

Hope in Troubled Times

Teach Me Your Paths

Psalm 25:1-22

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Teach Me Your Paths

Scripture

This is our second Sunday of not having a corporate worship service in our sanctuary. We are not able to meet together in person as the gathered, corporate, covenantal people of God to worship our Triune God. Instead, we are having Virtual Fellowship, which our modern technology enables us to do, but it is a far cry from meeting in person with one another to worship our great and glorious God.

Last time we started a series of meditations that I am calling, “Hope in Troubled Times.” Today’s meditation is titled, “Teach Me Your Paths.” It is a psalm of David, and it is found in Psalm 25.

So, please follow along as I read Psalm 25:1-22:

Of David.

¹To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

²O my God, in you I trust;

let me not be put to shame;

let not my enemies exult over me.

³Indeed, none who wait for you shall be

put to shame;

they shall be ashamed who are

wantonly treacherous.

⁴Make me to 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 long.

⁶Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your

steadfast love,

- for they have been from of old.
- ⁷ Remember not the sins of my youth or my
transgressions;
according to your steadfast love
remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!
- ⁸ Good and upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
- ⁹ He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.
- ¹⁰ All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love
and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and
his testimonies.
- ¹¹ For your name's sake, O Lord,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.
- ¹² Who is the man who fears the Lord?
Him will he instruct in the way that he
should choose.
- ¹³ His soul shall abide in well-being,
and his offspring shall inherit the land.
- ¹⁴ The friendship of the Lord is for those who
fear him,
and he makes known to them his covenant.
- ¹⁵ My eyes are ever toward the Lord,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.
- ¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
- ¹⁷ The troubles of my heart are enlarged;
bring me out of my distresses.
- ¹⁸ Consider my affliction and my trouble,
and forgive all my sins.
- ¹⁹ Consider how many are my foes,
and with what violent hatred they hate me.
- ²⁰ Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me!
Let me not be put to shame, for I take

refuge in you.

²¹ May integrity and uprightness preserve me,
for I wait for you.

²² Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all his troubles. (Psalm 25:1-22)

Introduction

Tim Quinn said that he was stumped. His old Macintosh laptop simply would not run the Mac Bible software anymore. Though he had worked with it for hours, nothing he did would help. His wife suggested that he call the owners of the software for help, but *no*, he knew what he was doing.

Finally, after having exhausted every last idea, he gave in and called the Mac Bible corporation. After speaking to a friendly voice, he was assured that the person to whom he was being referred would know exactly what to do. Tim wasn't convinced, but he called him anyway.

The name he had been given sounded familiar, and he soon learned why. The person on the other end of the line was none other than the man who wrote the Mac Bible software. He gave Tim a brief set of instructions, which he wrote down and hung up the phone. In minutes, Tim's computer software program was up and running. He just had to go to the man who wrote the program.

Tim writes, "How many times in life do we try to work out our problems our own way? Finally when all else has failed, we go to the one who designed us. Soon, if we obey, we find ourselves once again at peace with God and functioning as he planned."¹

As you know from our studies in the life of David, he

¹ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2000/december/12776.html>.

often faced trouble. Saul tried to kill him sixteen times before David finally ascended to the throne. After David was crowned as king over all Israel, he continued to face all kinds of trouble.

Many scholars believe that Psalm 25 was written by David much later in his life when his son Absalom organized a rebellion against his father. Psalm 25 is not written in a style that is dramatic or emotional, but in a style that reflects a mature faith in a heavenly Father.

One final point to note before we begin our lesson. Psalm 25 is written in an acrostic form. That is, each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In addition to Psalm 25, there are several other psalms written in acrostic form: Psalms 9-10 (together), 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145. However, Psalm 25 is a broken acrostic, in that two letters are not in the proper order. The result of this broken acrostic led one commentator to write, “This brokenness reflects the way troubles break the pattern of life itself.”² That is, our lives often experience trouble, as we are all experiencing right now.

Lesson

Psalm 25:1-22 shows us that we can prevail in life’s troubles when we hold to three never-failing truths.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. God Helps Us in Our Time of Need (25:1-7)
2. God Can Be Trusted (25:8-15)
3. God Delivers Us When We Take Refuge in Him (25:16-22)

² J. A. Motyer, “The Psalms,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 501.

I. God Helps Us in our Time of Need (25:1-7)

First, God helps us in our time of need.

When troubles come into our lives, to whom do we turn? To whom do we go for help?

Right now it seems as if entire nations are turning to their governments for help. We want our government to get rid of the virus. We want our government to provide health care. We want our government to help pay our bills. Soon, we will want our government to provide us with jobs.

While it is true that the government is able to play some role in helping, protecting, and providing, the mature child of God looks ultimately to the Lord. David writes in verses 1-2a, **“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.”** David knew that the ultimate source of his encouragement was God.

You may recall an incident prior to David’s coronation. He was still living in Philistia when he and his army went off to war with the Philistines. While they were gone, the Amalekites raided David’s city and took captive all the wives and children of David and his soldiers. When David and his men returned, they found all the women and children gone. The Bible says, “And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters.” That is completely understandable. “But,” the text goes on to say, “David strengthened himself in the Lord his God” (1 Samuel 30:6). David lifted up his soul to God. He put his trust in God. And God eventually enabled David and his men to recover all their families safely.

That is why David was able to go on to say in verse 3, **“Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.”**

The Hebrew word for “**shame**” and “**ashamed**” is different than being embarrassed or feeling foolish. One commentator says, “The unique biblical idea [for “**shame**” and “**ashamed**”] is that of being let down or disappointed or of having trusted in something that in the end proves unworthy of our trust.”³ So, the *New Living Translation* of verse 3 puts it this way, “No one who trusts in you will ever be disgraced, but disgrace comes to those who try to deceive others.”

David not only affirmed his trust in God, he also asked God to teach him his paths, as he said in verses 4-5, “**Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.**” David pleaded with God to teach him his truth.

Do you plead with God to help you understand his truth? Do you want God to teach you his paths so that you can walk in them? My dear brother and sister, God has given us his Word. Let us read, study, and apply God’s Word to our lives.

Finally, David wanted God’s forgiveness regarding the sins of his youth. He had regrets about the sins he had committed earlier in his walk with God, and he wanted to be assured of God’s forgiveness. So, he said in verse 7a, “**Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!**”

In his commentary on the psalms, Harry Ironside tells of visiting a very old Christian. The man was about ninety years old, and he had lived a godly life. However, in his last days he sent for Ironside because, as he expressed it, “Everything

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 223.

seems so dark.”

“Whatever do you mean?” asked Ironside. “You have known the Lord for nearly seventy years. You have lived for him a long, long time. You have helped others. Whatever do you mean ‘dark?’”

The man replied, “In my illness, since I have been lying here so weak, my memory keeps bringing up the sins of my youth, and I cannot get them out of my mind. They keep crowding in upon me, and I cannot help thinking of them. They make me feel miserable and wretched.”

Ironside turned to this psalm and read the verse in which David prays, **“Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!”** (Psalm 25:7)

After he had read the words he said, “When you came to God seventy years ago you confessed your sin and put your trust in Jesus Christ. Do you remember what happened then?” The old man couldn’t remember. Ironside said, “Don’t you remember that when you confessed your sins God said, ‘Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more.’ If God has forgotten them, why should you think about them?”

The man relaxed and replied, “I am an old fool remembering what God has forgotten.”⁴

My dear brother and sister, if Jesus has paid the penalty for your sin, God will never hold it against you again.

So, whether our need is the trouble we are facing, or learning the paths of God, or remembering not our past sins, let us remember this truth: *God helps us in our time of need.*

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary*, 226–227.

II. God Can Be Trusted (25:8-15)

The second truth is that God can be trusted.

It seems that David now affirmed the character of his God. After all, why pray if God cannot be trusted?

But God *can* be trusted. Why can God be trusted? In verses 8-15, David lists four reasons why God can be trusted. There are many reasons why God can be trusted, of course, but here are the four reasons given in these verses:

1. God can be trusted because he is **“good and upright”** (v. 8).
2. God can be trusted because **“all the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness”** (v. 10).
3. God can be trusted because he will **“pardon my guilt”** (v. 11).
4. God can be trusted because **“the friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him”** (v. 14).

I want to elaborate on this last reason. David writes in verse 14, **“The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.”** The word **“fear”** in this verse does not have to do with the emotion of being afraid but rather that of reverential awe. In other words, David came to revere the Lord because he came to a saving knowledge of God. Therefore, he became a friend with God, and God made known to David his covenant. That is, God revealed to David his promise to bring sinners into a right relationship with himself.

In his wonderful commentary on the Psalms known as *The Treasury of David*, Charles Spurgeon writes, “He who does not know the meaning of this verse, will never learn it from a

commentary; let him look to the cross for the secret lies there.”⁵ We can only become friends with God through Jesus. Jesus is the only mediator between his Father and us, as Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

God can be trusted because he has sent his Son, Jesus, to reconcile us to himself. Look to Jesus and trust in God.

So, God helps us in our time of need. And God can be trusted.

III. God Delivers Us When We Take Refuge in Him (25:16-22)

And third, God delivers us when we take refuge in him.

Knowing that he had taken refuge in God, David asks God to deliver him from fearsome enemies without and fearful emotions within. God delivered him from several things, such as loneliness (v. 16), a troubled heart (v. 17), afflictions (v.18), enemies (vv. 19-20), and troubles (vv. 21-22).

It seems that verse 20 is key to understanding David’s thought here. Here is David’s confident assertion, **“Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.”** Again, I like the way it is expressed in the *New Living Translation*, “Protect me! Rescue my life from them! Do not let me be disgraced, for in you I take refuge.”

As we have studied the life of David, we see how God delivered David when David trusted the Lord and took refuge in him. However, on those occasions when David did not trust the Lord and sinned, he suffered the consequences.

Our refuge is Jesus. This is wonderfully expressed in the

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 1-26*, vol. 1 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 395–396.

answer to the first question of the *Heidelberg Catechism*. The First Question is, “What is your only comfort in life and in death?” The answer is:

That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior *Jesus Christ*, who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my *Father* in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His *Holy Spirit*, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him.⁶

So, we can prevail in life’s troubles when we hold to three never-failing truths: God helps us in our time of need. God can be trusted. And God delivers us when we take refuge in him.

Conclusion

G. Campbell Morgan once said, “What we do in the crisis always depends on whether we see the difficulties in the light of God, or God in the shadow of the difficulties.”⁷ We don’t know how long the coronavirus pandemic is going to last. But, however long it lasts, let us see our difficulties in the light of God and hold on to these three truths: God helps us in our time of need. God can be trusted. And God delivers us when we take refuge in him. Amen.

⁶ Heidelberg Catechism, *Heidelberg Catechism*, Revised Edition. (Cleveland, OH: Central Publishing House, 1907), 19.

⁷ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/1996/december/1514.html>.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can
be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons.
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp.
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