

Reforming the Evangelical Soul

Selected Scriptures

September 25, 2021

Well for this afternoon's text I want to take you to Psalm 25. And I'd like to just begin by reading that text and then we'll kind of introduce it later, as we get into it, but Psalm 25, not necessarily a particularly familiar Psalm, but certainly one that helps us address the assigned topic of reforming the evangelical soul.

And so Psalm 25, a Psalm of David, beginning in verse 1. "To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust, Do not let me be ashamed; Do not let my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none of those who wait for you will be ashamed; Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed. Make me know your ways, O LORD; Teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; For you I wait all the day.

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"Remember, O LORD, your compassion and your lovingkindnesses, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; According to Your lovingkindness remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD. Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in justice, and he teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth, to those who keep His covenant and his testimonies. For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Who is the man who fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way he should choose. His soul will abide in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. The secret of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he will make them know his covenant.

"My eyes are continually toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses. Look upon my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins. Look upon my enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with violent hatred. Guard my soul and deliver me. Do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in

you. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.”

There is a collateral damage, you might say, to the effect of the things we’ve been talking about in evangelicalism today and it’s the impact that it has on the individuals in their, in their soul. It has a deadening impact in my judgment on what claims to be the evangelical soul. We’ve been sold a bill of goods by the high profile trend makers.

Whether it was the seeker sensitive model of Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. Whether it was the emergent church movement that Ed Stetzer and others profited from. Or the recent fad of social justice that has engulfed names that we once trusted. There is a consequence to this. It leaves a scorched earth effect behind on the Christian heart of those that have been under that kind of ministry. And I know that it’s something that has really shaped some of the things that we tried to do back in Cincinnati in the, in the, shadow of a, of a, very, ah, well known and popular seeker sensitive church, very influential one.

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One of the things that I've noticed about living in the shadow of that is that you come across people that have been under that kind of ministry is, is that it inoculates them against the true gospel. They're taught that Jesus wants to be their friend. Jesus wants to fix your problems. You know, God doesn't demand too much from you, he just wants to help you. And then, once he helps you he'll step back and leave you alone. You know, that kind of thing.

When people have been conditioned to think that that is the gospel and that is the nature of God, then the true Gospel holds no attraction to them because they've been inoculated against it. They, they, they've gotten a false seed planted in their heart that hardens them against the truth. Or, at best, it leaves them behind, undiscerning, and unable to tell any kind of truth from error. Or, more likely, especially in the realms that we've been talking about with Mark Driscoll and, you know, ministries of that sort.

People that have been burned by that, and burned by ungodly pastoral leadership. Burned by harsh leadership. It leaves

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behind people that are cynical, and cold, and sarcastic even. Because the ministry that they thought that they were under completely lacked any sense of, of the Spirit filled ministry that the Lord intended for his disciples to, to be under. And so there's, there's a, there is collateral damage, keep using the same term, there is an effect from this, that has a, a damaging impact on those that have been under that.

But, maybe we can leave that pretty much to the side for today and I can just kind of speak to you more as beloved fellow believers and to just address you more personally and we'll leave the application to the broader evangelical realm. To be understood by implication. You know, the, even for those of us that are earnest in ministry, you're earnest in your church involvement, earnest in your pursuit of Christ. You know the, the line of sanctification is not an unbroken line upward, is it? You know it's more like a, looks more like a, ah, Dow Jones chart. That's up and down, up and down a little bit.

There's, there's a trend upward but, you know, we all know what it's like to be, to be tired, to be fatigued, to be weary.

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We all know what it's like to be discouraged. We all know what it's like to have, say, significant family issues that come up and we wonder how it's going to turn out. And it, it weighs on us, what's going to become of this loved one that I care about that is drifting away from Christ and you cry out to God and it seems like things go from bad to worse and, you know, you're left with that sense of discouragement.

Well, what I want to bring out for you from Psalm 25 is this, is that biblical ministry, and it is the intention of God for his people that there would be certain effects of his word and of biblical ministry on our hearts and that it would produce godliness in a practical way. And it, in a godliness in a way that affects the way that we view the world. Godliness in a way that affects our capacity for perseverance through difficult times. Godliness in an effect that allows us to, to maintain hope and that confident expectation of the ultimate blessing of God even though circumstances continually roll against us.

You know you're trying to climb up the hill and you slide back down and yet you still have a positive sense and a sense of

optimism about the ultimate outcome of it, well how is that that is worked out in the soul? And that's why I wanted to come to Psalm 25. Psalm 25 is a very personal Psalm by David.

He uses the first person singular pronoun about thirty six times in these twenty two verses. I, me, my, you find this first person singular perspective throughout most of the Psalm. And so David is really pouring out his own heart here. Only to the end that does he take a broader perspective as he applies it more to the nation. In this Psalm, in, in these twenty two verses he calls on the name of Yahweh ten times.

Yahweh being that covenant name of God that he keeps, he's a covenant keeping God, he, he keeps his promises. He is faithful in a personal way to his people. And so David in a very personal way is pouring out his personal heart to a personal God. There is this great intimacy to it that today's current evangelical trends cannot produce because that's not what they're even trying to do.

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They've substituted a false earthly model for the living reality that scriptures, especially the Psalms, would call all of us to. Call us not only to, to acknowledge, but call us in to enjoy and call us in to participate in a life like this.

The, this is a pattern for all of us. That this is what the Spirit of God can do in all of us. As he works in our hearts and so that's what I want to focus on this afternoon and I trust that in one way or another the Lord will use it to encourage you even as he's used it to encourage me.

This is a beautifully written Psalm in the, in the original language it follows an acrostic pattern generally speaking the twenty-two verses start with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. And so David, here, is not simply dumping his heart out before the Lord as he wrote this he was thinking and he was structuring it and he put poetic into it to express it well. And to bring a, a sense of honor and glory to the way even that he wrote to express himself in the presence of God.

And so what is it that you and I need in a way that will grow our soul? What would reform our soul as we look at Psalm 25, we see it expressed in seven aspects. Seven aspects of David's prayer. This will be a genuine seven, not like the seven that I had last time that turned into twelve or fifteen, whatever it was.

This is a real number seven that we will stick to here today. You know and I just invite you to kind of think about all of this in a vertical sense, you, personally before the Lord, as you are reading David personally before the Lord, to let David's word's inspired by the Holy Spirit, to lead you in to a way that you yourself can walk with God and to find that you're next steps from life and, from where you are at right now.

And so we see first of all, the first aspect that we see of this prayer, is this prayer, it, it is a prayer of protection. A prayer of protection. The first verse functions like a summary theme for the rest of the Psalm. Look at it there, briefly in verse 1. Where David says, "To you O Lord I lift up my soul."

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And so David feeling somewhat downcast here, lifts his soul up to the Lord. Now what does that mean? Well, one of the primary lexical sources, in my library anyway, it says that this phrase has the sense of, of fleeing to God for protection or seeking refuge in Yahweh. There's a sense that in our trouble we go to our God and we, we ask him to protect us. And that, immediately, that immediately separates this Psalm from the prevailing pride of the current evangelical movement. And the emphasis on popular personalities and all that, and, and puffing men up for the sake of their profile.

David doesn't have a puffed-up profile here, he's coming to God humbly and saying, "God, I need your help. I need you, my God, I need you to assist me in this time in which I find myself." And rather than having the, the sense of cynicism that I described earlier, that coldness of heart, rather the Christian soul, the biblical soul, is one that, that knows to go to God and to trust him in the midst of hostile people and hostile circumstances.

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The Christian soul recognizes and has enough discernment about his life to say, I'm on, I'm on slippery ground here. This is difficult. The circumstances are difficult. The people are difficult. The future is unknown and uncertain and, and intimidating to me. And I feel vulnerable in the midst of that. I don't know what's going to happen. And the things that I hold dear are at stake.

Well, the idea that the Psalms repeatedly teach us is that when we find ourselves in that position, whether from medical issues or financial matters or whatever the case may be, when we find our future in jeopardy, when we find ourselves and our souls vulnerable, we go to the Lord like this and we ask him to protect us.

Now there used to be a time in my early Christian life where I felt like I wasn't supposed to pray unless I was feeling strong. And, you know, and you go, and, you know, you've got to muster up trust and faith in order to speak properly to God. Where I don't know where exactly I got that mindset from. But nothing could be further from the truth. My friends, beloved,

the Lord is using your circumstances that make you feel vulnerable like that to humble you and to draw you to grace, not to push you away from it.

Let's look back in the New Testament at the familiar passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. Just to remind you of this, that the apostle Paul himself cried out looking for relief and found that it was denied to him. Travis alluded to this text in his message earlier this morning. But Paul is weighed down. And in verse 7, 2 Corinthians chapter 12, I know you know the passage, he says, "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from exalting myself."

You see, he says it there twice. He says "the Lord allowed this messenger from Satan, he sent this messenger from Satan," for a particular purpose, to work out a sanctifying influence in Paul's life, to guard him from pride. To keep him from being puffed-up. I wish there were a lot more messengers of Satan at work in the evangelical movement today; to be honest with you if

this would be the effect of it. But that's outside of the scope of what we need to talk about today.

Verse 8, here's my point, Paul says, "concerning this, I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And he has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you for power is perfected in weakness.'" Paul goes on and says "okay if that's the case then I'll boast about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses with insult, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then I am strong." God had a purpose for you in your weaknesses.

God has a purpose for you in those intimidating times that you go through. God has a purpose in those difficult church life situations that seem to suck the life out of a body. As, as you deal with difficult issues. God has a purpose in that he is humbling us and teaching us to depend upon him and not on ourselves. And this comes out, this is brought out in prayer with the sense of, of, "Lord to you I lift up my soul. I am unable to solve this problem by myself. I cannot handle this on

my own O God, and so I come to you humbly and I ask you to protect me.”

This is a whole different mindset in which to walk with God. The Christian soul understands that these times of weakness are sent so that we would learn to trust God and to depend upon him and show forth that our trust in him is not in vain. Look at verses 2 and 3 with me. He says “O my God, in you I trust. Do not let me be ashamed. Do not let my enemies exalt over me. Indeed none of those who wait for you will be ashamed. Those who deal treacherously without cause they will be ashamed.”

And so, David here is saying that, and what he is modeling for is this. Instead of collapsing in fear, and collapsing in anxiety at, at the human circumstances he was facing, he comes instead vertically, humbly, privately before the Lord, and he casts his cares on him. He casts his case upon the Lord as it were, and he says “Lord I’m going to wait on you.”

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He's addressing him by the name Yahweh. He's saying, Lord I know that you're a God who keeps his promises. I know that I can trust in your loving kindness. And so in the midst of these difficult circumstances I come to you for protection and Lord I will wait on you until you deliver me. I will wait on you with a sense of confident expectation, that you will care for me in the midst of this. Stated differently, he's saying that he will accept God's providence. He will trust God's wisdom. He will yield to God's timing in the midst of this because as he comes to God he is placing himself under the protection of God and leaving his situation there, leaving his soul there, for the care of God to be exercised as God sees fit.

Now look, what we're discussing here, what we're seeing here, is a completely different mindset than one that expects immediate resolution of every problem at the first breath of prayer that we make on it. And let me just approach it this way. Early in my Christian life I went through a very serious trial. One that tormented me for a number of years.

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Seven years, really, if you counted out, and there was a lot about my worldview that was undeveloped at that time. There was a lot that I didn't understand that prolonged that. But through that it was all very, you know, it just humbled me. Probably, certainly not enough, it didn't humble me enough, but it humbled me and made me, taught me on the other side, the importance of depending on God and waiting on him. And realizing that not every, every issue in life is going to find an immediate solution.

Not every problem in life is going to have, you know we're conditioned by thirty minute T.V. programs that the problem comes up and it's solved at the end of thirty minutes. And when we start to think that way in the spiritual realm, and that's not, that's the wrong way to think. If there was not a struggle in the process, if there was not a time element to the process, you know where would be the depth of faith that was on the other side of it. If it was just superficially solved for us immediately we wouldn't know anything about the long term benefits of trusting God when there was no visible evidence in, according to human sight, to resolve it for us. Nothing to encourage it.

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Rather in the darkness of those times, so to speak, rather we're taught to lean on his word and trust him for the sake of his word, and to walk by faith not by sight. And that's very challenging. Under the weight that some of you are feeling that's the last thing in some ways that you want to hear. Is that it may not, it might.. it may not change anytime soon. But that's precisely your spirit, the point of your spiritual opportunity.

Is to recognize this and say, Okay Lord, I want to, I want to take another perspective on this. I'm just going to lift my soul up to you. I'm not going to ask you for any particular outcome. I'm just going to say you are my God, you are a God of faithfulness, I commit myself to you and I trust you for whatever comes out, come what may. I don't make any demands about the outcome, I don't tell you what you ought to do, I just come and say Father thy will be done. As in Heaven, so also upon earth. As in Heaven, so also in my life.

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And to learn to be content, to be there, under the hand of God regardless of what happens with the circumstances. And I want to suggest to you that that is the heartbeat of the true evangelical soul. One that knows God enough, one that trusts God enough, to go to him in times where there is no visible solution on the horizon and say, Lord I just ask you to protect me, cover me, help me. And then to get up and get on with the duties of the day.

And to live as though we actually believe the things that we say that we do. It's a prayer of protection that he opens up with. Now, secondly, here in Psalm 25, we see a prayer for guidance as well. A prayer of protection, secondly a prayer for guidance. And what David does here is having established his confidence in the Lord, "I've lifted my soul up to you." David expresses his trust next by asking God to guide him.

Look at verses 4 and 5, he says, "make me know your ways O Lord. Teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me for you are the God of my salvation. For you I wait all the day." Again, in contrast to the boastful pride of the current

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evangelical complex, you find instead here with David this humble sense of asking God to teach me.

God I don't know what to do. I don't know everything. God I, I don't know which path to take. And so I'm asking you by your providence and by your work, the work of the Spirit of God in my heart, I'm asking you to help me understand, enlighten my mind, and guide my steps so that I can walk in your path. Lord I'm, I'm in a, I'm in a period of darkness here. I don't know where to go next. I don't know what to do next. I'm at my wit's end, O God. And I don't know what to do.

And so the evangelical soul, rather than wringing it's hands in anxiety, contrary to what Jesus taught us in Matthew chapter 6, what the Christian soul does, what a true believer does, is he goes to God again in humility and says, God, please guide me. Please help me. Please show me the way. And now look, in different words, the New Testament picks up this exact Spirit in the book of James in chapter 1. You don't need to turn there, it's a familiar verse and I'll just read it for the sake of time.

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But in James chapter 1 verse 5, we're instructed in the New Testament writings, it says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all generously and without reproach and it will be given to him." You don't know what to do? Go to God! Say, God, give me wisdom, guide me. Teach me. Help me here. You know, and most everybody knows I turned sixty yesterday, which is just an amazing thought, I feel like I turned forty, but the calendar's winning this argument.

There have been times in the past year or two, you know, in ministry and other things that, uh, that we go through, you know, I, I just more and more I'm praying this way, more and more, saying God I don't know what to do! Here I am I've been a pastor for however many years and I do whatever I do and God I don't have the first clue on what to do here. I just ask you to give me wisdom. You know, 'cause I don't, I don't know what to do.

And so this, this, humbling effect before God, this humbling sense of a child coming to his Father saying, God I

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don't know what to do but I know you do. And I know you have the power to somehow impart that to me. And to direct the steps of my life. God I'm asking you to do what I don't understand. I don't know what to do but, but I'm asking you to guide me and to help me.

David there in Psalm 25, look at verse 4 he says, "Make me know your ways, teach me your paths." These are metaphors. That are talking about the direction and the unfolding of God's will for his life. Humbly asking God to unfold the circumstances of life in a way that would cause David to walk in the path that God had established him for.

Now, we're all here, we, we're big boys, big girls, theologically I'm assuming some things. We take seriously the sovereignty of God, the providence of God that God sovereignly orchestrates our circumstances and he is involved in every detail. He brings the details of life to us. We believe that, we trust in that, "God works all things after the counsel of his will." Ephesians chapter 1 verse 11.

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But, I think where we as Christians, as evangelicals sometimes where we fall back on is that that makes us passive and even fatalistic. Well, in the sense of whatever will be, will be. Well those doctrines do not make us spiritually passive, rather they become the grounds for us to pray. Say, God it's because I believe in your providence that I pray to you this way. It's because I believe in your sovereignty. It's because I believe in your goodness that I'm praying and asking you to work these things out in the life that you have given to me. And so God protect me, God guide me, as I look to the future I ask you to lead me. Whatever that means, however you do it, in your comprehensive sovereignty over all of my life, do a work in my heart and in my circumstances and in my relationships so that you're will is unfolded in my life.

Providence is not meant to make you passive it is meant to make you dependent and to make you consciously dependent and prayerful in a sense that it says, my prayers are meaningful because God is actually in control and therefore I will use prayer as a means of expressing my dependence upon him. Beloved this is the, this is the mark of the Christian soul. This is what, this is what Christians do.

We ask God to protect us. We ask God to guide us. This is fundamental to life. And again, you can think about it in a New Testament perspective, this is exactly how Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew chapter 6. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come," what's next, "your will be done."

Jesus commands us to pray like this. Commands us to pray in a manner that is seeking his protection and seeking his guidance. And this is not because God's will won't happen, you know unless we do Satan's going to be in charge. That's not the idea at all. Prayer is the appointed means for us to express our dependence upon God. And we do so in the context of, of the way that he has revealed his sovereignty and providence to be over all that we do and all that we see and all that we say.

It's a wonderful place, it's a wonderful place to be. You know back at home at Truth I'll talk often about, you know, in ah ten years of ministry at Truth Community Church we've had a, a shocking few number of funerals or people that in membership

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that have died. All family members of members have died but we've, the Lord has spared us that in our first ten years.

One of the things that I'm wanting to do, trying to do periodically, is to just prepare people for the moment you know when they're lying on their death bed. And to be able to face death with the same sense of serenity that David is expressing here in Psalm 25. "Lord I'm about to step from this life into the next and I am so confident of your care for me. I'm so confident of your guidance of my life particularly at this extreme moment that I commit my soul into your hands and I rest content here on my death bed. You come and take me when you wish, I am at peace, I am ready to meet you."

I am unafraid and I, I'm confident that the Lord provides that grace to his children in that hour. But we experience it all the more when we've developed a lifelong approach of trusting him for his protection and guidance. And his protection and guidance is not going to be withdrawn from you when you're on your death bed now you're on your own. Ah, what kind of

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shepherd would that be? What kind of good shepherd would that be that abandoned the sheep at the hour of its greatest need?

You and I do not need to be afraid of dying. We do not need to be afraid of the dying process if we are in Christ. Because whatever happens is going to be what God had appointed for us from the foundation of the world. It's going to be, come to us in the manner that God has appointed and we can rest in that. We can trust him for that.

Even in our dying moment we can worship even in our dying moment we can witness by the exuding of trust in God to protect and guide us even in the most extreme hour of life. This is what Christians do. This is who we are, this is what we are to be. We trust God to protect us and we trust him to guide us.

Let's move on in point number three and we see in this a prayer for pardon. A prayer for pardon. David as he continues on is expressing still another aspect of dependence upon the faithfulness of God. As he enters into a time of confession of

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sin. Look at verse 6 and 7 with me. "Remember O Lord your compassion and your lovingkindnesses, for they have been from of old."

God your, your compassion is eternal. Your loyal love is eternal. Nothing that has happened in time has changed who you are. Nothing that has happened in my life could possibly change your disposition of love toward me. And so God I appeal to your compassion, I appeal to your loyal eternal love, and the context of that is that he's bringing his sinfulness to the Lord.

Verse 7 he says, "do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions." God don't, don't hold my, don't hold my sins against me. Scripture says in Hebrews 10, you know, their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin, 1 John 1:7. And I'm, I'm quite confident that, that many of you in this room need to come back to these things and to apply them personally to your hearts and appropriate the cleansing of conscience and the settled peace of, of heart that comes from recognizing that what Christ purchased for you in, in purchasing your justification, your

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sanctification, your glorification with his redemptive work at the cross, he also purchased for you that the implication, better stated, the implication of this is, is that you can be at peace and be at rest even in light of the past sins that you've committed.

The whole point of redemption, the whole point of atonement, is that your sins would be carried away from you so that you bare them no more. Your sins were placed on Christ at the cross where God punished him for what you had done. What you had thought, what you had said, even the darkest things who knows how many abortions might be represented in a room like this, even that kind of dark sin, dark perverse things of, of an immoral nature that are surely represented, multiple times over in a room of this size.

For all of us to realize that our darkest sins, that, that we wouldn't want, and we should not discuss publicly, to realize that, that all of that was laid on Christ at the cross. God punished him and was perfectly satisfied with his Son. And, and in place of your sin, the righteousness of Christ was credited

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to your account. So that God accepts you not on the basis of who you were, or who you are, or who you will become.

God accepts you exclusively and only, as we'll see tomorrow morning, God accepts you exclusively on who Christ is and what he has done. The immutable Christ, the finished work. All indicating that God has accepted his Son and if you are in his Son then he accepts you as well. And therefore we have the prerogative, we have the privilege of peace of mind, peace of conscience as we come and confess our sins.

And David here is confessing in a way that is confident that God will remember his own character. You and I confessing now look on the other side of the cross, looking back at the cross, confessing our sins and saying, God, even though I don't deserve this I'm confident that you have not changed in your disposition toward Christ. So I ask you to forgive me in light of what my savior has done for me. In light of what your son has done for me.

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Listen. This is essential to the well being of an evangelical soul. And the nature of the kind of teaching that's being carried on and perpetrated upon people in the name of Christ, giving people the sense that you're pretty good, you know that we don't need to talk about depravity too much, and we don't need to take sin too seriously, after all God loves everybody and God loves you. You know but it's, but it's a, it's a, it's a sentimental definition of it that, that avoids the cross. It avoids substitution. And, and people just get this sense that, I'm a, I'm a good enough person to go to heaven. That's not the ground of our hope.

The ground of our hope is that Christ is good enough to go to heaven and he's had mercy to include us under the robe of his righteousness. He had mercy as I believe it was Machen that said and expressed it in this, in these terms, but when he was dying on the cross he was thinking of you by name. Because he was dying as a substitute for you. He was thinking of you and your sins and that, and, and appropriating and receiving the wrath of God for what you had done even on the cross. That's how perfectly symmetrical his substitution for you was, when he gave

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his life on the cross, and bore your sins in his body at the cross.

In some way that I don't claim to be able to express or explain any, inadequately, that somehow our savior had in mind his people individually by name when he gave himself up for us. Think about that. Think about the majesty of that. That's a shepherd for you. Laying, the good shepherd, laying down his life for the sheep. So much so that the apostle Paul could say in, in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20, there's a biblical basis for expressing it this way. You know he loved me and gave himself up for me, first person singular.

He didn't die for a blob of humanity and hope that later someone would believe in his death. It wasn't a potential atonement, it was an actual one. He actually accomplished redemption for us by actually dying for us by name two thousand years before we were born. That kind of theology leads you into a confident prayer for pardon that is both humble and confident at the same time. God I don't deserve forgiveness but Christ has purchased it for me and based on who you are, based who on who

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your Son is I ask you to be merciful and not remember my sins against me any longer.

And so David appeals to the character of God as we appeal to Christ as the basis for forgiveness. What does this say about the evangelical soul, what does it say about the Christian soul, the genuine Christian soul? Not these false versions that we've been talking about over the past twenty four hours or so. The truly Christian soul knows its own spiritual poverty and acknowledges it openly before God.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The bankrupt, the spiritually bankrupt, blessed are those who acknowledge their bankruptcy before God for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said in Luke chapter 5, "I did not come to call those who think they are righteous, I came to call sinners to repentance." And so the very sense, beloved, and some of you hi, I hope this will be an encouragement to you.

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You know those of you with particularly sensitive consciences and, you know, you could, you catalog and you know and you rehearse the things that you've done. And you know that, and you start to wonder, Am I even a Christian, or not. As you're thinking this way what you have to understand is that the whole point of salvation is to deliver you from that. The fact that you are sensitive to sin, that you hate sin, that you're repentant of sin, is the mark of a work of grace in your life.

The very fact that you see yourself as a sinner is an immediate invitation into the presence of Christ for mercy and for the kindness and love that he promised to us in Matthew chapter 11 because he's "gentle and humble in heart and you'll find rest for your soul." The evangelical soul doesn't boast in its own goodness. It freely confesses its own unrighteousness and goes to Christ and rests in him for forgiveness.

"If we confess our sins he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John 1:9, well that means something. I mean that's the, that's the word of God! That's premised on the credibility of Christ.

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The person and the work and the faithfulness of Christ. And so, and so we have this blessed gift given to us by our savior that we can go to him, go to him in our sin, go to him and confess our laziness, go and confess our lust, go and confess the angry words that we've said, go and confess the, the other things that we've done. We can go and confess it all, believing in Christ and knowing that he receives us favorably.

You know, one of the things that I've been teaching through all of the Psalms, it's taken me eight years and I'm not done yet, but one of the things that recently we've just been kind of rehearsing at, at Truth Community Church is this. To be in Christ, means this about your relationship with God. To be in Christ, and Scripture is filled with this, to be in Christ means that we understand that God is with us. And God is for us.

God is with me as a Christian and he is for me. He is not hostile to me. That's contrary to the Gospel. When Christ died he reconciled us to God, "while we were enemies Christ died for us," it says in Romans 5. In Romans 8, I want to get this exactly right, in Romans 8 the apostle Paul after saying we've

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been called, justified, glorified, he says, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him over for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things?"

Beloved, if you are in Christ, God has reconciled you to him whether you feel like it or not at any given moment is beside the point. It's premised on the objective work of Christ, not your subjective apprehension of it. And if Christ has reconciled you to God then God is for you. God is with you in the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And so this is greatly liberating. This is greatly producing of confidence in our hearts.

And so the evangelical soul, when it remembers its sin, it remembers Christ, it remembers the blood atonement made at the cross, and it clings to that shed blood for mercy. And Lord, if you died for me once, and you died for me once for all, then, then we're reconciled. And yes I hate my sin, and yes I need present forgiveness. I need cleansing of my soul. I need my joy

restored to me. But I'm not trying to manipulate Christ into loving me again. He already does.

Because his love is eternal and if you are in Christ, God is with you, Psalm 23 verse 4, "I fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me." Ah, Christian friend don't you see it? Don't you see how precious this is? If you are in Christ God is with you and God is for you. He is on your side.

How could he be more on your side than he was when he interceded for you at the cross? How could he be more on your side than he is as he intercedes for you at the right hand of the Father in heaven? Oh we just need to, we just need to put away our stingy thoughts about God. Our stingy thoughts about his love and his goodness toward us.

God is far more good, far more gracious to us than we can comprehend. And we need to rest in that. Do away with some of our, our destructive introspection of ourselves. Look outside of

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your heart. Look outside of yourself. Look up to Christ, look up to him in glory. Look up, see the heavens opened. See Christ looking down with his arms opened wide, which they are after the cross. Look up and see those wounds still visible above. Those wounds suffered for you and recognize the reconciliation is accomplished, pardon is given.

So that we go and we pray for protection and guidance and pardon with a full assurance and confidence that God receives us well when we do. This is what it means to be a Christian. This is what the Christian soul understands and acts upon and trusts in. And you start to see how utterly impoverished the evangelical world is as it divides us on racial lines and things like this. And totally diverts our attention from the very point of reconciliation, the very point of redemption, is a soul resting in the mercy of God and loving and glorifying him in response to that.

Well, fourth thing, fourth aspect that we see about the evangelical soul from Psalm 25 is you see David moving from there into a prayer of praise. There's a certain progression

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here that makes sense, uh, a man who has been pardoned and knows that he's been pardoned is going to respond in praise. He's going to offer worship to God, offer worship here in the New Testament side of the cross. Offer praise to Christ for what he has done.

And this is exactly what David does, look at verses 8 and 9. He says, "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in justice. And he teaches the humble his way." And then he goes on and says in, in verse 10, "all the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies. For your namesake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity for it is great."

So what David has done here is he's turned his attention away from himself and he's, he's turned his attention to simply extol the character and the attributes of God. What he's saying here in this passage, he's extolling God for his justice. He's extolling God for his moral purity, for his holiness. And from that position of excellence, that position of divine supremacy,

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and divine excellence, he is able to teach his people the proper way to think, and the proper way to live.

And so he leads us in the right way for those of us who humble ourselves before him. Now notice there in verse 11, David is not speaking here as one who is boastful in self-righteousness. You would not find David in the pulpit of current evangelical churches. With the proud boastful worldly spirit that animates that. David's soul was nothing like that.

He says in verse 11, "For your namesake O Lord pardon my iniquity for it is great." David is writing it as an earnest man of God and in the midst of that nobility of his spirit he was conscious of his sin. And beloved let me just reemphasize this again because I know that, I know this is, this is where people of tender conscience that are under the strong preaching of the word of God, this is, this is a particular pitfall for those of us that are like that.

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An awareness of sin is not a reason to doubt your salvation when it comes in the context of trusting and loving Christ. Awareness of sin is, is the mark of spiritual life. The, and you know, and John MacArthur has said, you know, that the more, the, the more you grow in holiness the less that you sin but the more that you feel it. The more that you're, you know you're more conscious of it even if you're growing in holiness, you've grown in holiness to a point where the, the remnants of sin that are in you pain you even more than they did at the start of your salvation in the early moments of your conversion.

This is a mark of spiritual life. Paul expressed this in Romans 7 didn't he? He speaks about that in verses 14 through 25, we won't turn there. But here's the point, here's what I want you to see, here's what I want you to take away from this part of it. Thinking of multiple people from our, from Truth Community Church, where I had to say exactly these words to them. Or words like them.

Just stop, and now I'm saying it to you, stop collapsing into that heavy introspection that says, I'm not good enough,

and what about this, and sorting out, trying to sort out, all kinds of unsortable motives. You know, why did I do this, why did I do that? You know the thoughts of man are very deep, you can't sort all that stuff out. The point of Christ and the point of trusting him is, is that I'm not finding my confidence spiritually, in, in what I see inside myself.

'Cause I look in there and I see the remnants of evil that are still clinging to me. Rather we look outside ourselves, we look to the cross, we look to the Son of God and we trust outside of ourselves in him for our righteousness. In him for our sanctification. In him for our wisdom. And it, it directs you from trusting in what you see inside yourself, outside to who Christ is. And you look outside yourself, you look up to Christ rather than in at self.

And that's what David is doing there in verse 11 he's calling upon the Lord. "Pardon my iniquity, it's great. And so Lord I'm asking for pardon based on the goodness and the greatness of your character." And so there's this prayer for

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pardon. Now, that's just to review the point so that we keep up with where we're at here.

We saw first of all a prayer for protection. A prayer for guidance. A prayer of praise. A prayer of confession that we called a prayer for pardon, yes. A prayer for protection, a prayer for guidance, a prayer for pardon, a prayer for praise. Point number five we see now a prayer of fear.

A prayer of fear. Elsewhere in the Psalms it says there is forgiveness with you that you may be feared. In the songs of ascent, somewhere, we won't bother trying to find that. But a prayer of fear. The way these things build on one another is just fascinating to me. The grace of God does not make David casual in his approach to God. Not overly familiar, you know, he, he, he still takes care to reverence the name of God. He fears the name of God. He lives in worship of God.

And you see that beginning in verse 12. Having just confessed his sin and asked for pardon he says there in verse

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12, "Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way he should choose. His soul will abide in prosperity and his descendants will inherit the land. The secret of the Lord is for those who fear him and he will make them know his covenant."

Notice how the word fear brackets those three verses. At the beginning, the man who fears the Lord, verse 14, the secret of the Lord is for those who fear him. This passage, this section of the Psalm is about fearing God. And so, forgiveness does not lead us into irreverence. Forgiveness does not lead us into an abuse of grace, or an acceptance of sin in our lives. Rather we are so struck by the majesty and goodness of God for having done this for us that we respond in fear.

What is that fear of which he speaks? Well you've probably heard it defined many times as reverential awe. I've never found that phrase helpful and so I don't define it that way. The fear of God, as you read through scripture, the fear of God for those who are reconciled in Christ is this. The fear of God is the life of humble worship.

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The life of humble worship that you render to God in response to his saving mercy in your life. Genuine salvation produces a man without exception, produces a woman without exception, genuine salvation produces a man or a woman who responds to God with a life of worship and a life of adoration.

A life of seeking obedience to him because we are so grateful for the gift in Christ that's been given to us. And we are so struck by the holiness and the justice and the mercy and the goodness and the grace and the patience and the mercy of God shed abroad in our hearts. When the Spirit gave us new life and led us to faith in Christ.

We're so astonished by that that we can't do anything other than live a life that in principle is marked by gratitude and a desire to obey. And so David's forgiveness, the forgiveness of great iniquity in verse 11 does not produce in David an irreverent man. There is no way that true salvation could result in a man becoming a cussing pastor. No way. Absolutely no way.

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Because reverence will be the mark of genuine salvation. There is no way that genuine salvation could lead a man to set a bed on his stage to talk about sex to his large congregation and to make a mockery of the pulpit, make a mockery of the word of God, make a mockery his responsibility for souls. There's no way.

There's no way that those kinds of, of, shenanigans, could come from a heart that's genuinely converted. Because a genuinely converted heart is going to fear God and want to honor him and show him respect and reverence rather than making the audience in front of him laugh. Or to impress him with how far he can push supposed bounds of Christian liberty with his foul mouth, his foul cigars, and his foul scotch.

I'm not having it. I don't buy it. Because true salvation produces the fear of God in a man and that shows in the way that he responds to life. And there's a genuine desire to honor God. And, and, and just to kind of go back to what I was saying earlier, you know, this scorched earth hearts that these false

ministers leave behind, leaving people behind cynical and cold and selfish. You don't see any of that here in Psalm 25.

What you see in Psalm 25 is an earnest soul. A sincere soul. Treating the name of God with reverence. Extolling him, praising him for his mercy. Wanting to make that known to others. Not for show. Not for profit. But out of the genuine sincerity of a heart that is sincerely grateful to God in awe of him and praying to him in dependence for protection, for guidance, for pardon, for praise, resulting in this holy hush in his soul.

A fear of God that would never trifle in the things of God to entertain audience or to puff up self. It's utterly impossible. It is completely contrary to the nature of biblical salvation. For that kind of result to come out of a man who's been truly born again, who's truly regenerate.

So, prayer number six we find a prayer for deliverance. A prayer for deliverance. And as we move in to the closing section

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of Psalm 25, David pours out now his heavy heart. He said, I lift up my soul there early in the, early in the Psalm, and don't let my enemies exalt on, over me. And then he goes into this, this section of trust and prayer and fear and it's like he's lost sight of the problems as he's extolling God and trusting him dependently as we, as we go through it.

Well now, in verse 15, he's come back and prays with new perspective on the things that were troubling his heart. Look at verses 15 through 18. You see him expressing a heavy heart. And he says in verse 15, "My eyes are continually toward the Lord. For he will pluck my feet out of the net. Turn to me and be gracious to me. For I am lonely and afflicted." The troubles of my heart, "the troubles of my heart are enlarged. Bring me out of my distresses. Look upon my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins."

It's encouraging, it's encouraging to see Scripture voicing our own discouragement, isn't it? It's encouraging to find in Scripture the words that give voice, you know, David says in other places, you know, "My heart is so troubled I can't even

speak. I don't even know where to start to articulate the weight that is in me, O God." And here he's praying for God to deliver him and he pours out his heavy heart and he voices his discouragement and look at how descriptive it is.

He says, "I'm lonely and afflicted. My troubles are enlarged. I have distresses, I have trouble, I have sin. And so there's, there's all this agitation going on in his heart. He has prayed the most godly prayer. He has prayed a Spirit inspired prayer, put it in that perspective. He has prayed the very words of God recorded for our use and our instruction and encouragement, Romans 15:4, some three thousand years later.

And yet we find him troubled, distressed, and afflicted. I find that very encouraging, I found it encouraging in, in more recent times where the only thing I could do in prayer was weep. The trouble, the trouble was so heavy, so severe, so close to my heart, and you just weep. It's a more direct way of saying, God I'm afflicted. You might say.

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David here is praying with that kind of heavy heart and yet it is side by side with an unshakeable trust in him. So that he can say there in verse 16, this is a prayer of faith. This is not a lack of faith. This is a man praying in the boiler room of faith that rep, praying in the engine of faith that makes it all turn. As he says in verse 16, "Turn to me and be gracious to me."

Saying, God I trust you. I know you, I know who you are, turn to me now. Be gracious to me now. And he says, "Bring me out of my distresses," verse 17. "Look upon me," verse 18. What's he doing here? What does an evangelical soul, what does a Christian soul do when it is so downcast? It looks dependently to God in that time, in the deep valley. He verbalizes his trust, and then he asks God to help him. This isn't complicated.

It's complex emotionally. It's heavy. But the principles are simple. God, you're my God. You're my covenant keeping God. You're my promise keeping God. And here I am, I'm in distress, I am hurting Lord. Oh! I hurt so much Lord. Turn to me and be

gracious to me. Have mercy on me. That's the mark of the truly evangelical soul.

Beloved, it's not the complete absence of inner turmoil that marks the Christian soul. Let me say it again. It is not the utter absence of inner turmoil that marks the truly Christian soul. It is instead the presence of conscious trusting dependence on the God of your salvation. The evangelical soul is consciously trusting and depending on God. The emotions come and go, sometimes the emotions are deep and they're hard to deal with.

Sometimes you're so weary you've, you know you feel like you're, things are just kind of, I don't want to say dead but you get the idea. Conscious dependence. The fact that you had the inner turmoil in your soul is not an indication that you are not a Christian. It is not an indication that you are not trusting God. It is an indication of life in this fallen world is hard. And sometimes there are things that just break our hearts. Right?

And so the mark is when it's like that, the mark of the evangelical soul is trust. God, turn to me, remember who you are, remember who I am, and deal with me accordingly. He continues on in verse 19, he looks outward horizontally on the opposition, "Look upon my enemies for they are many and they hate me with violent hatred. Guard my soul and deliver me. Do not let me be ashamed for I take refuge in you. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me for I wait for you."

Sometimes the enemies are external. They come in human form. I suppose at all times we should be mindful of the fact that scripture in, especially in the New Testament, tells us to remember that there's a battle taking place in the heavenlies. An invisible battle is taking place. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood but with principalities." But we see in this prayer, this trust in the sovereignty of God that reminds us that personal enemies, hostile political leaders, foreign enemies, none of them are in charge of the universe.

The God of our salvation is, and we go to him and we trust him and we're confident in him. Of course there's hostility in

the world. Of course there are sorrows. Of course there are tears. This isn't our home. All of the finality of bliss awaits us in heaven not here on earth. Scripture tells us the world will hate us. And so the Christian soul recognizes the conflict as an occasion to trust God as we walk our pilgrim pathway.

We're just passing through. This is not our home. We're not seeking a city here on earth, we're seeking an everlasting Jerusalem. And it will come in time. And it will be wonderful when it does. In the meantime, we simply have the privilege of living out a living trust in a living God. And make a display before angels like Job did. That God is worthy of our trust even if the circumstances never change.

And so David calls on God to deliver him because he's waiting expectantly on him as he makes that prayer for deliverance. Seventh and finally, we see a prayer of intercession. A prayer of intercession, when David has come full circle and praying through his own soul situation, now he prays for God's people in verse 22.

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It says, "Redeem Israel O God out of all his troubles." He looks beyond his circle. Looks to the people of God, and he says "God just as I've asked you to," to, "help and bless me I ask you that you would help and bless your people elsewhere as well." You know the leadership of our church, we, we pray for you. We pray for Phil and we pray for Grace Community Church and we pray for Travis and, and we pray for Grace Church of Greeley.

And I just use that as an illustration that the prayers of the godly extend beyond themselves. To encompass all of the people of God. The sorrows in David's life made him sympathetic in prayer for others of like precious faith.

And the more that we recognize that we're a remnant within a broader apostate evangelicalism the more important it is for us to be there for one another. It is important for you to be present with the people of God as often as you can when, when they gather together. Because your presence matters to them and their presence matters to you. We need each other, we need to pray for each other.

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And then to recognize that the hostility that we feel in the world is what our fellow brothers and sisters are going through so that it tenderizes our heart, it causes it to be tender, in a way that we want our prayers to embrace others as well. God be merciful to them too. God, sanctify them in the truth. God, lead them safely into your heavenly kingdom. By your grace and for your glory.

And so, we see that this is not a self-absorbed prayer. It's a deeply vertical prayer that has horizontal implications at the end. Charles Spurgeon said this, "Jesus is the redeemer from trouble as well as sin. He is a complete redeemer and from every evil he will rescue every saint. Redemption by blood is finished. O God, send us redemption by power."

Let's pray together. Father for these precious brothers and sisters in Christ that are in front of me, and hearing this through other means of media, I pray that you would grant us redemption from every sin and every trial of this life. Until we enter safely into your heavenly kingdom. O God, O Christ, O great and tender Holy Spirit, restore this evangelical soul to

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your people. For their good and preeminently for your glory,
through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.