

Introduction

This is one of the nine acrostic Psalms, meaning it is purposely composed using the Hebrew alphabet in order. (Psalms 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119 and 145) Think of a poem where each major line begins with the next letter of the alphabet. This not just a poetic device but employed for an ancient culture whose people did not have regular access to scrolls or books and therefore depended on memorizing the text.

This Psalm highlights the greater focus of the biblical theme of God's teaching, that it is not the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge but how to properly live and conduct ourselves in the course of this life. It is an excellent example of incorporating God's Word into our prayer life, what Scripture calls "meditating" on the Word, as it includes pauses for praise, confession of sin, and requests for God to apply His standards to distressing situations with others.

A Psalm of David.

¹To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
²O my God, in You I trust,
 Do not let me be ashamed;
 Do not let my enemies exult over me.
³Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed;
 Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed.

Read verses 1-3

Q: *What does it mean, "I lift up my soul"?*

A: It's a Hebraic way of expressing complete and sincere worship of God. It's not just performing a ritual but depicting something very personal by offering up the whole person, our immortal soul.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Romans 12:1

Q: *How does "ashamed" apply in this instance?*

A: It refers to trust in God. As long as David says he is trusting in God and his antagonists do not see God answering him, they will "exult".

Q: *So what action does he take in the mean time?*

A: Nothing on his own but instead chooses to "wait for You". (v.3)

Q: *Why is this actually taking the right course of action? Isn't this just doing nothing?*

A: This isn't just sitting in a void doing nothing, but using the time for worshiping, praying, and meditating on God's Word while we "wait for You".

Observation: *The Hebrew word for "wait" carries with it the meaning of an attitude of hope, expectation, and even confidence. It is not like one of the English meanings which is not knowing how things will turn out, one way or the other.*

Q: Why ask for them to be “ashamed” instead of requesting their destruction?

A: This offers the possibility of recognizing and responding to their spiritual condition which might lead to repentance. The door is left open for a right resolution according to how God sees both sides of the engagement.

Q: Who, exactly, are “Those who deal treacherously without cause”?

A: These are those who are at the opposite extreme from those who trust in God. They willfully take up actions which rebel against God’s Word and ways in not just their approach to God, but in their treatment of others, especially those trusting in the Lord.

Application: In order to be **taught** by God, one must wholly **submit** to God, even if it means **waiting** for His timing and response.

Read verses 4-7

Q: What is the difference or similarities between “ways” and “paths”?

A: The underlying Hebrew term for “ways” conveys the idea of a well-worn path due to constantly walking on it. Scripture often describes someone walking in the way of a bad spiritual figure such as the wicked Jeroboam (1 Ki. 6:25) versus a good figure such as David. (2 Ki. 22:2) “Paths” are God’s routes to a right way of living. Scripture speaks of the path of life (Ps. 16:11; Pr. 2:19; 5:6; 10:17; 15:24), the path of integrity (Ps. 27:11), the path of uprightness (Pr. 2:13), the path of justice (Pr. 2:8; 17:23; Is. 26:8; 40:14), the path of righteousness (Pr. 8:20), and warns against selecting the path of evil (Ps. 119:101) as it is a false path. (Ps. 119:104, 128)

Application: Our total commitment to His ways is a well-worn path that is solely committed to transforming us more and more into His image in the course of His life.

Q: According to v.4, what is the common destination of His “ways” and “paths”?

A: God’s truth and salvation.

Application: Authentic direction from God always leads to biblical salvation and can be verified by the unchangeable truth of His Word.

Q: What quality does v.5 repeat from the previous section?

A: It echoes v.3 in waiting on the Lord.

Q: Does the petitioner assert that he deserves God’s attention and action on his behalf?

A: According to v.6-7, such seeks the Lord’s “compassion” according to the eternal working of His “lovingkindness”.

⁴Make me know Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
⁵Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
For You I wait all the day.
⁶Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses,
For they have been from of old.
⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
According to Your lovingkindness remember me,
For Your goodness’ sake, O LORD.

Q: Why does the petitioner specify both “sins” and “transgressions”? How might this especially relate to “my youth”?

A: “Sin” is to fall short of God’s standard; “transgression” is to rebel against His standard. It speaks of the rebellious nature of the youth and how it might follow one into maturity.

Q: To what does he ultimately appeal in v.7? Why?

A: “...Your goodness’ sake...” The Lord’s steadfast love will cover sin so completely that it will be remembered no more.

As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
— Psalm 103:12

Application: God does not teach **facts** and **figures** but requires students who are committed to obtaining **salvation** according to His ways and paths exclusively by His **truth**.

Observation: Whatever God teaches will inevitably begin with an examination of one’s spiritual state. Without a commitment to the work of the cross, it can never go any further.

Read verses 8-11

⁸Good and upright is the LORD;
Therefore He instructs sinners
in the way.

⁹He leads the humble in justice,
And He teaches the humble His
way.

¹⁰All the paths of the LORD are
lovingkindness and truth
To those who keep His covenant
and His testimonies.

¹¹For Your name’s sake, O LORD,
Pardon my iniquity, for it is
great.

Q: How does this section immediately connect with the previous?

A: The previous ends and this one begins by referring to the Lord’s quality of being good.

Q: How does the working of God’s qualities of “good and upright” show itself?

- (v.8) “...He instructs sinners in the way.”
- (v.9) “He leads the humble in justice...”
- (v.9) “...He teaches the humble His way.”

Both spiritual extremes are in need of learning to walk exclusively on God’s well-worn path.

Application: An especially important quality serving to identify God’s true followers is attaining to visible humbleness of character.

Q: What is the stipulation in v.10 as to who will experience “all the paths of the Lord”?

A: “To those who keep His covenant and testimonies”.

Q: What is a “covenant” and what are His “testimonies”?

- “Covenant” is a pledge or agreement, the overall commitment made at the moment of salvation. It has requirements for both parties.
- “Testimonies” describe God’s witness of the permanent nature of His covenant.

Psalm 25 • The Lord is My Teacher, Page 3 of 6

Application: God's ways and paths are not temporal but require a permanent commitment.

Q: Previously, "sins" and "rebellion" were mentioned. What is the third category mentioned in v.11?

A: Whereas "sin" falls short of God's standard, and "transgression" is to rebel against God's standard, "iniquity" is to twist God's standard into something to suit or justify one's self.

Application: To properly receive and act upon God's **teachings** one must completely deal with the ill-effects of **sin**, **transgression**, and **iniquity**. This is a life which is **unpolluted** by even the tiniest drop of sin.

Read verses 12-14

¹²Who is the man who fears the LORD?
He will instruct him in the way he should choose.
¹³His soul will abide in prosperity,
And his descendants will inherit the land.
¹⁴The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him,
And He will make them know His covenant.

Q: Why do you suppose that it took this long to see a mention of godly fear of the Lord?

A: Biblical fear is the reverent attitude and personal submission to the sovereignty of God. This quality cannot be obtained without **first** committing one's self to His permanent path, dealing with all vestiges of sin, and measuring all things according to God's truth.

Q: What are the benefits of a proper fear of God?

- (v.12) "**He will instruct him in the way he should choose.**" God will provide guidance for life's choices and pending decisions.
- (v.13) "**His soul will abide in prosperity...**" Notice it is the "soul", referring to eternal prosperity and contentment in the course of this life, not necessarily monetary wealth.
- (v.13) "**...his descendants will inherit the land.**" An extension of "prosperity", this is leaving a godly legacy.
- (v.14) Such are privy to the "**secret of the LORD**". Only Holy Spirit-filled and faithful believers can understand all that God reveals through His Word, even the prophetic portions.
- (v.14) "**...He will make them know His covenant.**" Not just theoretical or factual knowledge, but to know by means of experiencing and living it.

Application: The fertile soil God prepares in us through a steadfast **commitment** to His path provides **direction** and a **heritage** in this life, **wealth** which satisfies for this life and the next, and a far-reaching knowledge of the **deep** things of God's **Word** and His **covenant** relationship with us.

¹⁵My eyes are continually
toward the LORD,
For He will pluck my feet out of
the net.
¹⁶Turn to me and be gracious to
me,
For I am lonely and afflicted.
¹⁷The troubles of my heart are
enlarged;
Bring me out of my distresses.
¹⁸Look upon my affliction and
my trouble,
And forgive all my sins.
¹⁹Look upon my enemies, for
they are many,
And they hate me with violent
hatred.

Read verses 15-19

Q: How is the emphasis in v.15-17 very different from that of v.18-19?

A: The petitioner asks for his own spiritual disposition to be addressed by the Lord before that of his antagonists.

Q: How is his situation described?

- (v.16) "...lonely and afflicted..."
- (v.17) "...troubles of my heart are enlarged."
- (v.18) "...my affliction..."
- (v.18) "...my trouble..."

Application: These are all issues of an internal matter which call for being resolved within us personally before bringing up issues of others' behavior causing these things to be addressed by the Lord.

Q: What remedies from the Lord are being sought?

- (v.15) "...pluck my feet out of the net..."
- (v.16) "...turn to me..."
- (v.16) "...be gracious to me..."
- (v.17) "Bring me out of my distresses."
- (v.18) "Look upon..."
- (v.18) "...forgive all my sins."

Application: Calling on the grace of God is effected in concert with making sure internal sin is first addressed before moving on to address external antagonists.

Q: What specific remedies are asked of God to bring against the many who "hate me"?

A: None. It is left up to the Lord to simply "look upon"—that is, give His attention to them; He will respond as He sees fit.

Q: How does this connect to the opening of this passage?

A: "My eyes are continually toward the LORD" (v.15) versus the request for God to "Look upon my enemies".

Application: We **look** to the Lord for His **work** in us and He in turn **looks** upon our antagonists to render a **response** according to how He sees the situation.

²⁰Guard my soul and deliver me;
Do not let me be ashamed, for I
take refuge in You.
²¹Let integrity and uprightness
preserve me,
For I wait for You.
²²Redeem Israel, O God,
Out of all his troubles.

Read verses 20-22

Q: Why might this closing benediction sound familiar?

A: It seems to echo the opening section. The beginning and ending of this Psalm are like bookends containing the petitions in between.

Q: What is the position taken by the petitioner? What do they have in common?

A: “I take refuge in You” and “I wait for you”. They are defensive stances awaiting direction from God; they are not actions which go out and take on these problems from one’s own strength or will.

Q: What is requested for the petitioner personally?

- (v.20) “Guard my soul...”
- (v.20) “...deliver me.”
- (v.21) “...preserve me.”

Q: What are the personal qualities of the petitioner?

A: “...integrity and uprightness...” (v.21)

Q: What is the purpose of including v.22?

A: It reminds us to always pray for others and even more so for their redemption. David, as both this Psalm’s author and the king of Israel, was acutely aware that the nation’s situation usually paralleled his own; he intercedes on their behalf.

Application: While taking **refuge** in and **waiting** on the Lord, the righteous man continues to **behave** faithfully **according** to God’s Word and ways.

Overall Application

This Psalm serves as an appropriate prayer guide for those who have set out on God’s path and desire to know and do His will, as well as successfully navigate conflict with others according to God’s Word.

- How often do we even wait upon the Lord? Why is it so rare for us to do so?
- How exclusively are we attached to God’s ways and paths? How might this divulge a measurable affirmation of our spiritual state?
- To what degree have we, or currently, addressed the issues of not just sins, but transgressions and iniquities as well?
- Have we suitably addressed our personal spiritual situation so that we are properly prepared to learn all the Lord has to teach us?