

PRAYING In The Bible

Prayer in the Bible: Psalm Prayer

What are the Psalms? The problem with the Psalms is the commentary. Everyone has an opinion. From the turn of the 19th and 20th century we had wonderful men comment on the Bible. These wise men gave us some incredible insights. Yet, as time wore on these insights started to become the gospel. Pastors would read the commentaries and then precede to write sermons. The Bible was being used less and less. What inspired these greats was becoming a rumor. Who needs the Bible when men have deciphered it?

Paul says in Ephesians 4:40 *“But that is not the way you learned Christ!”* Paul mentions this phrase because people were finding Jesus in everything. We learn about God from Jesus and the Spirit. Beyond that it comes through His word. There are many Psalms. Each one could be sung or read out loud. They teach us and mold us. Yet, they are also a template of prayer. Every type of prayer is found in the Psalms. The Psalms are readable and have profound meaning. We don’t need commentaries to know the Psalms.

I want to touch on the exaltation found in the Psalms. Yes, I am giving you a commentary of sorts. My purpose is not to replace the Bible with my insights. Instead, let the Psalms speak for themselves. They love to honor and exalt the Lord. It is a favorite in the Bible for men to ask the Lord to lean His ear. Adding to this is writing that gives God human attributes. It is a massively big word called anthropomorphism. How to describe the Lord? We are down here and by tradition God is up in heaven. Asking God to lean His ear seems reasonable. Psalm 17:6 *“I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.”*

We believe that God hears our prayer. Can we ask God to listen? Psalm 5:2 asks *“Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.”* I feel that God is always listening. I just read through countless verses of people not listening to the words God was saying like here in Jeremiah 11:8 *“Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked, each one, in the stubbornness of his evil heart.”* We can ask God to hear us. Yet, is it about God hearing or us responding to Gods words? Our prayer should be about instruction and praise far more than requests. Why should God listen if we do not?

Psalm 18 begins as a template prayer. This prayer/Psalm is so much like our song prayers in the beginning of this study series.

“I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

The Lord is my strength. His is my horn (victory). I take refuge in the Lord and He is my shield. It is about respecting who you are praying to. God is gracious. Yet, He is not a sap. You cannot disrespect and abuse God in prayer. Asking God to listen better come with humbleness.

There is another theme in Bible terms called “putting the Lord to the test.” Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16 about not testing the Lord. Then we have Malachi 3:10 as God says test Me! Which is it? In Psalm 25 the writer opens by telling God he trusts Him. Then this man appears to demand God do something for him. It is a great start by exalting the Lord. Yet, the remainder of this prayer is not a test of God. This writer is saying “God, you asked us to trust you.” “Will you hold up your word?” People love to twist this theme into knots. Yet, we all know the truth. Do not test God falsely. Should we demand God jump like a slave? Yet, we can ask God to prove

His word. To test His character. God is always faithful to His word and character. Are we in the request?

Psalm 26 is asking God to judge us. Years ago, I smugly asked God to humble me. Boy did He ever! In-fact I am not sure if it has ended 23 years later. Asking God to judge our actions is a bold prayer. You think you know your heart? It is a dangerous prayer, trust me! Yet, Psalm 56 and 57 mention God being merciful. Listing Gods loving character traits in your prayer is a good thing. Yet, why are you doing that? Again, do not test Gods character falsely.

Finally, we have Psalm 94. It asks how long will you take God to answer. Years ago, I saw a clip from the Simpsons about Adam and Eve. Homer fell asleep in church and dreamed of being Adam. He asked Eve (Marg) “how long will God be angry with us?” Homer woke up to the priest saying “forever and ever.” It is funny but not funny. There has been a long distance between Eden and today. Time means nothing to God. He is outside of time. You can pray and ask, but do not expect God to jump on your time lime. He is patient and He is kind.

The Psalm prayers are wonderful. They give us so many different types of prayers. We can learn from them. They do show us how to pray and what God hears. It is all there in the Psalms. My commentary is to let the Psalms speak for themselves. Let the Spirit do its work in your heart. Take the Psalms and add your own life to the words. How will these prayers change your prayers in the future?

