

Psalm 141 – Week of May 8

Memory Verse: Psalm 141.1

O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you!

I must confess that as an adolescent boy in the '90s, I liked MC Hammer. Known for his hits *You Can't Touch This* and *Too Legit Too Quit*, MC Hammer released a lesser known track in 1990 called *Pray*. In the chorus, he says, "That's word, we pray (Pray, pray) We got to pray just to make it today. I said we pray (Pray). Oh yeah, we pray (Pray). We got to pray just to make it today. That's word, we pray." How many times have you felt like you had to pray just to make it today? How many times have you questioned how much longer you could endure suffering, sorrow and hardship? Have you ever felt like all you had left was just a prayer?

In Psalm 141, David found himself in a desperate situation. He had to pray just to make it through the day. Although he had been anointed king, he had not yet assumed the royal throne. Instead, he faced continuous threats from King Saul. He had to pray just to make it today.

There is much debate over the meaning of verses 6-7 in the psalm; the Hebrew is obscure. One translation of verse 6 says, "When their judges fall into the hands of the Rock." Based on this interpretation, some scholars see the background of this psalm as 1 Samuel 24.1-22. The passage records David's generous treatment of King Saul at the cave of Engedi. Although David had the opportunity to murder Saul, he graciously spared Saul's life. Instead of cutting off Saul's life, David stealthily cuts off a piece of Saul's robe. Later, David humbly confessed injustice and disrespect he had shown to the King. David told Saul, "Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, 'I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.'" Even though David spared Saul's life, Saul did not reciprocate the kindness. He continued to pursue and threaten David. When David wrote Psalm 141, Saul and all of Saul's associates have left David feeling utterly hopeless and ruined just as those who are dead (vs7). They have laid traps, snares and nets to capture and defeat David (vs8-9). David's kindness to Saul had been repaid with increasing hostility and danger. So, what did David do? He prayed. He had to pray just to make it today.

Psalm 141 gives us pattern for prayer that we can follow when we are faced with trials on every side. First, we find that David prayed with urgency (vs1-2). He called upon the LORD and pleaded with God to answer in haste. He knew that his only help, his only refuge was God. There was no one else David could turn to for help. So, he prayed with urgency. He needed God to rescue. He needed God to deliver. Like incense raising to God from the tabernacle and like the lifted hands of a worshipper, David lifted his prayer to God.

When you are facing trials and hardship, is your first inclination to pray? When someone is working against you, setting snares that you may fall, do you seek to remedy the situation by getting even? Or, do you seek the LORD in prayer? Often in our times of trouble we lift our voices to others. In anger, we lift our voice to the one who has hurt us. In slander, we lift our voice to malign the one hurting us. Instead, we should lift our voice to the God of heaven. He will hear and answer us.

As David prayed with urgency, he prayed for personal purity (vs3-5). David's primary concern was that he would remain blameless in his time of trial. In his words (vs3), in his desires (vs4) and in his actions (vs4), David desired to remain pure. He recognized that amid his suffering, he faced great temptation to treat his enemies in an ungodly way. Relying on his own will, power and strength, David would certainly sin not just against others, but against God.

David acknowledged that although he desired to respond to this trial in a God-honoring way, he knew that he would not always say, desire or do what pleased the LORD. So, he recognized that the loving rebuke of a friend would be necessary to help him remain on a path of purity (vs5). Although David prayed that God will keep him pure, he knew his own weakness. He knew his own flesh. We all face this struggle – "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." So, David recognized that to be rebuked by a righteous man is a kindness. Spurgeon writes, "The man who will tell you your faults is your best friend. It may not be a pleasant thing for him to do it, and he knows that he is running the risk of losing your friendship; but he is a true and sincere friend, therefore thank him for his reproof, and learn how you may improve by what he tells you." In times of hardship, we must pray for purity, and when we fail, we must humbly receive the correction of our true and sincere friends who love us enough to tell us our faults.

Finally, as David prayed in his time of suffering, he prayed for protection (vs8-10). As David saw the traps, snares and nets the wicked laid out for him, he knew that he could not rely not on his own strength, wisdom or ingenuity to escape them. Rather, he recognized that the LORD was his refuge. His deliverance would come from God. Instead of focusing on the dangers of his enemies and devising strategies to overcome them, David lifted his eyes towards the Lord (vs8). In 1 Peter 5.8, we are warned that our enemy, the Devil, is like a lion roaming around seeking to destroy. And, he has laid countless, unknown traps to cause us to stumble. He has placed snares on every side. Like David, we should pray for God's divine protection that we may pass by the Devil's schemes safely. God promises that one day, Satan will be defeated. The wicked will fall into their own nets. God will bring us through every trial and storm. God will keep us from being caught in the traps and snares of our Enemy. We will pass by safely and enter God's eternal Kingdom of truth and righteousness. Christian, take heart in your struggle. Do not despair. You have the promise of God. Pray to him for protection. And, trust he will bring you safely home.

In this life, we will have trouble. Enemies will rise against us. Hardships will befall us. But, Psalm 141 reminds us that our posture in these times should be one of humble prayer. We pray with urgency. We pray for purity. We pray for protection. Brothers and sisters, we must pray just to make it today. That's word. We pray.

Written by: Jeff Porter