

The Prayer of the Believing Heart

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[0 : 00] Let us read God's Word then as we find it in the Old Testament, in the book of Psalms and in Psalm 19. Book of Psalms and Psalm 19.

Psalm 19 to the chief musician, a psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

In them he hath set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it.

And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

[1 : 24] The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey in the honeycomb.

Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight. O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

[2 : 26] Amen. May the Lord bless to us that reading of his holy and infallible word, and to his name be the praise. Let's sing again in Psalm 32.

Psalm 32, at the beginning. And we'll just sing the first four verses of it.

O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned, all the transgression he hath done, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile, nor fraud is found therein.

Verses 1 to 4. O blessed is the man to whom. O blessed is the man to whom. O blessed is the man to whom.

Is created! Openization be taken by the mêmes Flesh is the man to whom the Lord imputed not his sin.

[4 : 04] And in his wickedness, O cry, not from his from heaven.

When the sky did within my speech, how silent was my job.

My God's name was the Lord because I do it all day long.

For upon me, O God, I find thine hand in heavy light.

So that my mind should turn in this summer's job thereby.

[5 : 31] Let's turn back then again to the psalm that we read. The book of Psalms in Psalm 19. And we can read again verse 12.

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.

Let them not have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. But particularly the words in verse 12.

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. We're told at the beginning of the psalm that this is a psalm of David.

But we're not told anything else about it. We have no idea when this psalm was written or in what circumstances it was written.

[6 : 42] But it is very clear that it is a psalm of praise. And it is a psalm that is written in three sections.

The first section, verses 1 to 6, shows us the glory of God in his creation. We'll come back to that in a minute.

And then verse 7 to 10 is a meditation on God's law. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.

And finally, from verse 10 down to the end of the psalm, David meditates on our inability to understand our errors, our faults.

And so he starts the psalm then by showing the glory of God in his creation.

[7 : 39] The heavens declare the glory of God. And the firmament showeth his handiwork. Now, this is what's often referred to as God's book of works.

That is, everything that is connected with creation. With the natural world around us and the laws of physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, etc. and so on.

And all these things are amazing at times even to meditate on and to think on. The way in which our natural world and the heavens themselves show the glory of God.

I'm sure many of you have at times, especially on clear evenings, particularly during the winter, spent time having a look at the stars and the firmament.

The firmament showing his handiwork. And I don't know if you've often wondered about everything that governs the laws of nature, the laws of physics, when you contemplate the glory of the heavens.

[9 : 03] Even in the daylight, the sun, which is described, of course, later in verse 4, 5, and 6. The tabernacle for the sun, that's a bridegrooming coming out of his chamber, and so on.

And it's interesting, the word that's used in verse 6. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it. There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

If people had paid attention to the word circuit, they would have realised, of course, that the earth is not flat. It might surprise you to know that there are still many who believe that.

There is actually a society called the Flat Earth Society that insists that the earth is flat. But, of course, that is nonsensical.

But never mind, I'm not going to go into that just now. But as you think of the beauty of creation, both in what you see round about you, and in what you see in the heavens themselves, how can you not come to a realisation of the omnipotence, the magnificence of God's creation, the glory that exists in all that creation?

[10 : 30] Think of it this way. I'm sure most of you, if not all of you, will have gardens. And you will certainly have seen, or perhaps you have in your gardens, perhaps you have roses.

Can you describe in words the smell of a rose? It's extremely difficult.

There's just no words to really describe the fragrance of a beautiful rose. And if you try to explain to someone else what a rose smells like, words fail you.

There are things that we are unable to describe, and unable to fathom out in the glory of God's creation. And that's just a very simple example.

And behind that creation, there is, of course, or there are, I should say, a series of natural laws contained in God's book of works.

[11 : 46] Now, I'm not going to go into all of them in detail. Those of you who are interested in things like astronomy and physics and astrophysics and so on, and microbiology or whatever, will know that there are amazing things to be discovered when you look at the laws that govern many of these things.

Take something as apparently simple as the law of gravity. You're all aware of it. You all know that it exists, because otherwise you'd be floating around in the church from seat to seat.

And you know that it governs so many things in our universe. If I were to take the psalm book and drop it, it would probably land on the presenter's head, well, if I threw it in that direction.

But it certainly wouldn't come back up to me again. Have you ever wondered why that is? Now, I'm not going to give you a scientific lesson on the law of gravity.

There are many, many things in physics that you can, simply, you cannot understand except to state that they are laws.

[13 : 04] They are natural laws. And if you want to put it in a very simple context, think of it this way. Why do the angles of a triangle always add up to 180 degrees?

It doesn't matter what the size of the triangle is, whether it's a right-angled triangle or any other form of triangle, isosceles, equilateral, etc.

It doesn't matter. The angles always add up to 180 degrees. Why? Because they just do.

It's a law. It's a mathematical law. But did that law come into being by chance? Of course not.

Like so many other things, God is a God of order, not a God of chaos. And everything we look at in God's creation, in God's book of works, is divinely worked out and divinely fixed.

[14 : 21] The natural laws of mathematics, physics, of creation, we cannot change them. We can, through time and through research, through discovery, we eventually come to understand more and more of them.

And so, it's good to remember this as we think of the two books that God has given us. God's book of works and God's book of words.

And the second part of the psalm basically deals with God's book of words. The law of the Lord is perfect. And perhaps, I don't know if I've told you this before when I've been here, but you can think of the term Bible as an anagram or an acronym, an anagram or an acronym that works both ways for the two books.

B-I-B-L-E I'm sure you're all familiar with the fact that it comes from a Latin word meaning, of course, a collection of books.

But if you think of it this way, that the book of words is God's basic instructions before leaving earth. It's a very useful way for children, young people, to think of it that way sometimes.

[15 : 47] God's basic instructions before leaving earth. earth. And his book of works is basic instructions by living earth.

Basic instructions by living earth. And these are useful things to remember. As we come to consider and meditate upon God's glory and God's creation, that these help us to remember what's involved.

So the second part of the psalm then, the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, brings us to the book of words. Now again, I'm not going to go into detail on the law of the Lord here.

From verse 7 down to verse 10, we are told the sum of the qualities of the law. It's perfect, it converts the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, makes us simple, wise, and so on.

And then the final part of the psalm, David meditates on putting these two aspects together, the book of words and the book of works, and then he comes to this question.

[17 : 11] And he prefaces it in verse 11, Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them, that is, the law of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, there is great reward.

We don't often think of that, that there is great reward in keeping the law of the Lord. And this is not just referring to the eternal reward that awaits the believer in eternity.

David is conscious of that, you see that in the very last verse, the last word of the psalm, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. He is aware of his need for a redeemer.

But he is also aware of his inability to keep God's law. Like everyone else, it's something that we just cannot keep.

if we were able to keep God's law 100%, then we would not sin. Then we would have no need of a redeemer and Christ's death would be in vain for us.

[18 : 32] And we can see that goes right back to the garden, that God's promise to Adam when Adam fell, when Adam and Eve fell.

And you remember that it was Eve was deceived, but Adam chose to fall. Adam fell deliberately.

He chose to fall. But it is there in Genesis 3.15 that the first mention of bruising the serpent's head, that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent.

I don't know if you've ever thought of it, but it's quite a peculiar expression, the seed of the woman. From our discoveries in biology nowadays, we know very well that the seed is not of the woman, the seed is of the man.

It is the man who determines not only the sex of the child, but also the fertilisation of the ovum itself. But nevertheless, that's the expression, the seed of the woman.

[19 : 45] And of course it points forward if you connect up with the genealogies that are given at the beginning of Matthew and in Luke later on in chapter 3 if I remember correctly, it shows of course the virgin birth that was to come.

But then David asks this question. Who can understand his errors?

Now I want to suggest to you this morning that there are three kinds of errors that the believer has difficulty with.

cleanse me from secret faults. faults. I wonder how many secret faults you and I have that we would be absolutely horrified if other people were to know about.

Isn't that what Jeremiah tells us in Jeremiah 17 and verse 9 he says that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

[21 : 11] And even although you may be here this morning in a state of grace nevertheless you are aware more and more every day of your own secret faults.

Faults that are known only to yourself. and these very probably are faults that are sins of omission.

Things that we know that we should have done but yet we haven't done. How often perhaps have you been prompted even by the Holy Spirit working through your conscience that says go and visit so and so or perhaps during the Covid time when we couldn't visit phone so and so talk to such and such a person etc.

etc. Sins of omission and very much these are sins that are known to us ourselves rather than sins of commission.

The things that we do the things that we commit are usually perceived very quickly by others. And you know that when you examine your own mind science still can't tell us where the mind actually is.

[22 : 49] We know an awful lot of things about our physiology and even our psychology psychology. But we still don't know exactly where the mind is.

It's probably, I say probably, part of the brain but is it just part of the brain and so on. And yet what goes on in our mind sometimes is beyond our control.

can you control your dreams while you sleep? Your subconscious mind is at work and sometimes Satan attacks us through our subconscious mind by bringing things into our mind that we had no intention of thinking about.

random thoughts that suddenly appear in your head and some of them may be pretty awful and yet you have no control over them.

Or you have the control of course that once they're there to get rid of them and perhaps your prayer is that through the help of the Holy Spirit that such thoughts would not come.

[24 : 14] And yet they come. Yet they come. And sometimes they can produce a tremendous sense of guilt in us.

And guilt can be something, guilt and shame can be something that can cause us serious difficulty and serious problems.

This is nothing new in the psychology and the history of mankind. And there's a very interesting story in a very famous book and some of you may well have it called The Religious Anecdotes of Scotland which I used to read quite often on Sundays when I wasn't allowed to read anything else as a child and the stories were very interesting some of them.

people. And in this particular story and I'm not casting any aspersions on Kirk Session or ministers or anything else here.

At a certain Kirk Session meeting one of the elders spoke some very hasty words to the minister. The minister felt hurt but he made no retaliatory remark.

[25 : 36] He felt broken hearted discouraged and they all went to their respective homes. The next morning the elder looked very sad ill at ease as he sat at the breakfast table.

His wife noticing this asked what was wrong with him and he replied I dreamed I had been at a session meeting and had said some severe things to the minister that grieved him and when he went home I thought he died and went to heaven.

When I got to the gates of heaven out came the minister and he put out his hands to take me in saying come along James there's nae strife up here.

I'm happy to see you. Come away. Immediately after breakfast the elder made his way to the manse to beg the minister's pardon but great was his astonishment to find that the minister had actually died during the night.

This prayed so much on the elder's mind that he was so affected that two weeks later he also died. And Dr.

- [26 : 57] Adamson says at the end of this he says I should not wonder that if James met the minister at the gates of heaven he would welcome him with outstretched arms and say come along James there's nae strife up here I am happy to see you come away in.
- That's what guilt can do and sometimes we may feel very very guilty indeed about some of the thoughts that we might have. But then there's a second kind of secret fault that we might have.
- Things that we don't realise ourselves but others see them. and out of tact perhaps sometimes they won't say anything to you about them.
- Robbie Burns in a very famous poem highlighted this and he highlighted a particular sin that an awful lot of us may be very guilty of.
- the sin of pride. If you go back to I think it was the Synod of Whitby or it might have been the Council of Nicene in the 5th or 6th centuries or round about I can't remember which one it was right now.
- [28 : 28] When they endeavoured first of all to make a catalogue of sins they decided that every single sin emanates from pride that pride is the root of all sin in the human being.
- That's probably why Satan fell from heaven. If we take the two passages in Ezekiel and Isaiah that are often quoted as referring to the fall of Satan from heaven that it was because of pride.
- But Robbie Burns one morning was sitting in a church as he used to go to worship in Alloway and Air so often and he saw something that brought him to reflect on this.
- In front of him was sitting a very well dressed lady wearing an enormous hat and she took nothing against hats by the way and she took obviously great pride in her appearance.
- But what she didn't realise was that crawling on the top of her hat was a louse.
- [29 : 53] And I'm sure you've guessed this is Burns poem to allow us. And he says in it oh would some power the gifty gears to see ourselves as others see us.
- To see ourselves as others see us. Is it not our Christian duty tactfully graciously and in love as Paul reminds us so often to tell others when we see them unaware of the sin of pride or perhaps any other sin that they themselves haven't realised that they are committing.
- It's not an easy thing to do because of course you run the risk of the wrath of the person involved.
- Denial and wrath and we're all familiar with the effect that denial of a particular situation or whatever circumstance the effect that denial can have upon our psychological situation.
- It's very difficult sometimes especially to someone who may be older than ourselves even more experienced in the Christian walk to say anything to them about something that we perceive as wrong but they're not aware of.
- [31 : 40] And you have to be sure first of all of course that it is something that is wrong. It may not be wrong at all. It may just be your own opinion and your own judgment and sometimes we have to wonder about that.
- And then you see there's a third type of sin. These first two are sins that as Paul says in Romans 3 and verse 20 he tells us that by the law is knowledge of sin.
- And we can see that from verse 7 the law of the Lord is perfect. That a full knowledge of the law of the Lord is able to show us where so many of these sins appear.
- But when you start to think of it how many of us are able to keep the law of God? our Lord summed these things up in Mark and in Matthew when he was asked what the greatest commandments were and he said love the Lord your God with all your heart all your soul and all your mind.

So that's something that you and I can say that we do every single day and every single minute of the day. I wouldn't dare to say so and I'm sure you wouldn't either because so often our mind is on other things.

[33 : 18] It's not on the law of the Lord. It's not loving the Lord. But when it comes to the second one perhaps we're even worse love your neighbor as yourself.

Love your neighbor as yourself. that's where the story of the parable of the good Samaritan comes from of course. But it may be very difficult for us to love our neighbors especially with the COVID situation etc and so on.

And we have to be honest some neighbors are very difficult to love. Some are more difficult than others. And in neighbors here we're not just thinking of your physical neighbor in the houses or house next door to you but your brother and sister in Christ.

These are your closest neighbors. Do you love them in the same way as you love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind?

love the love the heart. I would have to admit that that is something that I fail miserably at. The time is passing. But perhaps there's a third kind of sin, a third kind of secret fault.

[34 : 42] Secret fault that is revealed to us only by the Holy Spirit but perhaps that some secret faults are never revealed to us at all.

Some secret faults that we may go through our life, through the process of sanctification until we reach eternity and yet we are never fully, if at all, aware of them.

They are known only to God. And perhaps God in his mercy may reveal some of these things to us little by little.

But I am quite convinced that there are some things that God never reveals to us. That perhaps we will become aware of in eternity as our sin.

Perhaps not. That God in his mercy would cleanse these sins from us. It's a very difficult thing to meditate on that.

[35 : 51] But when you consider God's law, when you consider temptation, and remember of course that the hymn writer put it, that yield not to temptation for yielding is sin.

Not the temptation itself, but yielding to the temptation. temptation, and even if that yielding is just in our minds, how far away from God's commandment in Leviticus 11, 44 are we?

Be ye holy as I am holy. none of us would dare to say that we can be holy as God is holy in this life.

And yet that is the promise that when we reach eternity, how does John put it in his letter? He says, we shall be like him. We shall be like the Lord Jesus Christ Christ in a resurrected glorious body, but also with a resurrected glorious holy mind.

That's quite amazing to think about, and quite in some ways impossible for us to understand here.

[37 : 18] But yet this is the struggle that every believer has. As Paul puts it, we are constantly under grace, not under the law, but yet the two natures are fighting one with the other all the time.

The things that you want to do, you don't do them, and the things that you should do, you forget about them, you put them aside, etc. The two natures constantly warring against each other.

The old fallen nature of sin and the new fallen nature of grace. Perhaps this morning you're thinking, I don't really understand this.

Well, to be honest, it's not easy to understand it. In fact, I'm not sure that I fully understand it myself. But nevertheless, I am aware of it.

And that is why, if you are also aware of it, that is why you can sing along with Paul and say, the wages of sin is death.

[38 : 29] But then you can also say, O grave, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? And that is what David is thinking about here.

cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin. Presumptuous in the sense that you know very well that you're committing it.

Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be upright, and I shall be innocent. And it's interesting here that the word the is not present in the Hebrew.

I shall be innocent from great transgression. Not a particular transgression, but various types of great transgression.

And then he concludes with what be your prayer and my prayer. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight.

[39 : 35] O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for your word this morning.

We thank you that there is a remedy for sin, that the blood that was shed at the cross of Calvary, and the atonement that was made, cleanses from all sin.

And we thank you that that is what your people are able to hold on to each and every day, that there is a redeemer, who cleanseth from all sin. We pray for any this morning who have not yet come to know this redeemer, that you would uphold and strengthen them as they meditate on these things, and if it be with your will to show your glory to them, that they might come to a saving knowledge of you.

Be with us now as we conclude our worship and pardon sin through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Let us conclude then by singing some verses in Psalm 51.

Psalm 51. David's own meditation after his sin with Bathsheba.

[40 : 59] From verse 7. Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so, yea, wash thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.

Of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice, that so these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. All mine iniquities blot out, thy face hide from my sin, create a clean heart, Lord renew a right spirit me within.

Cast me not from thy sight, nor take thy holy spirit away, restore me thy salvation's joy, with thy free spirit me stay, and notice that it's restore me thy salvation's joy, not restore my salvation.

He never lost his salvation in spite of his sin. The believer never loses his salvation, but yet he continues to sin and thought word and deed. But David's prayer might be your prayer, restore me thy salvation's joy, with thy free spirit me today.

Let us sing these verses, and in conclusion, Psalm 51 at verse 7, do thou with his sprinkle me. Do thou with his a podcast out for the people to get into The only an end I shall be white and white as snow.

[42 : 48] Of gladness and of joyfulness, make me to hear the voice.

That so this merry bones which shall have broken me rejoice.

O'er my name in which is forgotten, I may shine from my sin.

Herer sa'r là,■■■■■G tenants, my dear, herer■■■ me on earth.

Thank you.

[44 : 15] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever. Amen.