

Corrupt

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Preacher: Matt Ooi

[0 : 00] You probably have seen me up the front more recently, but it's usually chasing after Samuel, who, as you guys probably have noticed, loves the drum kit. But tonight we're looking at Psalm 141, and tonight we're looking at evil, at corruption.

So I'd like to start with this. Now, there are members of our congregation, our community, that are going through really hard times. And they are enduring through that well and relying on him in prayer day after day, night after night.

Now, if that's you, this probably isn't going to be as helpful for you. The first couple of Psalms that we had and next week's Psalm as well, those would be more helpful, I think.

And I think as well, among us, there are good and godly men. I know among us there are good and godly men who submit themselves to their leaders.

Who continue to rely on God in everything that they do. Now, this Psalm also might not be quite so helpful for you. Now, if you don't fall into either of those two groups, then let's listen and let's pray.

[1 : 15] Dear God, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you for your son and for the humility under which he came into this world.

Lord, please give us an awareness of ourselves in light of his love and his example for us. And help us to be changed, but to be changed deeply. Pray these things in your name.

Amen. Now, when I used to have a little bit more time on my hands, every now and then I'd be staying up late. And now, I have to be honest, it's a bit of a confession.

I used to watch Letterman. Now, I don't know if you like Letterman. I don't actually like Letterman all that much. I don't actually like the show that much. But the thing that I really did like about that show is the top ten list.

I think we all like a good list, one way or another. So, for this sermon, I thought I'd put one together. Now, it's entitled, The Ways That You Know How You Live in the Modern Age. So, it should be up on the screen there, which is good.

[2 : 19] Now, we sort of have that live audience atmosphere. It's not quite the same without the 20-piece band playing, but you can imagine a drum roll in your head or whatever. Anyway, here we go.

So, number ten. When you want to learn how to do something, you YouTube it. Number nine.

You've quoted The Simpsons or another movie in the past week.

Number eight. For example, you don't let anyone tell you what to do or what you can and can't do because you know deep in your heart, if you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything. Or you're a delicate snowflake, plastic bag, floating in the wind, whichever one you like better.

Now, number seven. At some stage, you've quoted Google or Wikipedia, but as a valid reference.

Number six. Deep down. Somewhere deep down, you really do feel.

If it didn't happen on Facebook, it didn't happen. Now, number five. You choose your holidays, vacations, or coffee based on whether it has free Wi-Fi. And number four.

[3 : 21] Your relationship involves more typing or texting than actual talking. And if you can read that, that kind of proves my point. Now, number three. Here we go. Top three. Whatever it is, we want it, and we want it now.

Number two. If you have a problem, you'll find the iPhone app for it. And number one. The number one way that you will know that you're living in the modern age.

When somebody asks you, how have you been? Your answer? Busy. I think there's something in our modern world about being busy.

Everybody just seems busy. Almost like we need to justify every moment of our existence. Even kids are going to activities night after night. They're keeping busy.

Somebody even said that about Samuel. They said, oh, gee, he's a little busy one, isn't he? And the thing is, if we're not busy, that's a good thing. And we know that.

[4 : 21] But when someone asks, you know, what you've been doing, I think there's almost a sense of guilt. That we can't list all of those important things that we have been up to. I think most of us have found a way to cope with that one way or another.

But the thing is, I think it does affect our Christian life as well. I think if a non-Christian was going to try to understand what being Christian was all about, they could easily mistake one of the main purposes of our Christian life for being busy.

Christian leaders always do seem busy. Especially if you're giving your time on top of work, on top of all the rest of the busyness of life. And I think we're often tempted to believe that is what our Christian life should be.

Busy serving gifts, using our gifts, furthering God's kingdom. Now, of course, sometimes those things are related. And they aren't bad in and of themselves. Don't get me wrong.

But I think here's the danger. Whether subconsciously or consciously, if we jump too quickly to thinking that linking our Christian life with keeping busy doing Christian things, if we put those things together too quickly, we'll inevitably make that mistake that I think so many of us who have been in ministry make.

[5 : 42] And that's being disappointed. Taking on too much, spreading ourselves too thin at work or church or just the busyness of life in general.

Now, if one of our purposes of the Christian life, if not the purpose, is to faithfully grow and serve in our love and unity in the knowledge of him, if that's what spiritual maturity is, then the question we should ask ourselves from that psalm is this.

What does spiritual maturity look like? What can we learn from David's character here? And David is a man that we can look to for that.

So let's look at the psalm. If you can follow along on the outline and just flip back and forth. Now, you probably already noticed, first of all, that it's a prayer. If we look at the start and the end of the prayer, it really gives us an idea of what's happening, of what David's feeling.

Now, listen to the tone of those first few verses. I'll read them out. I call on you, Lord. Hurry, come quickly to me. Can you hear the urgency there?

[6 : 57] It's almost desperation. Please, Lord, listen to me when I call. And if you zoom down to the end there, just verse 8 and following. Don't let me die. Protect me from that trap.

Keep me safe. You can hear it, can't you? David is in trouble here. And I mean real trouble. Some people reckon this is that infamous time in 1 Samuel 24 when he's in the cave.

And King Saul is trying to kill David. And King Saul happens to just walk into the cave and relieve himself where David is hiding. Now, the psalms around that actually do indicate that, well, the next psalm actually says when he was in the cave.

So that could be true. If you keep that picture in your head, that might help. But what's clear is this. David is in a bad place.

He's in a bad situation. And he needs help. Now, as we'd expect of a man such as David in this situation, he prays. Now, verse 2 talks about this prayer being an incense, lifting up of hands like the evening sacrifice.

[8 : 07] Now, before any of the closet charismatics here get a little bit too excited, the idea of incense here and the evening offerings helps us to get inside David's head a little bit.

So the burnt offerings, they were offered every morning and every night. So the idea there, they were regular. And the smoke would rise up to heaven and as a pleasing aroma to God.

Now, there are lots of purposes for those offerings. They were given times of celebration, sin offerings, dedications. But the main idea behind all of the offerings is that they should be pleasing to God, honoring to God, seeking to be right with God.

So in David's desperation, in his urgency, in asking God for help, he's not just chasing after his own safety or his own ideals. He's looking to please God.

And he knows that the only way he's going to do that is if he fully relies on him. All right. So for us so far, if you know Jesus, if Jesus is the one calling the shots in your life, then these are pretty solid truths that I'm sure you've heard for a while now.

[9 : 19] Seek God, rely on him, please him. There are any number of verses in Proverbs and the Gospels, the Epistles, wherever you want to look, I'm sure you can find those things. So hopefully

I'm off to a good start here.

There's nothing controversial just yet. But let's see exactly where David is going with all of this. Especially when he's in trouble. So verse three, David asked God to watch his lips, to be a guard over the words coming out of his mouth.

And he's asking that because verse four, or verse three and four, because he might speak the evil. And verse four, he might speak the evil that's actually going on in his heart. So he asked God to stop his heart from turning to those things.

Or to have anything to do with those things or others that are committing those sins as well. So, as we said, David, he's in a bad situation. And he's tempted to do something evil.

Or even worse, act on that evil. That the evil that is in his own heart. With everyone else that is committing those evil things as well. And I think that's the thing.

[10:30] That's how evil works. We often wonder how extremists end up doing the things that they do. From pedophiles to rioters, mass murderers, terrorists.

All of those people have something in common. More often than not, they're not doing those things by themselves. Now, in psychology, that phenomenon is called herd behavior.

Or we might have heard of it more as mob mentality. So it starts off with an issue or a desire or something they don't like. Or maybe even something they shouldn't like. And they find others who have those same thoughts and those feelings.

And they feed off one another. Justifying each other's ideas. And often the things that they want to do are so outrageous that no sane person would ever do them. Or at least not by themselves.

But eventually they do. Because they have each other's support. And those are the things that we keep seeing as we see those headlines. Now, I think this stuff has huge pulling power.

[11:35] Sometimes people just end up going along for the ride. Because it is such a strong pull. It leads to a heightened sense of belonging. Group identity. Sort of an us versus them mentality.

If you don't believe me, just look at a Friday night footy. You can see that mentality so strongly.

Now, it can blur the usually clear distinctions between right and wrong.

You just have to look at the riots in the UK for that. But worst of all, and I think this is the bit that we can underestimate. Is that it gives people boldness.

Boldness to do the things that they usually would never do. And even worse, to get a sense of satisfaction about doing things that they never dreamed of doing.

Now, if you don't believe me from all that, just ask post-Nazi Germany. There's a whole country that was twisted.

[12:33] Those World War II documentaries, they often interview Hitler youth. The ones that are still alive. And this thing I keep seeing them repeating is that they just can't believe they were involved in all of that.

But at the time, at that time, it felt right. It felt good even. Now, that's the sort of evil that David's surrounded by.

And the danger for us, the danger for us is that we might be so immersed in our own culture that we might be doing things that we don't even realize that we're doing.

Worst of all, though, we might be doing those things and we'll think that we're right. Now, we'll get back to that. Verse 5, though, I think is a perfect example of that. Now, I don't know about you, but for me, that's the verse that actually kind of stuck out the most from this psalm.

Not because it's the main point of the psalm, though, but because it's so countercultural to our day. Political correctness would have a field day with this. Good Christian leaders, they should always be gentle and warm and soft.

[13:45] And I should feel warm and almost fuzzy if things are going right. And I have a right to my opinion. You have a right to your opinion. But if he loved me, we'd go about it in a nice, amicable way.

And just let each other be. Now, that's what sounds reasonable in this world. But that's not David's prayer. Let the righteous one strike me.

This is an act of faithful love. And just in case we were going to read something else into it, he says it again. Second half of verse 5, let him, the righteous one, rebuke me. Let him correct me.

It is oil for my head. It's a rare and good and gracious gift. And that's also in all of the Proverbs and the Gospels and the Epistles.

It doesn't quite sound PC. Now, if anything, it's the other way around. And this is the thing I find in myself and that I keep hearing all around me every day. It's so easy to see the faults in other people.

[14:52] Those words just spew out of our mouths. I'm not only talking about words spoken in anger, words in joke, but also words of criticism. It's true.

Everyone, everyone is a critic. Criticizing what we see based on how we want to see the world. Criticizing what others do because they're making us feel bad.

Or maybe they're not doing it right. Now, I tried to count one week just how many times I heard words of criticism from myself or from others around me.

And I lost count after two days. It's not because I have a bad memory. But in this postmodern, politically correct, individualistic age, we've been raised to believe that we should value our opinion. That we have a right to have our voice heard. And it's right because it works for me. It just seems to be a given. So if anyone tries to tell us differently, the first thing we do is push back.

[15:59] Without even thinking. At least in our hearts, if not with our words and our actions. Now, that's just one trip, I think, that's set for our age. Waiting for us to fall into it.

Now, my point isn't that we should have opinions. Or we shouldn't have opinions. Or that we shouldn't think. But my point here is this.

If you read that line and you get all excited and think, Yeah, I should be out correcting people. And they should thank me for it. And you're probably the first one that's going to need correcting.

Now, the correct response here is out of a desire to honor and to please God, be prepared to let a righteous one strike you.

Don't refuse it. Don't refuse it. Now, for David, let's recap for a little bit.

[17:01] So he's in a bad situation. There's bad people all around him. Now, but instead of hearing the crowd, instead of following the crowd, he does two things. He prays against the evil in his own heart.

And he asks to be corrected. He doesn't make excuses. He doesn't try to play the victim. He takes responsibility for the evil in his heart.

And he asks to be corrected himself. Now, I think that is a really hard thing to do. That's a big call. Especially with everything else that's going on around him.

And that could be going on around us. The evil that we see every day. It's easy for us to think that's them. They're doing those things. Now, the reason that David can make this call, though, that he can say, please, God, take away the evil in my heart, is verse 6.

Notice the first word. David says, when. When the rulers of the evil ones will be thrown from the cliff. When they get what's coming to them.

[18:14] See, David sees that evil, but rather than acting out on it, in joining in that evil, in his prayer, in his heart, he commits that situation to God. David sees the evil, but he trusts God.

Now, of course, I think we know that doesn't mean that we just pray when we're in trouble and everything will magically disappear. David was a man of action. But remember, what we're looking at here is David's character.

Instead, for us, especially for us, we know Jesus, if we trust in Jesus. We know that Jesus has defeated the power of evil in this world.

And we know that right now he's preparing a place for us in heaven. And we know that he'll be back. At the end of time. And when he comes back, ultimately, all of the evil in this world is going to come crashing down when it hits the bottom of that cliff.

And if you don't follow Jesus, that's what you'll be signing up for. Here's the thing, though.

[19:22] It's only when we are sure of the outcome of our future that we can act in a way now that is approved by God. It's only when we know what our future holds that we don't need to act out of frustration.

And when we do serve, we don't need to worry about the worldly results. And when we get disappointed. And we will get disappointed. We don't need to feel that we've worked so hard for what seems like nothing.

That's the confidence that comes from knowing Jesus. But the thing is, it's only when we're actually in a bad situation.

When we're actually truly being tested. That we can find out how deeply God's words are carved in our hearts.

Now, verse 7. It's a little difficult, depending on the translations. But the gist of that verse is basically that in the end, we'll all pass away. We'll all turn to dust. One way or another, we shall all die.

[20 : 31] That's pretty much the bottom line. Again, though, if we trust in Jesus, if we're waiting for our true home in heaven, we can pray just like David does in verse 8.

Right now, Lord, I look to you. I depend on you. You are my refuge. Don't let me die. Protect me from this trap. Let the wicked get what they deserve.

I've been faithful to you. Keep me safe. So that's David's prayer. And that's what we should model when we're in a bad place as well.

And we're tempted to fall into the evil that's all around us. Now, application-wise, I could even boil it down to three. Actually, no, two.

I can boil it down to two application points for us. The first one is pray. Bet you didn't see that one coming, did you? Pray. Pray regularly.

[21 : 28] The second one, meet up with a righteous person. And I don't mean just for coffee, just to have a chit-chat. But meet regularly with the same person.

Fortnightly or monthly. Whatever works for you. And pray against the evil in your heart. And the evil that is all around us. Intentionally pray for those things.

And that we can grow in love and good deeds. Now, if you're not sure who to turn to, there's always our pastor, Jono.

And Andrew. Either of them. Let them direct you to someone. Make it this week. Make it tonight. Email them. Call them. Whatever it takes.

Just ask them. Now, as pastors who have to give an account to God about the people that were under their care, trust me, they want you to ask for their advice.

[22 : 29] So that's the two application points. This is the part that I've been struggling with all week, though. And wrestling with it.

Because my guess is, maybe, maybe half of you, as soon as I mention those two application points, pray, meeting up with people, might have switched off.

Sure. I know that. I need to pray. And meet up. That's good. I got that. You know, we hear that all the time. Stop me if I'm wrong there.

Stop me if that wasn't what you might have been thinking. Now, usually, I think the way that this goes down is that we take those points.

Maybe we'll remember them. And we can come to our community group. Or we'll remember them during our personal reflection. Maybe we'll resolve to pray with one another about the evil in our hearts.

[23 : 34] And maybe we might even meet up with, some people might actually meet up with people outside of church in their community groups. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe I'm being cynical.

Others.

yeah, I've been busy, this thing came up, and I kind of forgot. And it seems like a legitimate answer. But out of a place of love and care for each of you, I have three questions to finish with.

So the first one, if prayer is how we relate to God, if prayer is our offering, if prayer is even the answer Sunday school gives, God, Jesus, Bible, pray. Then what does our prayer life say about our relationship with Jesus?

Especially in a church where the average Bible knowledge is as good as Bible college, it's easy for us to hear what we already know put in the way that we want to hear it.

[24 : 57] We're saved by grace alone through faith. I'm not perfect. I don't have to be. God loves me. Great truths in Christ. Those are our refuge and our strength. And because those are our refuge and strength, we do get so involved, and we do serve and serve and serve.

But if we just follow the rest of the mob, soaked in our own busyness, that our personal prayer life becomes just another thing on that checklist.

Alongside all the ministry and all the meetings and all of the work and all of the Christian things that we do. I say again, this is coming from a place of love. Because there may be some here tonight, again, maybe, who've been so busy just doing things for God that you'll come to that last day and you'll cry out, Lord, Lord.

And the words that you're going to hear back are that I never knew you. Now, if our relationship with God, our love for God, is our number one priority, then everything else that we do needs to stem

from that.

If it isn't, then all of the things that we do, every single thing, is just going to come from a place other than our desire to glorify God.

[26 : 31] So I'll ask again. What does your prayer life say about your relationship with God? Now, second question.

This is actually the question that I asked at the start. So I hope the psalm has already answered it. The question is, what does spiritual maturity look like? What did you learn from David's character? Scan through the psalm again, if you're not sure. Pick up on some words. David's voice, his hands, his mouth, his lips, his eyes, his head, his heart.

Every cell in David's body is crying out to God, relying on God. He desperately needs God.

Now, for many of us who have barely spent a night without a roof over our heads or without food, we can't say that we've actually experienced the full impact.

[27 : 41] And I mean the full impact of all of the injustices and the hardships and the pain that this world has to dish out, physically, mentally, spiritually.

then it's hard for us to understand this kind of desperation. But this is the desperate situation that we are all in.

Pride, greed, anger, lust, selfishness.

I think if we stand before God, not one of us can deny that those things are in our hearts. So I'm going to ask one last question.

Just one. Last one. How desperately do you need your Father in heaven? How desperately do you need your Father in heaven?

[28 : 54] Let that dictate whether you pray every day. Let that dictate whether you'll meet up and be held accountable by a righteous person for the rest of your life.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, our culture leaves us blind. There's, it's so hard for us to be able to get past all of the tasks and all of the weight of all of the stresses that are in our lives. But Lord, through all of that, help us to keep these two things close to our heart.

Help us to keep crying out to you and help us to keep meeting together. Now, Lord, we trust these things to you because we know that you are the only one we can depend on.

Lord, please let others fall into this trap as we who love you follow and pass safely by. and put ourselves in your hands.

[30 : 16] In Jesus' name, Amen.