

Pillar Passages – Psalm 25
Jed Brown
Aug 19, 2021

Welcome to another edition of our Pillar Passages, where we look at key passages in Scripture. This morning we're looking at Psalm 25.

The psalm is striking because, of the topic right at the beginning. David prays, "To you, O Lord, I life up my soul."

Why?

"O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to sham; let not my enemies exult over me."

The whole concept of enemies is one that Christians have a hard time with. We, in some circles, have been trained to think of the concept of enemies as something that was Old Testament. That now Christianity means, when Jesus came, His essential message was that now of grace and love and therefore we no longer have any enemies. But that doesn't seem to jive with the rest of Scripture. After all, when Jesus commanded us in Matthew 5 to love our enemies, that implies—by definition—that we still have enemies. So Christians to have enemies.

For just a moment, before we get in the rest of the psalm, I like to look at Jesus says there in Matthew 5. He says here verse 38, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'" Jesus is quoting here the Old Testament, the *lex talionis* (Latin from *lex* – law, and *talio* retaliation). The famous eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth command.

It is interesting how Jesus says this. He says, "You have *heard* that it was said." As if Jesus is saying here. He's not arguing with the original command. He is arguing with how it is being used in His day. It was used in His day to justify retaliation. Jesus is saying, You have heard it said an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth, in the cause of retaliation. But in fact, the Old Testament purpose of the passage was to *limit* retaliation, because man's tendency is not to do an eye for an eye and tooth for tooth, but a *life* for an eye and an arm for a tooth. We are prone to retaliate and make the fire go higher.

What Jesus is speaking to here, when He says resist the one who is evil (verse 39) but if anyone slaps you on the right cheek give to him the other also. Let him take your cloak go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you. And do not receive the one who will borrow from you have heard that it was said ... Again the same kind of language here. ...you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. Jesus says, 'I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

He is not smoothing out with some—as D. A. Carson has said—He is not smoothing out with some sentimental pablum the notion of enemies. What He's doing is, He is reshaping our hearts and retraining our hearts, and our response to enemies in this life. We have enemies. Christians

have enemies. But He is reorienting ourselves. What Jesus adds here—which we'll come back to—is the focus on reward. But this does not come up yet in Psalm 25, but we see a great deal of agreement here with what Jesus is saying and what David speaks to in Psalm 25.

Let's look here at what David does with *his* enemies. David had enemies. We have enemies. The first thing that David does, is he turns *to* the Lord. He lifts up his soul to the Lord, verse 1 and 2. He says, "It is in You that I trust. So let me not be put to shame." Which implies that these people want to put him to shame.

Are there people, in our culture today, that want to put Christians to shame? All over the place! It is all over. Christians have enemies who would exult over them if they were allowed to. If they were empowered to. They would.

David then turns from that reality to the reality of who God is, and he reminds himself that, "none who wait for You shall be put to shame. David turns to the Lord in *faith*. In a faith that waits.

This is one of the great tests of faith: can you *wait* for the Lord's judgements? Can you *wait* for the Lord's justice? Can you *wait* for the Lord's deliverance? Or must you take deliverance into your own hands? That is one of the fundamental differences between David and his predecessor Saul. David could wait for the Lord in faith, while Saul could not. Saul had to take things into his own hands.

David waits trusting that they—they are the ones who shall be ashamed because God is the God who loves great reversals. They are the ones who shall be ashamed because they are the ones who are "wantonly treacherous." This little phrase here is helpful because it gives us a little bit of a definition as to who the true enemies are. There are many people in this world who are followers of our true enemies and they are *not* our true enemies. There are the deceived and the deceivers in this world. It is very important to understand the difference between the two. The deceivers are the ones who are wantonly treacherous who know the truth, and yet at the same time continually, repeatedly go against the truth and betray the truth.

What is the heart of David's prayer here? The heart of David's prayer here is first not; "Bring justice upon them, prevent them from fulfilling their wantonly treacherous plans. His first prayer is, make me know Your ways, O Lord. Teach me Your paths. Why is this. Why does David pray first that God would lead him in truth—verse 5—and *teach* him? For You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all day long.

David knows, that when you are under the pressure of enemies who want to put you to shame, who want to do you in, who want to cancel you... Those are the times when it is most easy to go off the path. Those are the times in the fog of war you cannot see. So David prays first, teach me your paths so I can keep walking in the ways of your salvation. Keep teaching me, because it is You that I wait for all the day long.

Then he prays this: Remember your mercy, O Lord. Why is this? David reminds himself that he needs God—how much he needs God. Then he reminds himself how faulty he can be. David, himself, is a sinner like his enemies. So David humbles himself, and reminds himself that he is in need of mercy, just like his enemies. He appeals to God’s mercy and to His steadfast love asking God, don’t remember the sins of my youth. David remembers that this is all by grace. What I’m asking you for, Lord, is not something that I deserve. I’m asking You to deliver me by Your grace so that Your name would be hallowed. Your name which is associated with grace.

So according to this; according to Your steadfast love remember me. Not because I deserve it. But for the sake of Your goodness. Let Your goodness be broadcast all over the world of Your delivering me. Why? Because You are good and upright, O Father. You are good and upright, therefore, You instruct sinners in the way. I am not asking as a perfect person, I’m asking as a sinner because that is who You are. You lead the humble in what is right; and You teach the humble Your way. All of Your paths—not mine—all of Your paths are steadfast love and faithfulness for those who keep Your covenant and Your testimonies.

Again, David prays, in verse 11, for Your name’s sake, for Your glory, that Your name may be hallowed—pardon my guilt for it is great. Not because I deserve it.

Then in verse 12 and 13 David comes across one of the best truths that we can remember when we are under attack for our enemies. And that is this: Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will He instruct in the way He should choose. And this in verse 14; the friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him. The Lord reserves His friend group—if you will—for those who fear Him. But then like all great friendships here’s what happens. Notice what happens next. And He (the Lord) makes known to those who fear Him, His covenant. Like all great friendships, these two people who are in this friendship share their secrets with each other. God shares with His friends who fear Him His covenant. How perfect is His covenant, how unbreakable it is with them. He displays it in His deliverance of them. He displays it in His strong love in the world. Thus David can say, my eyes are ever towards the Lord, for He will pluck my feet out of the net,

But then David being God’s friend turns to Him and tells God his secrets in verse 16. I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged. So bring me out of my distresses.

Out of the fear of the Lord, God becomes David’s friend and David becomes God’s friend and they tell each other their secrets. In telling each other their secrets, God’s covenant is revealed to David and David can then turn to the Lord humbly and yet confidently and pray; Consider my affliction and my trouble and forgive all of my sins. Deal with my two greatest foes: my external enemies which are still here, and my internal enemy—that is the sin and the guilt that if it could, would separate me from You forever. So consider how many are my foes. The foes are still there. David’s enemies are still there and they hate him with a violent hatred.

We see this today, even when government departments are calling signs of terrorism those beliefs which Christians often hold. There is a violent hatred in the world for God’s people. Our

enemies have not gone away. David's enemies have not gone away. Yet he returns again and ask God, will You consider them?

Now he returns to this notion of his enemies—the thought of his enemies—with a changed heart. With a heart that is more at rest. With a heart that is confident as he cries out to God to guard his soul and to deliver him. He repeats his concern and his question from the very beginning. He request—let me not be put to shame. Why? Because I take refuge in You. Will You glorify Yourself? I am going to entrust myself in Your desire for Your glory, God. In the mean time, this waiting on You does not mean that I do nothing. That I live with a limp passivity.

Nor does it mean that I can do whatever I want. I will work in integrity and uprightness that comes by faith. That comes by faith in Your promises. That You will come through, and You will do this for all Israel. You will redeem Israel out of all its troubles.

Praise the Lord, now that we who are on the other side of the cross have an even more vivid picture of this and proof of this. David's own life would become a proof to him. We have the live of the greater David who was sacrificed for us on the cross. We have an even more vivid picture than David had that God will redeem Israel. He has redeemed us and is redeeming us. He will redeem us out of all of our troubles. He does not keep us from troubles, but He does redeem us out of all of them for the sake of His name. For the sake of His glory.

These are great truths. Truth that we would do well to meditate on and to sock away into our hearts so that they would be at the ready when we face our enemies. They are many. They are real. But Jesus is the stronger one. The stronger one who will deliver us out of all of our troubles.