

TITLE: AN EDUCATIONAL PRAYER

TEXT: PSALM 141

INTRO: Prayer is not something to be looked at and done flippantly or without proper respect for God. In **Lk 11:1**, Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. Did they not know how? Or did they simply want to know from the Son how to pray to the Father? Jesus taught to hallow God, align your will with His, to be persistent, but not repetitious. One of the best ways to improve your prayer life is by reading & studying the psalms. In Psalm 141, we learn much about proper prayer. The setting is unknown, but is thought to be **1 Sam 24** (David & Saul in the cave).

I. PROPER ADDRESS – ASK TO BE HEARD (v. 1-2):

- A. (v. 1) “*LORD*” – we must 1st know *who* to pray to (not Mary, not a saint). “*I cry unto thee*” – we must recognize our need. “*Make haste to me, hear my voice when I cry*” - God hears our prayers, but He doesn't have to (He doesn't hear the prayers of sinners who ignore His word). So we should be thankful for the opportunity to speak to Him.
*Here we have a king begging to be allowed into the presence of the King (**Est 4:11**-the king must hold out the scepter).
- B. (v. 2) “*Let my prayer be set before thee as incense...lifting up of hands as...sacrifice.*” Let it be accepted! Incense was burned in front of the veil, the smoke rising to the mercy seat, symbolizing our prayers going before God (**Rev 5:8**). The psalmist is recognizing God as Deity, & the source of what we need in this life. Jesus said, “*hallowed be thy name...thy will be done...*”

II. PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARDS RIGHTEOUSNESS (PURITY) (v. 3-4):

- A. He doesn't then immediately jump into his personal requests, but asks God to keep him from sin.
- B. (v. 3) “*Set a watch (guard) before my mouth...*” - a very poetic way to say, “help me watch what I say.” David may be concerned about this in a specific incident (**1 Sam 24**), or in general. Either way, every Christian ought to have this concern (**Jam 3:1-12**).
- C. (v. 4) “*Incline not my heart to any evil thing...*” Jesus said to pray, “*lead us not into temptation*” – God doesn't tempt anyone with evil (**Jam 1:13**); He limits it (**1 Cor 10:13**-He won't allow you to be tempted more than you can handle, but will provide a way of escape). We should ask God to be with us, not to leave us alone to deal with the temptations this world presents.
“*Let me not eat of their delicacies*” – give me strength to say no to the things that tempt me (sex, money, greed, power, etc.).

III. PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD REPROOF (v. 5-7):

- A. (v. 5) **ACCEPT REPROOF**
1. “*Let the righteous smite me, it shall be kindness*” – In contrast to the wicked of v. 4, he says he would rather be smitten (broken) by the righteous – this is kindness (mercy) to him. Because it shows him the truth & allows him to correct himself.
 2. “*Let him reprove me, it shall be...oil...*” – He accepts reproof at their hands – it is like oil on his head (pleasant); let not my head refuse it. Here he displays the attitude that all Christians should have. If we sin, we *will* be reproved/corrected **1**) by ourselves, **2**) by others (brethren), or **3**) by God. **Lk 18:14** – “*every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*” It takes humility to accept reproof. Most today are lacking in this. But if you humble yourself now, God will exalt you later (**1 Pet 5:6**). However, if you exalt yourself now, you *will be* humbled/abased later. Either way, you will be humbled. It's only a question of when and by whom! *David shows the right attitude in accepting reproof **now** (which would be even more difficult for him, seeing he was the king)!
 3. “*For my prayer shall continue in their calamities* (bad, evil, distress, misery, adversity)”
 - a. Context unknown, but could be **1 Sam 24** (David finding Saul in the cave). This could be in reference to Saul.
 - b. A modern application: Those who reprove us are not perfect. It would be easy, but wrong, to have a vengeful attitude toward them, looking for opportunity to bring them down to our level (when rebuked, many look for faults in those who are rebuking them). David does not have that attitude. He responded properly to Nathan's rebuke (after Bathsheba), and when Joab rebuked him for his excessive mourning for his rebellious son Absalom.
- B. (v. 6) **ACCEPT CORRECTION**
1. This is either continuation of **1 Sam 24**-defeat of Saul's ungodly reign, w/Israel then hearing David's sweet, pleasant words.
 2. Or it may be a continuation of the last words of v. 5. When those rebuking/reproving me shall be overthrown (dropped) from rocky places (spiritually speaking), they'll hear my words, which are sweet (pleasant). They'll hear me praying for them. This may not be the meaning, but would still be appropriate for Christians.
- C. (v. 7) **ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES**
1. Either the consequences of someone else's sin – Saul in particular (very wicked at times). “Sheol” & “Saul” are almost the same word in the Hebrew. So some believe this should be ‘Saul’ instead of ‘sheol,’ and refers to Saul's wicked deeds.
 2. Or it could be the consequences of one's own sins – A picture of the feeble condition of David (**Rom 8:36**-“*We are killed all the day long...*”). David would not hope in his own might, but in the power of God (v. 8-10).

IV. PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE – TRUST IN GOD (v. 8-10): – Here we see the only real ‘personal’ requests of David.

- A. (v. 8) General trust – “*my eyes are unto* (“toward; according to” –harmony with) *you*” – I'm obedient to, in harmony with, you. This is necessary in order to say, “*in thee is my trust*” & “*leave not my soul destitute* (empty – life w/out God).”
- B. (v. 9-10) Specific trust – “*keep* (protect) *me from their snares...*” –let them fall into their own trap, while I escape. Christians will always be persecuted. We must keep working, asking for God's help. This, of course, is ultimately answered at the judgment.

CONCLUSION: Looking back at this prayer, we see David making several requests to God. We too make many requests of God in our prayers. But are our requests comparable to David's? Our requests may be good and in harmony with God's will, but do we ask God to help us watch what we say (to control our tongues, avoiding negative language, **and** speaking positive words)? Have you asked for reproof recently? If David needed this kind of help, then I know you and I do as well!