

What is True Prayer

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Date: 28 March 2021

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[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and go to the book of Psalms.

If you need a Bible, there's one in the chair in front of you, a black Bible. You can pull that out and you can go kind of towards the middle of that black Bible. Find page 394.

Actually 393, but 394 as well. So 394, Psalm 4. Psalm chapter 4, the book of Psalms. Psalm 4.

Again 394 in that black Bible. Today we're gonna look at Psalm 4. Next week I'll do a resurrection message. And then April 11th we'll start in the book of Judges.

God's overwhelming, never-ending, relentless love for his people that's the theme and I'll give you the sub-theme. Here's the sub-theme of Judges. He wants you to solely want him.

[1 : 08] That's the sub-theme to Judges. He wants you to solely want him and he'll discipline you to get there. He'll discipline you to get you there.

So just be prepared for the book of Judges. God's serious about this. His love is relentless and he wants you to want him solely.

That's what the book of Judges is about. That it whet your appetite. Right? So. And do this, by the way, as you're reading through the book of Judges, I encourage you, this week, next week, you should be able to do it in two weeks, find the number of times you see the word harlotry or played the harlot in the book of Judges, what Israel did.

And you'll see, you begin to understand why that's the theme, sub-theme. God wants you to want him solely. So, that being said, Psalm 4 today, a resurrection message for next Sunday, then we'll jump in in the book of Judges.

Psalm 4 today, Psalm 4, I'm gonna read it and then we'll jump in doing a verse-by-verse study on Psalm 4.

[2 : 21] This was an actual evening prayer, a Davidic evening prayer for the choir director on string instruments, a Psalm of David. Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness.

If you relieve me in my distress, be gracious to me and hear my prayer. O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? Will you love what is worthless and aim at deception, Selah?

But know that Yahweh has set apart the godly man for himself. The Lord hears when I call to him. Tremble and do not sin. Meditate in your heart upon your bed and be still, Selah.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and trust in Yahweh. Many are saying, Who will show his good? Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O Lord.

You put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and new wine abound. Verse 8, in peace. I will both lie down and sleep for you alone, O Yahweh.

[3 : 33] Make me dwell in safety. I'm sure you heard about the story of a little boy who had been sent to his room because he was bad.

A short time later he came out and I said to his mother, I've been thinking about what I did. I said a prayer. That's fine, she said. If you ask God to help you to be good, he'll help you be good.

Oh, I didn't ask him to help me be good, he said. I asked him to help you put up with me. That was his prayer. It's so easy to pray the way we want to pray.

It's easy to pray the way we want to pray. If you really want to learn how to pray, go to the Psalms.

The Psalms are songs and they're really prayers. Songs, prayer songs, if you will. If you want to know how to pray, take time in the Psalms.

[4 : 50] They teach you a lot about how to pray. The prayer songs to recognize how to pray. Prayer is talking to God like a wish request to God.

It's true. But in the Psalm today, we're going to see or answer the question, what is true prayer? And there's other aspects to true prayer.

I'm sure you see it throughout the Bible, Old Testament, New Testament, yes, it's true. But in this Psalm, it's going to answer us this question, what's true prayer? What is true prayer?

As a matter of fact, you have, it's going to give us seven aspects of true prayer to change the way we pray and have us respond fittingly. As I said earlier, it was a Davidic evening prayer.

And, you have to understand the emotions and the historical context behind this Psalm.

[5 : 57] It was probably written during the revolt of Absalom against David. If you know that story, 2 Samuel 15, 16, 17, Absalom, his son, was coming into Jerusalem.

Do you remember what David had to do? He fled. So get this. The king of Israel is fleeing from his throne.

So now you're going to see the emotions that are going to be behind this prayer song.

I mean, we looked at Psalm 24 and it was, remember it was, it was excitement, the ark of coming, it was coming in and people were dancing and I was just like excited.

last week we looked at Psalm 13. It goes back in time when David was running from Saul. So here at Psalm 4, it shoots us forward in David's timeline of his life and it's like, oh yeah, what do you know what it was like to run from Saul?

[7 : 20] He's running again and this time from his own son. He was running from his own son who was coming to Jerusalem. He was going to take the throne.

So here's the feelings behind this, okay? Okay? This Psalm, then you'll understand, this Psalm gives us a Godward focus in the midst of life's storms.

When trials strike, this is how we can pray to our God. And David gives us these seven aspects of true prayer.

And I encourage you, I hope, and I'm encouraging you this won't change the way you pray. First, what is true prayer?

True prayer, number one, cries for God's help. The first part of verse one and the last part of verse one, answer me when I call.

[8 : 26] Notice the last part of verse one, hear my prayer. His request to God to help him was based on his fellowship with God.

I have fellowship with you. I'm crying out to you. God responds when we call to him.

Hear me. He's going to bring up later on in verse three that he was confident that the Lord heard him. Do we go to God at any time?

Do we cry out to him? Do we go to God at any time with confidence that he will hear us? True prayer cries out to God for help expressing dependence and need. And the only reason why you can be confident that God hears you is because you have direct access because of Jesus who lived and died and rose.

You can come right into the presence of God right into his throne room at any time. True prayer cries for God's help. That's the first one. Number two. True prayer rests on God's vindication.

[9 : 46] Notice he says the next part of verse one answer me when I call O God of my righteousness. What does he mean by this? What does he mean when he says this O God of my righteousness?

O God's righteousness is his John Piper says the unswerving allegiance to uphold the value of his glory. That's what righteousness means. It's a good way to define it. But what does he mean when he says the God of my righteousness?

My righteousness. Why is he saying my righteousness? What's he talking about? He's conveying the fact that he David was right. In other words God vindicates those who are upright in his sight.

God's the possessor of righteousness. Yes. The author of righteousness. Yes. He's also the vindicator for those who are righteous. He is for those who are misjudged and persecuted because he's the standard of what is right.

God himself. And David was saying I'm right before you O God. He was right before God. He rested on the fact that God would vindicate him.

[11 : 06] He knew he was right. He says God you know my heart. You know what's going on inside of me. Remember this is that principle that metanarrative of the Bible where God's people suffer and they face persecution and yet in the end God vindicates them.

It's not in vain. Your suffering is not in vain O Christian. And what's the proof of that? Jesus. Because Jesus suffered.

He was the godly one. The God man who suffered and died and it looked like everything would fail. God vindicate him.

We'll celebrate that next week. He resurrected him from the dead. God vindicates his people. True prayer rests on the fact that God will vindicate.

True prayer rests upon the fact that God will in the end make things right for his people. He will vindicate us. Christ is the proof of that. Jesus is the proof of that.

[12 : 17] If Jesus would have never physically resurrected from the dead why even be here? There's no point. There's no point to your suffering. Go commit suicide right now.

There's no point. No but there is a point to suffering because as Jesus suffered you will suffer and though we suffer now the suffering in this life is not even worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed.

You will be vindicated. And see true prayer we rest in that and sometimes vindication some of it vindication happens now in this life.

It did with David. Absalom was killed. He was reinstated. But sometimes it doesn't. Right? But whatever happens Christ's followers rest on God's perfectly timed vindication and that's true prayer rests upon that.

Number three true prayer depends on God's grace. Towards the end of verse one he says be gracious to me. show pity have mercy on me and our prayers are we making demands?

[13 : 43] Everything that comes to us is God's grace. What is grace? Unmerited favor undeserved favor. You don't deserve anything. If you think God is obligated to you you're wrong.

God's not obligated to you He doesn't give you anything. How can you say as the creation tell the creator you owe me? That's ridiculous.

He owes you nothing. So we true prayer depends on God's grace. Do we depend on the grace and mercy of God? We don't deserve anything from God.

Nothing. Nothing. Number four true prayer lists out our petitions. That's what he does.

And notice the order too I mean he's talking about we're depending on him his grace resting on his vindication we're crying out to him for help. And then here's my petitions notice he says verse two O sons of men how long will my well how long will my honor become a reproach will you love what is worthless and aim at deception silah it's a statement to the enemy who was his enemy Absalom there was a coup going on his little band of rebels they turn David's glory to shame David lived for the Lord but they loved vain things or empty things or worthless things he says they aim at deception worthlessness they sought deception in other words to drag his reputation through dust there was nothing but lies about

[15 : 43] David from Absalom you see that in the story make reference to that 2nd Samuel chapter 15 16 17 you see that the lies that I mean even Ahithophel his trusted counselor betrayed David and notice the last part of verse 2 the silah it's like it's an expression of frustration Lord look at this do you see what's going on go to verse 6 many are saying who will show us good this is a statement from the destitute in other words what good is it to be with David he's on the run who wants to be around that guy I don't want to be around David I want to be around with Absalom yeah he's awesome what good is there with David people were questioning if he was doing the right thing people started doubting David because of the lies it reminded me of Shimei if I say his name right he was one of the relatives of Saul and David was walking with his

I mean his whole entourage and this guy was cursing David and throwing rocks oh curse you curse you this is what you get and Abishai was like David I'm going to go over there and cut that boy's head off right now let me do it David's like no no no don't do it it's from the Lord David's like this is what's going on it's hard to stand upon the truth when no one's behind you and they begin to question you that's when you say Lord look at what's going on here's my petitions I need you true prayer we list out list your needs to God what are your needs what are your petitions he hears his children interesting how what happens here in verse 4 and 5 in the prayer which leads us to the fifth aspect of true prayer true prayer results in godly responses there's a result from true prayer interesting that he does this when we have biblically minded christ focused prayers it brings about four responses and you see this right in the middle of the psalm it's striking you have the prayer and then you actually have godly responses that come from prayer it comes from having this attitude of prayer before god true prayer results in godly responses here's four responses a b c and d a first godly response we meditate in our hearts look at verse 4 tremble and do not sin meditate in your heart upon your bed what's he saying tremble in other words quake rage be agitated or be angry but don't sin in refuges chapter 4 verse 26 paul quotes this anger in itself is not necessarily sin is what you do with it be angry and don't sin but then he says meditate in your heart upon your bed now meditate you think of it in our culture or new ages clear your mind no in the bible you don't clear your mind in the bible you fill your mind when you see the word meditate in scripture especially in the psalms it's calling you fill your mind we fill our minds with truth instead of simply responding out of emotions we respond from what we know to be true instead of that knee jerk reaction careful my rip your pants don't just give a knee jerk reaction he says stop fill your mind with truth think meditate in our hearts the first godly response from true prayer letter be be shush your mouth we silence our mouths notice the last part there of verse four and be still be silent be quiet selah selah he puts that in there as ponder

what was just said it's a musical crescendo to think to keep from talking instead of talking maybe we need to open up god's word letting him speak a good habit to develop is to let your prayers be directed from god's word maybe we need to open up the word of god god speaks from his word you want to know how god speaks god speaks today he speaks from this genesis revelation everything you need for life and godliness is right here in the scripture maybe we just need to be quiet be silent fill your mind we meditate in our hearts we silence our mouths see we sacrifice our lives notice he says here offer the sacrifices of righteousness in verse five what does this mean sacrifice of righteousness it was a way of consecration even of confession and really even of fellowship you might say well

I go to like and offer some sacrifice well for the old testament you gotta understand what the sacrifices meant these rituals that they would do were ways Israel would symbolically give themselves a Yahweh they were exterior actions that displayed interior devotion and what happened was Israel got so caught on the on the exterior on the ritual well I went I did my thing I'm good did my little checklist I went to church Christmas and Easter I'm good I'm fine it's not about the ritual it's what's behind the ritual that's why he says we sacrifice our lives I give you my life we fill our minds with truth shut your mouth we give him our lives and letter D we submit our wills our wills last part of verse 5 and trust in Yahweh what was

David going to do I'm going to submit my will we submit our wills look at the end of the day we need to trust God's plan and what he's purposed to do and what was David going to do he's fleeing Jerusalem the capital his throne where he sat as king you feel the emotions of that he couldn't do anything else and of course he's probably was so angry at what was going on but this was his response it's good you see this tremble be angry and do not sin we should be watchful of our anger when things don't go the way we think they should go like with David they didn't go as he expected was it deserved in some way from

[24 : 40] David yeah there were some results consequences but still he was having the right response so what do we look at resting on God's vindication we depend on his grace we listen our petition we cry for help we have godly responses look to five here's the sixth aspect of true prayer what he does here in the middle part of verse six he asks for God's presence verse six may are saying who will show us good that's what he says lift up the light of your countenance upon us oh Yahweh let your kindness be directed toward us actually thinking of the promise that Aaron would proclaim upon Israel in Numbers chapter six verse 24 26 and we see here that word countenance the light of your countenance is the presence of God the countenance of your face he asked to be satisfied with God

I need your very presence with me I feel you're far away I want your blessing I want your presence I want you here with me what mattered most to David was God's presence with him is that what matters most to you not being delivered from your turmoil not being delivered from your trouble not being delivered from your pain are you asking for God's presence I mean that's my first reaction not to ask for his presence but get me out of this mess that's my first reaction maybe it's not for all you people but for weak links like me my first reaction is get me out of here I don't want to suffer I don't want to hurt I don't want to be in pain I don't want to deal with this every single day do you what matters most to you that you get out of that pain or that

God's with you I want you that's what David is asking I want you David was so good at this and then last last aspect of true prayer true prayer comes down to it relies on God's faithfulness it relies that God's going to be faithful in the end when it's all said and done God's going to be faithful and you see that throughout different aspects there's actually four different aspects I'll give to you God's faithfulness first God relieves look at middle part of verse one he says you have relieved me in my distress it's interesting the word distress it's a play on words here the word distress literally means make narrow or tight and when it says you have relieved me it means make large so you've made large these tight spaces what's he saying he's going to rely on

God's faithfulness that God makes large the narrow places God makes light the difficult times God sets us free in tight times God eventually will relieve us God eventually will vindicate us God eventually will take the pain away he will be trusted in his faithfulness in that way God relieves and not only that God relieves God marks notice verse three first part of verse three but know that Yahweh has set apart the godly man for himself set apart separates him God separates us for himself he marks us distinguishing us from the rest here is the sovereign election of David setting him apart it was an assurance of

God hearing his prayer and the assurance of God hears our prayers Christian you must hold on to the fact that God loves you he marks us notice he says the godly man for himself a faithful one a godly one a lover of God those whom God loves with an unchanging love and who love him back because he's changed their wills to love him most notice set apart the godly man for himself you see that a faithful God upon whom we can depend he chooses us for the sake of his name for himself not for you God doesn't choose you for you God chooses you for himself to show that he's faithful and gracious God will always be faithful to us because he's always faithful to himself which is for the sake of his name he's relying on

[30 : 53] God's faithfulness God relieves God marks and not only that but God hears the middle part of verse three last part excuse me Yahweh hears when I call to him he was confident God heard him because God is faithful he's a faithful God to his people God is for his people those who love his son I mean have you forgotten Hebrews chapter four verse 14 to 16 we have a great high priest who passed through the heavens Jesus Christ the righteous one hold fast the confession come before the throne of God to find grace and mercy in our time of need you can come and he hears he was confident of that we rely on the faithfulness of God and then last number four or letter D excuse me he gives a couple blessings here first he gives David joy

I'll give her seven you put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and new wine abound I'm just so excited wait wait wait wait wait a second he's running from Absalom he's running from his throne he's got nowhere to go Ahithophel his great counselor has bailed on him and betrayed him this guy is going so here he's going and he's saying oh you put gladness in my heart what this is crazy he's psycho there's something wrong with this guy there's more joy in God than when a farmer enjoys a bountiful enormous harvest of his crop is in my heart his soul and you gotta understand something here the historical context of this

David was receiving provisions by stealth people were kind of hiding and going around here David here's some stuff for you here here they were doing this by stealth because Absalom was in control so if you wouldn't gave David some stuff you'd be considered as going against Absalom they'd kill you a rich harvest had come in so the followers of Absalom had a powerful reserve in these rich storehouses at their disposal they had all these resources David and his followers they're beggars and yet David's saying what I possess in my heart is far richer can you say that God is faithful and he'll give that to you he may not feel it but he will and he does he's faithful to that

David says it why can't we he he gives joy not only that he gives peace look at what he says in verse eight in peace I will both lie down and sleep he gives peace I'm gonna sleep good tonight fellas you ever had something where you're suffering you're in pain a trial a hardship how do you sleep I sleep horrible I sleep really bad why because you're mulling it over in your head aren't you cats I'm gonna get a good night's sleep tonight I'm good amid the turmoil true prayer rests on God's faithfulness and he gives us peace we trust there's peace and you can sleep

Spurgeon he says this quote the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which the child of God rests his head at night giving perfect peace isn't that nice interesting verse eight the end of verse eight it gives you a reason because notice the for for there's a reason that's a reason because why could he rely on God's faithfulness because of God's security the end part of verse eight for you alone oh Yahweh make me dwell in safety you yourself alone no one else calls him to dwell in security so he's free of care wait a minute hold on he's running from Absalom how does that make any sense yes amid this turmoil he knew he'd dwell in safety and security he knew that eventually

[36 : 26] God would vindicate him for his own sake he trusted in that David David literally had to trust that God would keep him safe in the end he trusted in the promises that God made to him 2nd Samuel chapter 7 God said there's going to be someone on the throne there's a promise to you David and your sons it's going to be I mean it's the promise really of Jesus the Messiah coming remember put yourself in that time frame put yourself in David's shoes he's running from the very throne where he was reigning Absalom's there he has to bank on those promises that God made him he has to and he has to trust eventually why can I rely on God's faithfulness because I know

I know the promise that God made it will make me dwell in security I know it to be true and we must do that too we must trust in the promises God has made to us do you believe that nothing will separate us from his love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord Romans chapter 8 verse 38 and 39 is there we must trust the promises of the gospel God should judge you God should condemn us because he's holy and just and we're sinners but that's why Jesus had to die he died and he physically rose when you turn from your sin and you trust Christ Jesus alone he'll save you his love comes to you if you're here you're not a Christian you should trust Christ and you will experience the love of God you trust

Christ and you will experience the grace and mercy of God and nothing will separate you from that love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord we must bank upon those promises true prayer cries for God's help it rests on his vindication it depends on his grace we list out our petitions to him it results in godly responses it asks for God's presence we want him with us and relies that he's going to be faithful that's true prayer I pray that encourages you you pray with me Lord Jesus we know that we fall short and yet we thank you oh spirit that you will take these truths and we ask that you implant them deep within us and we fill our minds with truth and we fill our minds with the promises of the gospel in the midst of trials and hardships and such tribulations not at all how David what David experienced in the midst of these times though we know we can rely on your grace we can cry to you for help we know you'll vindicate us we give you our petitions and say oh god help me we really want you go to you you you you you you you you you you you you