



Our Daily Need Psalm 23

Question: How often do we pray so that we can feel better about ourselves that we checked off some spiritual box? How often do we pray unexpectedly? How often do we pray out of some sense of Christian duty and obligation, while in the back of our minds were thinking that our prayers don't really matter and God is just going to do what He wants to do anyway?

Acts 12:6-16 Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. 7 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. 8 And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." 9 And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." 12 When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. 13 And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. 15 **They said to her, "You are out of your mind."** But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, "It is his angel!" 16 But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, **they saw him and were amazed.**

Question: What do you think they were praying for? Why were they amazed? They fully anticipated that Peter was going to be executed just like James. They never expected God to answer their prayers concerning Peter.

Question: If God already knows what I need, why do I have to pray and ask?

John Calvin - "Believers do not pray, with the view of informing God about things unknown to him, or of exciting him to do his duty, or of urging him as though he were reluctant. On the contrary, they pray, in order that they may arouse themselves to seek him, that they may exercise their faith in meditating on his promises, that they may relieve themselves from their

anxieties by pouring them into his bosom; in a word, that they may declare that from Him alone they hope and expect, both for themselves and for others, all good things.

Question: So what should our approach be?

Luke 18:1 And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

(Unrighteous judge's response to oblige the widow is compared to God's loving response to His elect. Activity vs relationship)

Colossians 4:2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Question: So how should we pray?

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

John Macarthur - "In fewer than seventy words we find a masterpiece of the infinite mind of God, who alone could compress every conceivable element of true prayer into such a brief and simple form - a form that even a young child can understand but the most mature believer cannot fully comprehend."

Review:

- **Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name** - prayer begins with worship. Why? He's the only one worthy. He's the only one that deserves it. BUT, we don't worship God because of what He can do for us or what we can get out of Him, we worship Him because of who He is.
- **Your Kingdom come** - prayer begins with worship and then recognizes the Kingdom of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. "My kingdom go, Your kingdom come." We should be focused on the expansion of God's kingdom now in this present reality, and also the fulfillment of God's kingdom in the future when Jesus finally returns to rule and reign forever.
- **Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven** - prayer begins with worship, it recognizes God's authority, then submits to and longs for God's will to be accomplished. It longs for God's will to be submitted to, to be obeyed, not just on a personal level, but also in the world around us, just like it already is in heaven.
- Notice how all of this is God-centered. It's all about honoring and worshipping Him, it's all about His kingdom, it's all about His will - NOT ours. It's not man-centered. First section focuses on God, second part deals with the needs of the worshipper.

Matthew 6:11 "Give us this day our daily bread."

- For us in the western world it is difficult to understand why we should ask God for something that we already have in abundance - food.
- What is Jesus teaching us?
 - It's ok to ask (not command) God for stuff, for Him to meet our needs

Matthew 6:25, 32-33 "25 Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?...32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

- Jesus isn't saying that those things aren't important. In fact, He's expressing His confidence that God will meet the **PHYSICAL** needs of His people.
- We should have the same confidence that Jesus had, but when we pray we should ask for legitimate needs, not greeds!

James 4:3 "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."

- Note the use of the word bread, "our daily bread" - not cake or other luxuries.
- Note the use of "day" and "daily." Why daily?
 - o We are to be continually dependent on God. We aren't told to ask that God provide us with storehouses of food for the future, but that He provide for our immediate needs in the present.
 - Why? This keep us focused on the Provider instead of what's provided.

Question: But what about the ASK promise?

Matthew 7:7-11 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

- Is Jesus promising that God will give us anything we want as long as we Ask, Seek, and Knock? NO
 - Focus of chpt 6 is on God meeting the physical needs of His people
 - o Look at how well God takes care of the birds of the air (food), lilies of the field (clothing)
 - Focus of chpt 7 is on God meeting the spiritual needs of His people
 - o Look at 6:33, our focus should be on His kingdom and His righteousness (seek first because it's far more important)

Question: Has God promised to meet the needs of everyone?

Psalm 37:3-7 "Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. 6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. 7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him."

- God has never promised to always meet the needs of everyone, but He has promised to provide for those who "trust" in Him, "delight" in Him, "commit" themselves to Him, and those who "rest" in Him and wait patiently for him...someone who's in a saving relationship with Him!
- What does that look like? How does He do it? (Psalm 23)

Psalm 23:1a The Lord is my shepherd;

- All of us have and will serve a master, God or Satan. David uses 2 vignettes to describe his relationship with God (God provides provision, restoration, protection)
 - God is seen as a shepherd, believer is seen as sheep
 - God is seen as a host preparing a banquet table, believer is seen as a guest being lavishly taken care of
- The Lord (Yahweh, I AM) - Where do we have a tendency to turn/look in times of need?

Psalm 23:1b I shall not want.

- Never said we won't have needs, just not wants (Needs vs. wants)
- David is saying that the Lord is the master of his life and that he is so satisfied with the way He cares for him that he has absolutely no desire for anything or anyone else.
- Now he's going to describe how God cares for him and completely satisfies him.

Psalm 23:2a He makes me lie down in green pastures.

- Sheep have a high center of gravity and are very top heavy, which makes it difficult to get them to lay down because of how hard it is for them to get back up on their feet. So, before sheep feel comfortable and secure enough to think about laying down the shepherd has to remove anything and everything that can cause anxiety or fear.
 - Anxiety from hunger pains
 - Tension within the ranks of other sheep
 - Aggravations from annoying insects
 - Fear from predators overlooking and following the herd
 - Only the shepherd can remove these anxieties and fears through his provision and presence!
- The Good Shepherd never runs out of green pastures for His sheep.

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

- David is saying that God so effectively removed his anxiety and fear and replaced it with peace and contentment that he was now empowered to fully **surrender** his natural instincts of pride, being in control, and protecting “self” because he knew that God could be **trusted**. (God does this through His provision and presence)
 - Picture of a life moving from being dead in sin into new life in Christ

Psalm 23:2b He leads me beside still waters.

- Sheep are weak, fragile. They have to be lead gently, not driven hard like cattle. Driving sheep will kill the herd.
- Sheep are timid, easily scared. The sound of rough waters causes anxiety and fear.
- Sheep are stupid. If left to themselves, sheep will drink anything to satisfy their thirst, including puddles of water filled with manure, urine, disease, etc.
 - The promises of this world look satisfying, but are nothing more than filth.
- David is saying that God leads him in such a way that He protects him from trying to satisfy his needs from the nasty and filthy puddles of this world that will only kill us, while at the same time leading him to the only place that where his needs can really be satisfied - Himself.

Matthew 5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

- Birthmark of a genuine believer.
 - What do you hunger and thirst for? Are you satisfied with what and who you have in Jesus?

Psalm 23:3a He restores my soul.

- The Good Shepherd provides diligent care for His sheep.
 - It's important to remove the debris from the wool. Otherwise the added weight will dramatically increase the likelihood of the sheep tipping over.

- It's important to continually be alert and looking for any lost or fallen sheep so that he could rescue or upright them to prevent them from becoming a convenient meal for roaming predators.
- It's important that the wool be sheared on a regular basis

Psalm 56:13 “For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.”

- David is saying that God had diligently combed through the wool of his life and character so that He could remove the debris and filth that weighed him down, that would eventually lead to his own destruction.
 - Have you come to see God remove the debris and filth from your life?
- David is saying that even when he did stumble and fall, which he did mightily, God faithfully came to rescue him and restore him.
 - Have you come to experience that kind of restoration after a fall?
- David is saying that God continually trims the fleece of his character through the cutting edges of what - His word. It's uncomfortable and painful during the process, but such a relief when we are finally set free from ourselves.
 - Has God's word been used in your life like that?

Psalm 23:3b He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

- Sheep are creatures of habit and if left to themselves they will follow the same paths until they become ruts, graze on the same land until it's a desert wasteland, rest in the same areas until they become infested with parasites and insects, and pollute their own ground with manure and urine until it became too polluted to use.
 - In the end, the land is useless, the sheep are thin and sickly, and the reputation of the shepherd is tarnished because it's obvious to everyone else that he can't take care of his sheep or manage his land.
- Sheep are easily distracted and led astray.
- The Good Shepherd has a pre-determined plan to keep his sheep on the move.
- David is saying that God is meticulously leading and guiding him away from the comfort of his own destructive habits, not just for David's own health and well-being, but also for God's own reputation.
 - Can you see how God has guided you and helped change your habits and desires over time?

Psalm 23:4a Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

- The emphasis here is where the shepherd is leading the sheep. The sheep have survived winter and spring and are now being led away from ranch towards the mountains. Why? Because the good shepherd knows that's where the land is rich with food and water.
- In order to get to the mountaintop, the shepherd has to lead the sheep through the valleys that will expose the sheep to the dangers of flooding rivers, avalanches, rock slides, poisonous plants, threats from predators, and strong storms.
- David is saying that regardless of the circumstance or calamity that comes his way, he is able release his natural instincts towards panic and fear and find confidence in God's care. How? Press into the Shepherd, stay close to Him.
 - David has confidence because he knows that God's presence is right there with him in the midst of that circumstance and calamity, that God is working things out for his own good, and that God is actually bringing him to safety and bringing him to higher and more fertile ground.

Psalm 23:4b your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

- Nothing gives sheep more comfort than seeing the shepherd's rod and staff, and each for different reasons.
 - The rod was the shepherd's weapon of choice, used not only for his own defense, but also for the protection of his sheep.
 - It was used to discipline any sheep that got out of line or tried to wander away.
 - It was also used to push back the thick wool so that the shepherd could provide a close, first hand, and intimate examination of the skin to evaluate the sheep's overall health.

Psalm 139:23-24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

- The staff was used to gently nudge or guide the sheep to where the shepherd wanted them to go.
- It was used to rescue sheep by lifting them out of the water before they drowned or freeing them from thorn bushes before they became a happy meal for some predator.
- It was used to comfort shy, scared, or sick sheep because it allowed the shepherd to remain intimately connected but gave him greater reach.
- David is saying that God's Word and God's Spirit had given him great comfort, and each for different reasons.
 - Can you say the same?

Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

- David now begins to describe his relationship with God - God as host
- David is saying that God treated him like a gracious host that provides lavish hospitality.
- God had provided such safety and security that he was able to rest comfortably and dine, even as his enemies looked on. Despite impending danger, God spread out a table and provided for him, provided what he needed.
- David is saying that God is so awesome that He even treated him as an honored guest and provided such abundant blessing that his cup overflows.

Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

- Having experienced God as shepherd and host, David concludes this psalm by reflecting back on the reality that God's love, mercy, provision, and grace are neverending and something he will enjoy forever and ever, regardless of whatever circumstance or calamity he may find himself in.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd..."

- Promised to meet our physical and spiritual needs.