart, knew what trouble and adversity was like. Sometimes we get this deception in our heads that if you're really godly, life will be easy.

That's a deception. And David knew what adversity was like. He's begging for an audience with God.

Do you notice it here? Give ear to my words, O Lord. Consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry.

In this, you notice the Hebrew poetic form of parallelism, where he just piles thought upon thought. The first three lines essentially say the same thing, but he's giving intensity and drama to it by repeating the same thing in three different ways. He's just crying out to God, Lord, please listen to me.

You felt like that, haven't you? Lord, please, I need you to live. I need an audience with you, God. I can't take it feeling like my prayers are bouncing off the ceiling.

I need to sense that you're listening to me, Lord. And I love what he says there. If you notice how it continues there in verse two, at the end of verse two, he says, for to you, I will pray.

Now you read that, you know, OK, yeah. So what? He'll pray to God. What else is he going to pray to? It sounds elementary to say that David prayed to God, but I want you to understand that this is an essential aspect of prayer.

Oftentimes, we come to prayer so full of our request, so full of our own feelings that we never consciously focus on God and sense his presence. We're really not praying unto God at all. Our thoughts, our minds are swirling.

It's about us. And it's as if David is saying, listen, God, I need to shut aside myself. I need you.

I'm going to pray to you. David was a great man of prayer because his prayer time focused on God. It wasn't primarily about his request, though he definitely made requests.

It wasn't primarily about his feelings, though he poured out his feelings before God. His prayer was to God. R.A. Torrey in his great, great book, How to Pray, has this paragraph.

He says very much of so-called prayer, both public and private, is not unto God. In order that a prayer should really be unto God, there must be a definite and conscious approach to God when we pray. We must have a definite and vivid realization that God is bending over us and listening as we pray.

Do you catch yourself praying a lot without that awareness? I do. You almost find yourself just sort of casting up words to heaven instead of really being aware that you're praying unto God. And then if that's not enough, look at how he puts it in verse three.

My voice you shall hear in the morning. David made it a point to pray in the morning. He did this because he wanted to honor God at the beginning of his day and he wanted to set the tone for an entire day dedicated unto God.

Does anybody need an example of someone else who prayed in the morning? How about our Lord and Savior Jesus? It says that he rose up a great while before the day he went out and departed into a solitary place and there he prayed. That's in Mark 135. Makes us feel lazy, doesn't it? We oftentimes think that there's not enough time to pray.

My friend, you can always get up earlier. I know a guy who has to leave for work like at 530 or five o'clock or something. So he gets up at four.

So he can have his time with the Lord. Spurgeon said this is the fittest time for communion with God. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening.

While the dew is on the grass, let grace drop upon the soul. I like that. I don't think that David only prayed in the morning, but there is something wonderful about setting the tone for your day by a time with God in the morning.

You know, a behavioral scientist will tell you that it takes three weeks to establish something into a habit, that if you do something repetitively for three weeks, it starts becoming ingrained in you as a habit. And, you know, when something is a habit, you just start doing it without giving it so much thought to say, well, I have to choose to do this. You sort of just move into the groove of doing it.

Well, maybe for your devotional time, you need to say, I am just going to stick with this for three weeks and make it a habit and then see what the Lord does in and through that. And this is even better in verse three, it says, my voice you shall hear in the morning, oh, Lord, in the morning, I will direct it to you and I will look up. That last phrase is very important.

In the morning, I will direct it to you and I will look up. You might say, OK, well, fine. He's directing his prayer to God.

No, that's not what it means there in the original language, the Hebrew that David originally spoke it, sung it unto the Lord. Actually, that last phrase of verse three tells us what we should do before prayer and it tells us what we should do after prayer. Before we pray, we direct our prayer.

After we pray, we look up with expectancy to heaven, really believing that God will answer. Let me explain the distinction between the two. That Hebrew word for direct right there, it has the idea of not to aim.

That's usually what we think of. You know, I'm going to direct an arrow towards a target. And you think of somebody pulling back the bow and aiming and say, OK, I'm going to aim my prayer towards heaven.

That's not the meaning of the ancient Hebrew word. Actually, I think a direct is probably a fairly poor translation of this. It's the same word used in the ancient Hebrew for to order or to arrange.

When it talks about the priest preparing a sacrifice and laying in order the pieces of wood and the pieces of the animal for sacrifice, laying it in order, it uses the same ancient Hebrew word. It's as if David is saying, I will arrange my prayer before you. I'm going to lay it out on the altar in the morning just as the priest lays out the morning sacrifice.

I think it's a mistake. Often the way we pray, because we don't direct our prayer, we don't order it. We don't arrange it.

We pray it haphazard. It's just sort of this random stream of consciousness kind of praying. And we don't say, no, I need to direct my prayer.

What am I going to come and pray for before God today? To prepare yourself mentally to come into the presence of God. Instead, it's just kind of coming in and rambling and chatting it up. Now, listen, God loves it when you come in and ramble and chat it up.

He'd rather you do that than say nothing. But isn't there something to learn from this phrase? I will direct my prayer. David prepared himself for his prayer time.

You know, if we would take two or three minutes before we settle down to pray, what do I need to pray for? Let me just jot it down. I'll just jot down some notes. I'm going to order it.

I'm going to arrange my prayer before God. And then when you do that, you put yourself in the right frame of mind because you say, well, listen, I can't just come and bring a laundry list before God. I need to make sure I thank him.

I need to make sure I praise him. And so you put that right at the top of the list. And then you say, well, you know, I need to make sure I give time in my prayer to listen to God.

It's not just all me talking as if this is monologue. I need to listen to him as well. But you see how we often neglect those things when we rush into prayer without any order, without any arrangement, when he says in the morning, I will direct it to you.

David's telling us what to do before we pray. But look at what he says in the last part of verse three about what to do after you pray. He says, and I will look up.

That talks about having a hopeful expectation after the prayer. Oh, Lord, I'm looking up to you. I know that you're going to do it.

I'm looking to you with expectancy. You're going to answer my prayer. Have you ever caught yourself praying like this? Oh, I do.

Sometimes you pray it. And in the moment of prayer, you're so full of faith. It's like, yes, the triumph of faith.

And then as soon as you end your prayer, it's like God will never answer that one. Well, that's not looking up. That's looking to self that's looking to fear and to doubt.

David says, no, I'm going to prepare my prayer beforehand and afterwards. I'm going to look up to the Lord and trust that he will win the victory in this. Now.

David next in verse four, he begins to paint a contrast between the wicked man and the godly man. Look at it here. Verses four through eight.

For you are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with you. The boastful shall not stand in your sight. You hate all workers of iniquity.

You shall destroy those who speak falsehood. The Lord of Whores, the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into your house in the multitude of your mercy.

In fear of you, I will worship towards your holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies. Make your way straight before my face.

Now, as David comes before the Lord in this morning time of prayer, you can just picture him, you know, versus one, two and three is sort of the preparation. But now in verse four, he's before the Lord and as he's in the holy presence of God, he immediately comes to recognition of the sinfulness of man. When you meditate on the righteous character of God.

You immediately come to the contrast of the sinfulness of man, of mankind in general and of us in particular. But he says, you are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness. Lord, you're holy.

I see unrighteous men all around me, but you're not like that. You are a holy God. You know, I think this is a very good way to measure how well you are praying to measure whether or not you're really coming before God or whether you're merely mouthing words.

What's common in the Bible when men and women have a close encounter with God? Almost always they are deeply aware of their own sinfulness. Do you remember Isaiah? I saw the Lord high and lifted up his glory, filled the temple, his train, the robe, filled the temple, all the angels crying holy. And then what's his response? Woe is me, for I am a sinful man with sinful lips dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

You have John coming before the Lord in the book of Revelation in his heavenly vision. And in his great experience, he just falls out flat before God with a deep awareness of his own sinfulness. If you aren't becoming more aware of your own sinfulness, not that you're out committing any particularly great sin.

I'm not talking about that, but just our own inherent frailty and weakness and that of mankind in general. If you're not becoming more aware of that, I don't think you're connecting with God at all. I don't know what you're doing in your prayer time, but isn't this just sort of self-evident that if we're really coming before God, we're going to be more aware of his great holiness and of our great need for him? Let me put it to you this way.

If we're really drawing closer to God, we will inevitably become more sensitive to sin in ourselves and in others. Sometimes it grieves me to see when a callous has developed in my own life or conscience towards sin. You know, not necessarily that I practice such a sin, but when I see other people do it, it doesn't grieve me.

It doesn't bother me. A very saintly man that I've read about. Became a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force during World War II.

And you know what his greatest trial was during that time? One of the greatest trials he endured being a chaplain in the Air Force during the Second World War was the profanity that he heard from the other servicemen. And you and I thought, so what? This man was deeply, deeply grieved. He felt abused and dirtied just by the profane talk he heard around him.

Now, that's a sensitive heart. That's a heart that's drawing close to God because it's becoming more sensitive to sin. In any regard, David makes it very clear here when he says in verse seven, I will come into your house in the multitude of your mercy.

He makes it clear that his confidence is not in the idea that I'm so righteous and they're so wicked, God. No, his ground of confidence is in the mercy of God. And then he says in fear of you, I will worship.

Did you notice that David's worship wasn't based on his feelings, but on his reverence for a righteous, merciful God. And then he said, Lord, make your way straight before my face, I need your guidance. Now, look at it as he continues here, verse nine and 10, where he describes the destiny of the wicked.

He says there is no for there is no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is destruction, their throat is an open tomb, they flatter with their tongue, pronounce them guilty. Oh, God, let them fall by their own counsels, cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against you. I want you to notice this, that David focuses on what the wicked say as evidence of their wickedness.

Did you notice that? Look again at verses nine. How does he know that they're wicked? There's no faithfulness in their mouth. Their throat is an open tomb.

They flatter with their tongue. Those are all sins that you commit with your speech, by what you say. So David looks to what the wicked say as evidence of their wickedness.

It's almost as if David was reading Matthew 12:34, which obviously he wasn't because it hadn't been written yet. But Jesus said at Matthew 12:34, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. If you're wicked, it will your speech will betray you sometime or another.

Oh, I know we know how to put on the church talk here at church, right? You know, many of us would have vastly better walks with God if we would just speak outside of church with the same vocabulary we use inside of church. Shamefully, some of us add words to our vocabulary when we leave church, profane words, words that we would never say inside of church. But it's not just profanity that David's talking about.

Look, he's talking about lying. There's no faithfulness in their mouth. Their throat is an open tomb.

Now, that's a vivid picture, isn't it? It's like an open casket funeral every time they open up their mouth. And then they flatter with their tongue. We get the sense here in this psalm that David felt the sting of wicked words and lies against him.

Lord, they're lying against me. There's death in their mouth. They're flattering me to my face, but behind my back, oh, Lord, they're they're being wicked in their words.

I think it's wonderful that even though David was slandered and attacked by his enemies, something good came out of it. This song came out of it, you know, an impassioned prayer to God. Lord, my enemies are so wicked that they're just driving me to come to you in desperate pleas.

Well, that's a good thing to be driven to the Lord. And even in that, our enemies can do us so much good. They can compel us to come to God.

I think it's interesting how David points out that his enemies flattered with their tongue. You know, the worst people that you have to watch out for with flattery is the people who would tell you that they would never flatter you. Flattery is a terrible thing where you just spin out sort of empty words just to gain favor with somebody.

But look at what David says about all these people who sin by what they say. He says in verse 10, Lord, pronounce them guilty. Oh, God, let them fall by their own counsels.

Lord, let them come to the end that they deserve. Pronounce the guilty sentence upon them, God. But look at the contrast in verse 11.

But let all those rejoice who put their trust in you. Let them ever shout for joy because you defend them. Let those also who love your name be joyful in you.

For you, oh, Lord, will bless the righteous with favor. You will surround him as with a shield. Now, I think it's interesting.

That David saw the evidence of the wicked in their words, you could tell the wicked are really wicked by what they say. But he doesn't say that the righteous are righteous by what they say. No, the righteous are

those who do what? Verse 11, who put their trust in you.

The righteous are not made righteous by their good speech or the fact that they don't lie or that they don't flatter. The righteous are those who trust the Lord and love his name. Nevertheless, the righteous are made evident by their words.

What do they do with their words? They rejoice. They shout for joy. They're joyful in the Lord.

Folks, you need to ask yourself this pointed question. Is your walk with the Lord a joyful walk? I mean, can somebody look at your life in the Lord and would they say, man, that is the biggest bucket of misery I ever saw in my life? You know, you go to people and you witness to them like this. You say, well, don't you want what I have in the Lord? And they say, not in a million years.

Oh, shouting for joy. It's a good, good thing. Charles Spurgeon said that one guy came up to him and he said, when I hear you preach, I feel that I must have a shout.

Now, Spurgeon preached in a big place and it wasn't a terribly vocal congregation that he preached to. You know, there weren't a lot of amens and hallelujahs, other Christian groups in his day. But in Spurgeon's Baptist congregation, they just pretty much sat and listened.

But a guy came up to him and as I said before, they said, Mr. Spurgeon, he said, when I hear you preach, I feel that I must have a shout. And Spurgeon said, my friend, shout if you feel forced to do so. And right when he said that in his sermon, somebody yelled out glory in the congregation.

And Spurgeon said, our brother cries glory and I say so to glory. In our own congregation, there's not a lot of amens or hallelujahs or preaching brothers. My brother was visiting a church once and the congregation was much more vocal.

And he said he sat next to a lady and she didn't really say amen. She didn't really say hallelujah. What she said while the preacher was preaching was she would just cry out, make it plain, make it plain, which is good advice for any preacher to make it plain.

But, you know, you should know that I certainly don't object to an amen or a hallelujah or whatever. It doesn't bother me one bit, you know, for that sake, I don't feel that I need it. I've heard some preachers, they seem to need it, you know, it gets the preacher going.

I need to tell you, I come up to the pulpit and I'm already going. It doesn't matter if you're, you know, vocal or not, man, I'm already go. My heart is filled with the word of God and the love of God and the spirit of God.

And, you know, to me, it's not helpful for me one bit or another, whether or not somebody says amen or hallelujah. But if it's helpful for you, I don't mind one bit, but don't feel like you've got to do it for my sake. But man, he says, shout for joy.

And then if you notice this, I love this phrase in verse 11, let all those rejoice who put their trust in you. Let me divide this up into four sections, it's a permit, a precept, a prayer and a promise. First of all, it's a permit.

You have permission for joy. This is your ticket to joy. You have divine permission to be joyful.

Don't think that God looks down upon your joy. He rejoices in it. You have divine permission for joy.

He says, let all those who rejoice who put their trust in you. But second, it's a precept. You know what a precept is? It's a command.

I think we have a command to be joyful. I think the chronically unjoyful, if that's even a word, the chronically unjoyful Christian is in sin. What right do we have to be so morose and downcast when our great God in heaven reigns and Jesus Christ has won the victory for us? Thirdly, I'd say it's a prayer.

Well, pray for joy, pray for it in yourself, pray for it in others. Now, I think you should especially pray for joy in people that you know who are servants of the Lord. That's a good prayer to pray for your pastors.

Lord, give them joy, because if you lose your joy in the Lord, you cannot be a good worker for the Lord. You can't bear a strong testimony for the Lord. You can't bear up under trials if you don't have much joy.

You can't live a powerful, attractive Christian life. Listen, as to the same proportion that we maintain our joy in the Lord, we're going to be strong in the Lord, because what's it say? The joy of the Lord is our strength. Finally, I'd say not only is it a permit, a precept, and a prayer, it's also a promise.

God promises you joy. He gives you joy and gladness, and the Lord wants to turn your night into day. Take it as a promise.

God has joy for you. And notice this, how the psalm ends in verse 12. For you, O Lord, will bless the righteous with favor.

You will surround him as with a shield. Friends, that's the greatest blessing of all, the favor of God, knowing that God looks down upon us in terms of favor and blessing. And he's pleased with us that there's a smile on the face of God when he looks down upon us, not because we're so righteous, but because we have a relationship of trust and love in a Savior who is righteous and we're found in Christ.

That's our standing in grace. With favor, you will surround him. Wouldn't you be joyful in knowing today that God is just very stoked about you? He's happy about you.

He sees you in terms of favor and goodness. That's a shield, folks. He says with favor, you will surround him as with a shield.

That's a shield. To know that God's favor is upon you, to know that God looks down upon you from heaven with a smile on his face. And I think it's wonderful to consider what a shield does.

You know, a shield doesn't protect any one area of the body. A shield isn't just for the head like a helmet. It isn't just for the chest like a breastplate.

It isn't just, you know, for any other particular part of the body. It's for the whole body. You can move it around everywhere.

It's mobile enough to cover any and every area of the body. It's armor over armor. And that's how fully the favor of God, our standing in grace protects us.

Yes, you have the armor of God on the man. It's like there is a shield. Devil, what can you do against me when I am convinced that the Lord God looks upon me in terms of favor because my righteousness is in

Christ? Martin Luther found a great deal of help and protection from the man who was the prince of the governor over the region that he lived in.

The man was known as the Elector of Saxony. That was his title. And because this politician supported Martin Luther, that's why the Pope's armies couldn't just march into the area and take Luther away by force.

And one day, one of the cardinals, a cardinal of the region, spoke to Luther and one of the cardinal's servants taunted Luther. He mocked him, saying, Where will you find shelter if your patron, the Elector of Saxony, would desert you? And Luther answered, I'll find it under the shelter of heaven. That's our shelter.

That's our shield. And so, we have the Lord God with us. Then, should we consider that David could end so triumphantly because he started so triumphantly seeking the Lord in the morning.

Let's ask God to show us what we need to do to have joy and confidence restored in our life and a real shield about us, his favor surrounding us. Let's pray together. Father, that is our prayer.

We want to sense your favor around us as a shield. And Lord, my heart goes out in particular this evening to those who feel that you've looked upon them with a frown or a scowl upon your face. Lord, I pray that you would help us to really come to you by faith in Jesus and what he has done for us and our relationship with him by grace.

See that we stand in grace before such a loving God and having your favor upon us. That's a shield for us. We love you and praise you, Lord.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

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