

PM Psalm 101 Living Right?

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Date: 22 May 2022

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[0 : 0 0] Psalm 101 and a question to begin with, are we living right? Before we look at the psalm itself, let's look at a little background to it.

We've previously looked at Psalms 92 to 100 which looked at raising praise to God. And this psalm is almost a natural follow on as it turns our attention from praising God towards rightful living.

Living in a way that is honourable and glorious to God. We're called to give praise to God for his glorious deeds and for the mercy he's shown us because he's holy.

The psalm that we're looking at tonight is accredited to King David. And is believed to have been written shortly before the start of his reign or just after.

And Charles Spurgeon writes about this psalm. This is such a psalm as a man after God's own heart would compose when he was about to become king in Israel.

[1 : 1 3] It is David all over. Straight forward, resolute, devout. There is no trace of policy or vacillation. The Lord has appointed him to be king and he knows it.

Therefore he proposes in all things to behave as becomes a monarch whom the Lord himself has chosen. So basically David in this psalm is looking to reflect the character of God in his behaviours, in his actions.

David has set his heart devoted to the service of God. As we know he was God's choice as a leader of his people. But one of the striking points that struck me in this psalm was that David seven times refers to what he will do.

How he will act. And twice to what he will not do. As he plans to walk with God. We must remember that the king wasn't like a present monarch.

The king had a real presence in the nation. And was seen as being basically God's person on earth. We must remember the king was seen as acting in behalf of the Lord.

[2 : 3 8] He was to carry God's will. And demonstrate God's characteristics in his words and his deeds. The psalm itself can be split into two pieces.

Two equal parts with four verses in each. The first four verses are concerned with David's behaviour as he walks in the way of the Lord.

In the final four verses we look at David's attitude towards others. We can see this clearly throughout the psalm.

David is clearly making solemn vows before God about his personal behaviour in his house and in his nation. So let's look at the first four verses.

Verse one starts, So David starts with a declaration that he will sing of justice and steadfast love to God.

[3 : 4 6] For David, these are to be the characteristics of his rule. And he has experienced them first hand from God throughout his life. In verse two we learn that David will ponder the way that is blameless.

That is not to give the image that David was sinless. After all, we can read in Samuel of the sins which he committed.

David was not sinless. He was a mortal human just like us. We know of how he ordered the death of Uriah the Hittite, one of his great generals, because of his lust for Bathsheba, Uriah's wife.

Warren Werbe, the theologian, reminds us that blamelessness does not mean sinlessness. Rather, it can be another word for integrity.

Cultivating a wholeness of heart and single-mindedness. Instead of having a double heart and a double mind.

[4 : 54] In Psalm 26, a psalm attributed to David starts in verse one with, Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and have trusted in the Lord without wavering.

So, David may have sinned throughout his life, but he was not trying to serve two masters.

He was not about later kings who would try and appease God, while also trying to honour the false gods of his neighbours. We even see Solomon, who built the temple in praise and honour to God, but who also then built altars in the high places to satisfy the false gods of his many wives.

We are called to follow David's example. And if we look at Matthew verses 5 and 8, Jesus declared, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

And in Philippians 2.15, Paul calls us to be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, amongst whom you will shine.

[6 : 11] So we are to stand blameless before the world, to demonstrate our integrity by following Christ's command, and being their light to the world. Showing an example of Christ's message to the world.

In the final sentence of this verse, we see David referring to integrity. That if we are to walk in integrity in front of society, the starting point is to walk with integrity in our personal lives.

To walk in integrity in our home lives. And we see again, the failure in David's lives later, when his own son rises against him, because he didn't walk in integrity.

He didn't discipline his son when required. In the midst of this second verse, David cries out, Oh, when will you come to me? So David invites God to reside with him.

And later he will bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. So they abide side by side. But here it reminds us, that without God's promise, David cannot live a blameless life.

[7 : 26] David reiterates this theme in Psalm 51, in verses 10 and 11. David writes, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. And this is also true for us. We can have high ideals, high aims, but without reliance upon God, we can never attain behaviour that is going to be pleasing to God.

No matter how good our actions, no matter how good our intentions, our actions are worthless, without God.

We will be focused upon ourselves and our desires, looking to gain our own satisfaction, and our own salvation. In verse 3, David proclaims, I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.

I hate the work of those who fall away. It shall not cling to me. So having set out his desired behaviour, David starts to set out what he will avoid and what he will not tolerate in his nation.

[8 : 45] Worthless can also be seen as wicked. So he will see nothing that is wicked before his eyes. David vows to protect his eyes, to protect his sight.

What we see demonstrates what we know. And we'll lust after, or fantasise after, what we see.

Jesus says in Luke 11.34, Your eye is a lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light. But when it is bad, your body is full of darkness.

Think how this applies to our deteriorating sight. Our sight fades, and things become dull.

They become out of focus. And then they become blurred, and eventually useless. We are in darkness. So it is also.

[9 : 45] A perverse heart has the same effect. Jesus warns us that we choose to view, that what we choose to view, and what we search for, affects the rest of our body.

If we seek Christ, we will live in the light. If we set our vision upon sin, then we will live in darkness, far from God, and light will be shut out.

Just as though we are blind. In the second part of this verse, David focuses on those who fall away. Those who are involved in apostasy. Those who turn aside from God.

He will not tolerate their presence. And this theme continues into verse 4. A perverse heart shall be far from me. I will know nothing of evil.

David, for the sixth time, in the four verses, uses that assertive statement. I will. He uses the I will statement to highlight that he has set his sights on a high moral standard.

[10 : 53] We can also see here a transition from David's behaviour to that of the others around him. And what he will tolerate in his associates.

He will know no evil. And people of corrupt hearts and minds shall be far from him. In verse 5, we see the clear move to David's considering the attitudes towards others.

Whoever slanders his neighbour secretly, I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart, I will not endure. Now we think about it, no one desires to be associated with those who slander or lie about their neighbours.

But think how much more important it would be for David as a king to distance himself from such people. Imagine that his court, if there was a few who would look to whisper tales and postulate lies about their fellow courtiers in an effort to better their own positions and undermine their fellow courtiers.

His court would become insecure and so also with his rule over the nation. David is clear that he will have short shift with such behaviour.

[12 : 16] He states that he will destroy such people and so uphold God's commandments. In Exodus 20, 16, we read the ninth commandment.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. And similarly, David reflects the attitude of God in Isaiah who promises that the haughtiness of man shall be humbled and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

So verse 6 contrasts with these vows of destruction of the slanderer and the proud. Verse 6 says, I will look with favour on the faithful in the land that they may dwell with me.

He who walks in the ways that is blameless shall minister to me. So David as king needed associates around him whom he could trust.

People, as seen in verse 2, had the heart of integrity. Who practised what they preached. Who weren't double-minded saying one thing while actually doing and living another.

[13 : 31] David fills his courts with those who embrace this lifestyle. It's often said that we are known by the company we keep.

What is said about you from the company that you keep? Now, in this we need to be careful. Because it's easy to think about this and say that what we need to do is shut ourselves off from the outside world to enclose ourselves in our own little protective enclaves.

to lock ourselves away from those who are sinful. Yet, where does that leave Christ's example in our lives? He was tax collectors who were seen as outcasts to society.

He associated with prostitutes and sinners as the Pharisees, the self-righteous were quick to point out. Well, let's look at the first point.

Let's look at Jesus first. We often worry that the company we keep will affect our lives. It will influence our actions. People keep bad company, we say that if they keep bad company then they'll get into trouble.

[14 : 48] People keep bad company and they start drinking. They keep bad company and they start getting involved in offending behaviour. But is it because of the company we keep?

Yet Christ kept the company of sinners and yet was sinless. He was not led astray by their behaviours. Rather, in Luke 6.45 Jesus states, The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil.

For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. We are led astray, we sin against God because of what's in our hearts, not because of the company we keep.

If our heart is pure and we mix with people who are not, our actions should be pure. Our actions and words are driven by the desires of our hearts.

So our hearts must be focused upon God or we will stray from his ways. So we should not cut ourselves off from people of the world.

[16 : 03] We should meet with non-believers. We should have contact with those shunned by society, the poor, the sick and the imprisoned. However, we should also look at from whom we take counsel.

Those who we draw advice and guidance from. Those whom we rely on in times of need. Like David, we should ensure that they share our walk with God.

They have the same beliefs and faiths as ourselves and can uphold us in times of difficulty. Therefore, we can uphold and support one another.

We can hold each other to account and if on occasions it is required, we can also rebuke one another. As David closes verse 6, he says, He who walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me.

They shall attend to David's needs and give him counsel. They will give him advice. As we go on, David is clear and repeats in verse 7 that those not walking with the Lord will not be part of his inner circle.

[17 : 22] They will not dwell in his house, they shall be excluded. David writes, No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house. No one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes.

And that goes back to support verse 6 about keeping good counsel. Verse 8, David concludes the psalm by announcing that he will remove all the wicked from the land.

He says, Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land, cutting off all the evildoers from the city of the Lord. And here we need to think about the Middle Eastern tradition where kings or their council met often at the gate to the city in the early morning.

And if we look at the book of Ruth, we see in chapter 4 how Boaz goes out early in the morning to sit at the gate and to meet with the elders. The first line shows that David seen this as an ongoing task that would not be done in a day.

Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land. It will take perseverance to clear Israel and to clear Jerusalem, the city of God, the city that would become his dwelling place of the wicked.

[18 : 48] And as we look at verses 5, 7 and 8, we see not just a contrast with verse 6, but also a contrast with Psalm 15, which was written by David.

Psalm 15 says, O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell in your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right, and speaks truth in his heart, who does not slander with his tongue, and does no evil to his neighbour, nor takes up a reproach against his friend, in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honours those who fear the Lord, who swears to his own hurt and does not change, who does not put out his money at interest, and does not take a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things shall never be moved. So here, David lays out for us clearly the heart that we should have, and the behaviour we should exhibit if we are to walk in God's way and dwell with him forever.

As we hear this Psalm read, we can see that David's ministry was a forerunner of Jesus' ministry. Jesus comes to proclaim the steadfast love and justice of God.

God, he too walks in a perfect way, but here he surpasses anything that David has done. David may have set an example, but Christ was sinless and followed his father's will, even to Calvary and death on the cross.

[20 : 33] He too hated wickedness, and he too will destroy the wicked from the city of God. God. We read in Revelations 21 and 27, and this is talking about the city of Jerusalem, or the new Jerusalem, but nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

But God knows that we cannot keep the law in its entirety, that we cannot earn our own salvation, and abide with him through our own efforts.

So God has gave us a sacrifice that will enable us to come into union with him. God gave us his own son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ did not come by accident. God determined, determined that he would give his son to take on our sin. that he would be a substitute for us, and suffer the punishment that we should suffer for our sins.

He would undergo our death as the one who was sinless. He could pay the price and rise again from the dead, and conquer death. That we might be clothed in his righteousness, and once more have union with God, through faith in Christ alone as our saviour.

[22 : 08] As Christians, David has given us a model of the righteous life, but we are sinners, and as such, we need to embed ourselves in the salvation we receive through our faith in Jesus Christ.

If you have not yet received Christ as your saviour, he waits for you to invite him into your life. Ask him, and he will enter. Father, let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the gift of your scripture, for your holy word, for the direction it gives us for our lives, for the assistance to lead us in rightful living that brings praise and glory to you.

we give you thanks that you have poured out your grace upon us, and that we can know your son as our saviour.

We ask for those who have yet to come into a personal relationship with Christ, that you will continue to pour your grace out upon them, that their hearts may be softened, that their hostility towards you may be overcome, that they may accept Christ as their saviour, and come into an everlasting relationship with you.

[23 : 46] These things we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord and saviour. Amen.