

The Mighty God Who Hears

2026-07-05 – Psalms 61



Is prayer worthless? Occasionally we hear godless people of the world mock those who pray. They belittle those who offer "thoughts and prayers" in times of tragedy and arrogantly claim, "Save your thoughts and prayers--we need real action!" This betrays an incredible amount of sinful pride in their heart and no place for God, but it also acts as if prayer does nothing and assumes there is no God who hears and who is all powerful. Even as God-fearing believers in the Lord Jesus, we sometimes are tempted by the old sinful self within us to ask: "Does the Lord actually hear my prayers?" "Does my prayer life really matter?" Join us as we dwell on an amazing passage of God breathed Scripture of Psalm 61. Here the Lord through David directs us consider who He is as to the awesome God who hears His people. Let us be praying and expect to encounter and be shaped by the God who is strong to save us in Christ from our sin and sustain us to the end. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must be eager to walk in step with God's Spirit according to the Word and friends, the truth is we cannot pray enough. We need God's Word to guide and govern how we pray, May Christ be praised! Soli Deo Gloria

Now, if you would please rise if you are able for the reading of God's Word. This morning, I will be reading Psalm 6. A superscription for Psalm 6 says, "**For the choir director: with stringed instruments according to Sheminith. A psalm of David.**" Now the word Sheminith is a musical term referring likely to the octave or way in which it is performed. This is a psalm of David.

This is the word of the Lord:

***"Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger; do not discipline me in Your wrath. Be gracious to me, Lord, for I am weak; heal me, Lord, for my bones are shaking. My whole being is shaken with terror. And You, Lord—how long? Turn, Lord! Rescue me! Save me because of Your faithful love. For there is no remembrance of You in death; who can thank You in Sheol? I am weary from my groaning; with my tears I dampen my bed and drench my couch every night. My eyes are swollen from grief; they grow old because of all my enemies. Depart from me, all evildoers, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my plea for help; the Lord accepts my prayer. All my enemies will be ashamed and shake with terror; they will turn back and suddenly be disgraced."* (Psalm 6)**

This is the word of the Lord.

Lord, we thank You for the truth of the gospel. Lord, we thank You for calling us out of darkness into light, out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Your Son. Lord, we thank You for saving us, Lord. Lord, we thank You for raising us to new life. Lord, we thank You for giving us Your Holy Spirit who helps us understand Your word and helps us to see You in worship. Lord, I pray that we will set our hearts and minds on things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Lord, I thank You for this day where we can gather together to worship You today on Your day, Lord, where we can even today as a body come to Your table too. Lord, after we hear Your word preached, Lord, we

thank You just for this time of worship, and we give it to You all for Your glory. We praise You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We give You our worship in Jesus' name, amen.

Please be seated.

Before the sermon this morning, please join me now and bow your heads again as we come to our Lord God and our **pastoral prayer** this morning. Please pray with me now.

Our merciful and loving God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we do rejoice that we can sing "Great is Your faithfulness." God's summer changes to winter and noonday changes to midnight and years and decades pass by. And empires rise and empires fall and politicians come and politicians go. We move in, we move out. Old friends left behind and new friends found. God, we see new love and glad marriages. We see trust destroyed and relationships shattered. We gain strength and vigor. We suffer bodily decay and sickness. We see the joy of family and the heartbreaking death of loved ones. God, we have happy fellowship with You and we have coldness of heart. We feel the thrill of the mountaintop and we know the anguish in the valley. We have marched in triumphal unity with Your people, and we have mourned alone in the wasteland. God, we know revival. We know backsliding. We sense Your nearness. We feel You are silent at times. We are filled with faith and we are drained by doubt. We sin, we repent. We sin again, we repent again. God, our world is unsteady and our lives are volatile. Our walk with You is inconsistent. But God, we rejoice that we can sing this morning that great is Your faithfulness.

God, we rejoice that You never change, and that You are not disturbed by circumstances, that You do not need to grow and develop, that You do not shift by forces outside of You, but God, that You remain faithful. You remain constant, never changing, trustworthy, and faithful to us. That God, even when our strength fails, You remain faithful. Even when our loved ones are taken away, You remain faithful. Even when we sorrow and grieve, You remain faithful. Even when we sin and we enter the dark caverns of doubt, You remain faithful. Even when our church seems so frail and thin and secular philosophies delude her, and the pleasures of this world seduce her, and the tyrannical governments of this world seek to kill her, God, You still remain faithful. So God, we rejoice that we sing, "Great is Your faithfulness."

So we pray this morning, God, knowing that morning by morning, new mercies we see. We ask that You be faithful to build Your church, that You save lost souls in our midst, that those who think they are saved but are not would be awakened from their self-deception, that You heal marriages, that You encourage fathers and mothers, that You bring the doubting Christian back from the brink of despair, that You rejuvenate hearts that are cold, and that, God, You unify Christ the King Reformed Baptist Church and Cornerstone Church, so that we would be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose, doing nothing, God, from selfish or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, regarding one another as more important than ourselves.

Our faithful God, we ask that You do a great work this morning. And God, we continue to pray for our country, and we do thank You for 250 years of American independence. God, we understand that our citizenship is ultimately in heaven, but we are still full of gratitude for our country here in this world. God, for the self-sacrificial military and first responders, for the freedom and prosperity, and God, and for the biblical convictions and prudence that have formed the ethos of the United States and have made this country great. God, we pray for our country and for a widespread biblical revival in our land. We pray that those wicked worldviews that have caused destruction and ruin in their wake would be overcome by the gospel of Jesus Christ. God, we reject Islam and Hinduism and atheism and the anti-God, anti-family, anti-Christ satanic ideology of leftism and Marxism that has infiltrated our politics, our colleges, our seminaries, and our churches. God, we ask by Christ's name alone be honored and glorified in our country. Amen.

And God, we thank You that of all the countries, America has sent the most Protestant missionaries out into the world. God, we continue to ask that You raise up many more missionaries that are not the ones that are biblically illiterate or prosperity preaching false teachers, but those, God, who truly know Christ and are theologically sound. And we pray, Father, especially this morning for Zambia, and we thank You for our faithful brother in Christ, Dr. Conrad Mbewe, and we ask that You guide and uphold African Christian University in Lusaka, and that You would raise many God-fearing men and women through that institution in Zambia.

So Father, we do thank You that You remain faithful even when we are unfaithful, and that You hold us even when our grip fails. And God, we thank You and praise You this morning. We pray all this in Jesus' holy and precious name. Amen.

Well, grace and peace from God our Father, through Jesus Christ, our risen, ruling, one day soon returning Lord and the only Savior, brothers and sisters and friends, and it is good to be together on this Lord's Day.

We will be in Psalm 61 momentarily here, and I will read from Psalm 61 and ask you to stand in just a moment. And as you are finding Psalm 61 and are standing for the reading of God's word, I do hope and pray that you had a wonderful time yesterday celebrating, as was already mentioned, so many years of the Lord's faithful kindness to our nation. It is abundantly blessed, yes, and we see brokenness all around it as well. So would you please stand as we go to the Lord and look to His holy word, for surely in our beloved, but yes, broken nation, that is the place we must look to.

Hear now the word of the Lord from Psalm 61:

"For the choir director: on stringed instruments. Of David.

Hear my cry, O God; pay attention to my prayer. I call to You from the ends of the earth. When my heart is without strength, lead me to a rock that is high above me. For You have been a refuge for me, a strong tower in the face of the enemy. I will dwell in Your tent forever and take refuge under the shelter of Your wings. Selah. God, You have heard my vows; You have given me a heritage to those who fear Your name. Add days to the king's life; may his years span many generations. May he sit enthroned before God forever. Appoint faithful love and truth to guard Him. Then I will continually sing of Your name, fulfilling my vows day by day." (Psalm 61)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Almighty God and merciful Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we praise You for Your Word, and especially today for Your word to us in Psalm 61. Help us, O God, hear our cry. Teach us, Holy Spirit, now through Your holy word and sanctify us and strengthen us as Your children. God, convict us, guide us, lead us, call any without hope, without Christ, to saving faith in Jesus today. Illuminate our minds and hearts, O God, to receive Your word, to take it and receive it, knowing that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from Your mouth. We thank You, Lord, that though grass withers and the flower fades, Your word stands forever. So be glorified, we pray and ask in the precious and powerful name of King Jesus. And all God's people said, Amen.

Well, if someone asked you to describe your Christian faith, I wonder how you might answer them. What words would you use to describe your faith? I'm sure there are many different words that come to your mind, probably many that are very good, very biblical, very accurate. But I'm not too sure there would be many of us who would describe our Christian faith in these terms: "I'm an amateur Christian."

An amateur Christian. You look up the definition of amateur, you'll read, quote, "one lacking the skill of a professional; substandard; a dabbler who has an absence of serious commitment." I don't think very many of us would want to be marked by that or describe ourselves in those terms.

30:17

In his fascinating 2013 book "Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution", historian James P. Byrd noted that during the Revolutionary War between colonists and the British Army, most of the colonial soldiers were younger and poorer on average. And Byrd said together they comprise what another historian, John Ferling, called an army of amateurs. That's what the colonial army was—ordinary citizens, many of whom had never set foot on a battlefield before.

This historian, James Byrd, went on to describe the colonial soldiers in saying that not only were they ill-prepared, they were often outnumbered, and massively so, to the point where there was a point in the American Revolution when there were 50,000 regular troops of the British Army in the colonies, not counting their 30,000 mercenaries—so 80,000 British troops or those allied with them—against fewer than 4,000 American colonial troops and a few of their irregular militia. Byrd said this fascinating line in his book:

“Such inexperienced and overmatched soldiers needed instruction and inspiration, both of which ministers used the Bible to provide. Precisely because they were amateur soldiers, their ministers warned them not to be amateur Christians, since their success on the battlefield depended on spiritual and military training, and both relied on biblical wisdom—amateur Christians in an amateur conflict.”

And the ministers of God back two hundred and fifty years ago recognized that they could not be spiritual infants; they could not be immature in their faith.

Last week we noted that we as Christians are in a battle. We face a very real war, a spiritual conflict where it is brutal; eternity is at stake; souls hang in the balance. We face these enemies—the threefold enemies that Scripture tells us about: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world, in summary form in Scripture, is this rebellious, Christ-rejecting, devil-worshiping and following rule. We have men and women, boys and girls who are led astray by false teachers who flatter us, puff us up, encourage us towards self-righteousness and vain glory, all the while diminishing the righteousness of God, the holiness of God, and they undermine Christ’s person and Christ’s work. These individuals in the world love to add to God’s Word. They love to take away from God’s Word. That’s the world.

The flesh is indwelling sin—that old man crucified with Christ who desires to take dominion. We need to constantly keep it in check. That’s the flesh. And then there’s the devil—that liar, that murderer from the beginning, that ancient foe as some have called him, who dragged a third of heaven’s angels with him in his defiance and rebellion against the living God. So we have these enemies: the world, the flesh, the devil. The battle, the conflict that we are in as believers. And one of the things we must realize as believers is that this is a real conflict—a real conflict that the Scriptures equip us with and constantly call us to.

The Psalms are instructive for prayer, as we said last week. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians actually puts it this way: he says, **Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints**” (Ephesians 6:18).

One of the things that the sad reality in this present day and age is there are many pulpits, many churches that have very shallow preaching but also very shallow praying. It’s a problem for many reasons. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne in their book “The Trellis and the Vine” put it this way:

“Feeble and inadequate preaching weakens our churches. As the old adage goes, sermonettes produce Christianettes!...”

That’s what it is. It produces these cute little adorable Christians who are no threat to anyone and are impotent on earth.

But prayerlessness or insufficiently praying and calling upon the Lord, being, as it were, a cadet in the school of prayer is also a massive problem. Where the people of God don’t pray, the people of God are not growing in godliness, particularly related to their walk with the Lord in prayer, communing with Him, calling upon Him, crying out to the Lord of heaven and earth.

What did the Apostle Paul call us to? In 1 Timothy 4, he said this: **“For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it—that is, godliness—holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come”** (1 Timothy 4:8). This saying the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said to Timothy, “This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance.” There are earthly and eternal benefits to growing in godliness, to receiving the word of God preached and read, and to crying out to the Lord in prayer. We cannot remain cadets in the school of prayer.

And that brings us to Psalm 61, which is instructive, incredibly so, when it comes to prayer. Charles Haddon Spurgeon commented on Psalm 61 this way:

“This Psalm is a pearl. It is little but precious. To many a mourner it has furnished utterance when the mind could not have devised a speech for itself.”

So when you don’t have words, Psalm 61 has provided words for the saints who suffer and go through trials.

What’s going on in the context of this? Well, a couple of things. You’ll note at the superscription, the introduction, of this Psalm in Psalm 61, we don’t have as much context. All it says is **“For the choir director: on stringed instruments. Of David.”** So this is a Davidic song by David. It was given to the choir director so it was to be played and sung in ancient Israel. The old covenant people of God would have cherished this and loved this. But the particular context we don’t know. Some would say perhaps this was a time when David was fleeing Absalom his son. A few weeks ago when we preached Psalm 59 I noted to the brothers and sisters in Christ the King Reformed Baptist Church that in David’s life he had family drama and dysfunction that makes anything we deal with look like nothing.

Consider for a moment that King Saul, the king of Israel, loved David and hated David, but also that it was King Saul who was none other than the father-in-law of David. None of you, I hope, have had your father-in-law try to murder you. But that’s what David faced. But tragically, it was not only his father-in-law; his

own son, Absalom, tried to overthrow him and put him to death. King David knew what it was to suffer. He knew what it was—the pain of being in a family that was broken by sin.

And here in this Psalm, several commentators would say, perhaps that was what was going on. David was away from Jerusalem. He had to flee because his own son was trying to murder him and usurp his authority. We don't know exactly, though, the context of this, but we do know David was suffering. We do know he was likely the king. As in the latter half of this, he's speaking of himself in the third person.

But today, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I want us to walk through some instructions on how to pray. And we'll answer three questions. We're going to look with the Lord's help today at not only the posture of prayer—we're gonna ask, **what's the rightful posture of prayer?** We're also going to ask ourselves, **what's the right place for prayer?** And then we'll close out with, **what are right priorities in prayer?** Psalm 61 walks through all of these wonderfully, masterfully, and there's actually so much in this short Psalm for us to look at together. So let's take these now one at a time.

First, **the posture of prayer.** The posture of prayer for the believer, both for David and for all who trust in Jesus Christ, is this: it is one of **desperate dependence**. Notice that verse 1: **"God, hear my cry, pay attention to my prayer. I call to You from the ends of the earth when my heart is without strength."**

Now throughout the Psalms we can see over and over again that there is a desperate place that David is in. We see this time and time again. So many times that I'll just give you a few examples of this. Earlier in the Psalter we have Psalm 4:1, **"Answer me when I call to You, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress and be merciful to me and hear my prayer."** Desperate dependence. Psalm 5:1, one chapter after that, **"Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my sighing. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to You I pray."** And then the next chapter, Psalm 6, **"Be merciful to me, O God, for I am faint; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O Lord? How long?"**

We could multiply this many times over, so much so that we'd be here for hours just reading the Psalms of all these times of desperate dependence on the Lord. But Psalm 61 is no different. Part of the posture of our prayers is to be one of desperate dependence. We don't have the answer. We don't have the solution. We don't have the power or the resources. But there is One who does.

We see this example here in David. But that's not all. Another part of the posture of our prayers ought to be this: **longing for God's presence**. Longing for God's presence. Look at the next set of verses there in Psalm 61: **"Lead me to a rock that is high above me, for You have been a refuge for me, a strong tower in the face of the enemy. I will dwell in Your tent forever and take refuge under the shelter of Your wings."** *Selah (Psalm 61:3-4)*

Notice this: rock, refuge, strong tower, Your tent, shelter of Your wings. This is language of a longing for the presence of God. Most commentators will again note that this is David away from Jerusalem, away from where the presence of God dwelt, on the run. We don't know from what circumstance or from what enemy, perhaps a family member, as was already noted. But David here is longing for the presence of God.

The posture of the prayers of the people of God must be similar. "God, I'm not only desperately dependent on You, I long for Your presence." And that means there was a sense of the Lord's absence. If you're here

today and you've ever sensed the absence of the Lord, understand it does not mean you are in the disfavor of the Lord. It means you're human, but also even more so, it means you are Christian. That's a strange thing to think about—a paradox. How can I, who've been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ, have this distance between me and God?

Now to be sure, we should always examine ourselves. We do that before the Lord's Supper and ask, is there any sin, any unrepentant sin, any hardness of heart that I need to confess before the Lord? But my friends, it does not mean every single time that when you sense the absence of the Lord, that He has forsaken you, that He has abandoned you. But a faithful believer will have this posture in their hearts: "Lord, I long for more of Your presence. I want more of Your presence, not less, Lord. I want more of Your favor. Lead me to a rock that is high above me. Be my refuge, my strong tower." This is a sense of "I need Your protection. I'm vulnerable." That's what this is highlighting here. All around me, enemies are coming, and without Your help, I will surely die. I'm surely lost.

And so the posture of our prayers is desperate dependence on God, and also longing for God's presence. And a third part of the posture of our prayers is this: we have a **confident trust that God hears**. We're not offering our prayers to the Lord thinking, maybe He'll hear, maybe He won't. No, we have a confident trust, like David, that God hears. Look at Psalm 61, verse 5: "**God, You have heard my vows**; you have given a heritage to those who fear your name."

You've heard my vows. Vows are often spoken of in the Old Testament. There's an excellent free online Bible resource called Bible Hub you can check it out, and what they note is very interesting. The Hebrew word for vow, "neder", signifies a binding promise. Bible Hub goes on to say this: "The seriousness of vows is underscored in Numbers 32: if a man makes a vow to the Lord or swears an oath to bind himself with a pledge, he must not break his word; he must do everything he has promised."

So in the Old Testament, we see this over and over again. These vows, these commitments made in faith to the Lord: "I will do this, Lord. As surely as I live, I will do this. I will do this." And there's a sense of urging us to carefully follow through what comes from our lips, and even more so with the king of Israel, who had an extra level of responsibility. This is telling us our words matter to God. Our commitments matter to God. The Lord of Heaven and Earth cares about what we say, and He cared about what the king of Israel, David, said and what he did as well.

But David is modeling here this posture: "Lord, yes, I'm desperately dependent on You. Yes, I long for Your presence, God. But also I believe that You hear me. I believe You hear my vows and I believe that You hear my prayers." This is the posture of our prayer life before the living God.

That brings us to the second question: **What's the rightful place for our prayers?** Is there a time, is there a place maybe where we shouldn't pray? Or it wouldn't be appropriate? Where is God available to be heard? This is a loaded question. There are some people who think you have to go to certain individuals who are more holy than them, closer to God perhaps, to be able to pray. There are others who would say, "I'm not in the right environment. I'm not in the right state of mind. I'm not close enough to my happy place," or these kinds of things to pray.

But what does the Lord teach us? What does the Spirit of God teach us through the Word of God in Psalm 61? The first place for our prayers, the rightful place for our prayers is this, according to Psalm 61: everywhere. **Everywhere-God is always accessible to His own children.** To His own people, God is always readily accessible. Understand that. He's always available. He's always eager to receive the prayers of His people.

Look at verse 2a: *"I call to You from the ends of the earth."* Now again, most commentators think David was away from Jerusalem. So is this metaphorical? Him saying, "I'm away from the ends of the earth in the sense that I'm away from where Your presence is, Lord." Could be that. Could also be what he felt in his inner life. He thought, "I seem so estranged from You right now. God, You seem so distant from me." And yet "I call to You from the ends of the earth."

The place for our prayers, brothers and sisters in Christ, who have access to the Lord because of the new and living way that Jesus has provided for us—the answer to the question, "What is the rightful place for my prayers?"—it is everywhere. It is everywhere. Because faith in Jesus Christ, faith exercised, can be practiced anywhere. From the most remote corners of the earth, we have all these examples in the Scripture of where God is heard.

Consider for a moment the cries for protection from death in the belly of the great fish—Jonah cried out to the Lord. Abraham cried out to the Lord away from his homeland and kindred. Moses cried out to the Lord away from comfort, away from those he knew. Job cried out, estranged from comfort and possession, from everything he had that he had lost, his faith holding on by what seems barely a thread—he cried out to the Lord. To the cross of Jesus Christ where our Lord and Savior cried out to the Lord His God, God the Father.

We read throughout church history as well of those in cold prisons. We are called in Hebrews 13 to remember those in prison who suffered. The Lord hears the silent sufferings of the saints. He hears the dark nights of the soul. No matter where we are, how distant God may seem, His people, however weak that faith is expressed, His people always have access to the throne room of grace. And this is a deep encouragement for us. You think you're distant from God, you think you can't feel Him, my friends, call out to Him in faith. Draw near to Him. Cry out to Him.

Not only should we recognize that the place for our prayers is everywhere—God is always accessible—but the Scriptures in this passage also teach us that a place for prayer particularly is as **God's people suffer in their particular trials.** The place for our prayers is especially as God's people suffer in their trials.

I love the way Charles Spurgeon puts this. He says,

"Tribulation brings us to God and brings God to us. Faith's greatest triumphs are achieved in her heaviest trials. It is all over with me. Affliction is all over me. It encompasses me as a cloud. It swallows me up like a sea. It shuts me in with

thick darkness. Yet God is near, near enough to hear my voice, and I will call Him.

And that is what faith does. Faith cries out to God and says, “God, I can’t sense You. I can’t feel You. You feel distant. But I’m trusting in Your promise. I am trusting in Your word. And I know You are the God who never lies.”

That’s what faith does, friends. Faith in Jesus Christ understands there is no place where God cannot be heard when faith is exercised. There’s no place. Now to be sure there are warnings in Scripture about when God will shut His ears to us. For example, husbands, men, we should be aware of this. First Peter 3 documents this. The way we treat our wives, the way we love them or don’t, God shuts His ears to us if we treat our wives a certain way. That is a sober warning, men. You men are called to love your wives, and us men who God has called to be husbands, we have to take that with the utmost seriousness.

There are other times in the Psalms when it says God will not hear the prayers of those who are cherishing evil and iniquity in their hearts. The answer to both those is to confess and find, as Luke puts it in Acts—this refreshment that is found by repentance. That’s what happens. You say, “Lord, forgive me for my sin. Forgive me for this.” But then you cry out to Him and you entrust to Him all the trials you are facing.

The place for our prayers in Psalm 61 is very clearly Everywhere. David knew this. David was not saying, “I’m not by the temple. I can’t pray. God’s not available. He can’t hear me.” He was all the more ready to say, “I’m in a trial. I’m suffering right now. And I know that God is pleased. Even if I can’t sense His favor, I will cry out to this God. I will cry out to Him in my tribulation.”

David was driven away from the comfort of home, from the people of God. His own son perhaps seeking to murder him, his family perhaps hating him, perhaps siding with Absalom. We don’t know the details in the situation. We know that he was away though from comforts often in his life. And what did that lead him to do? Seek comfort in the world? I’m sure at times he was tempted to this. I’m sure at times he did give in to this.

Matthew Henry summarizes it this way so helpfully:

“That which separates us from other comforts should drive us so much the nearer to God, the fountain of all comfort.”

When we go through trials and suffering, friends, we should recognize we don’t need those comforts to express faith. We don’t need those comforts to pray. We have all we need in Christ Jesus. We have all we need in the Lord. And we exercise that faith and we cry out to Him, realizing that place does not confine our prayers.

This brings us to the third question. We've looked at the posture of prayer—our posture must be desperate dependence on God, longing for His presence, and confident trust that He hears—and the place for our prayers: everywhere. We must pray everywhere all the time, without ceasing, is the way the New Testament puts it. And we must do it especially in times of trials.

A third question is this: **What are the rightful priorities of our prayers?** What are the rightful priorities of our prayers? Now, some of you like me perhaps grew up and your parents maybe taught you, grandparents or some other family members or some Sunday school teacher, a delightful sister or brother in the Lord who is walking in faith in the Lord, that wonderful acronym ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. It's a wonderful model for prayer. Don't hear me bashing that at all or diminishing that. This is complementary to that. This is supplementary to that. That's a wonderful model. Keep doing that.

But in Psalm 61, the priorities of our prayers are clearly laid out, and they're important for us to take to heart, especially as we go through our own personal trials. Here's a few of the priorities of our prayers.

First, our prayer life should **prioritize humble, heartfelt petitions**. It is a good thing to pray for those in government. We pray for those in government because the Lord has called us to do that. In His Word, it's a command. We should absolutely do that. Amen. But we should not only do that. Again, it's a both-and. We should also pray humble, heartfelt petitions.

If you look at Psalm 61, notice this emphasis on "my, my, my." And all throughout the Psalter, you see this. David is expressing frequently prayers of personal anguish, of his own heart's desire. "God, this is my trial. This is my tribulation." It could be selfish or self-focused or self-obsessed if you were expressing it to everyone else out there in the world all the time. But insofar as you are taking your prayers to the King, to the Lord with humility—with "Lord, this is my need. This is my trial. Hear my prayers"—it is not dishonoring to the Lord. It is pleasing to the Lord. So we prioritize humble, heartfelt petitions. That's a good thing to do in our prayer life.

A second priority is this: **we prioritize admitting personal weakness**. Look at Psalm 61, verse 2. It says, "**My heart is without strength.**" This is something that is difficult to do. It's difficult to admit personal weakness, but it pleases the Lord of heaven and earth when we say to Him in our prayers, "God, I am weak. I am needy."

There's a third, and I'll ask for Your forgiveness in advance. I accidentally deleted this slide. That happens sometimes. These slides are not inerrant. They are not infallible like the Word of God. And the third priority of our prayers is this: **we ask often for God's rescue**. We ask often for God's rescue. This language of the Lord being our rock, our refuge, our strong tower is an expression of "Lord, I need You. I am striving after You and I'm longing for You, but I recognize that the situation I'm in, that the suffering I'm enduring, it requires someone greater than I, someone more powerful than I, someone who can rescue me and deliver me." It's an expression of hopelessness and helplessness before the Lord. And so our prayer life must prioritize asking often for God's rescue—earthly trials, yes, and also thanking Him for the ultimate redemption found in Christ Jesus that He has accomplished through the death of Jesus, that He will bring to fruition and completion at the return of Jesus. We ask often for God's rescue.

And it's good to pray generically, "God, thank You for the forgiveness of sins." Absolutely, brothers and sisters. But David here expresses, as we've already seen, heartfelt petitions: "Please, God, please do this in my case, in my situation." And it is a model for prayer. It is a model for prayer to say, "God, I need deliverance from this particular enemy, this particular trial I'm facing, this suffering." And so don't act like it's one or the other. Too often in the Christian life we think, "Well, that's not a spiritual need. I shouldn't be praying for that." That's not what the Word of God tells us in Psalm 61 or throughout the rest of Scripture. What is it? **"Cast all your needs on Him,"** not some. That's what the Scriptures teach us. We ask often for God's rescue, recognizing the strength that is found in Him and the power that is found in the redemption in Jesus Christ.

So the priorities of our prayers are humble, heartfelt petitions. This might be confession of sin. In this case it is a simple plea of "Lord, look what I'm going through. Hear my cry." It's also admitting personal weakness: "God, I can't help myself. I can't do this." The priority of our prayers also **involves asking often for God's rescue.**

The Protestant Reformer John Calvin said,

"Nothing animates our hopes more than the recollection of the past goodness of God. Nothing stirs us up to call upon the Lord, to thank the Lord. Nothing stirs us up quite like recalling how God has worked in the past and bringing that to mind."

And it should fill our prayer life. "God, You delivered me from sin. You forgave me. Jesus took the penalty for my sin. Look at all these things You've done. Rescue me now, just as You have in the past, Lord. I'm longing for Your rescue."

Another aspect of the priority of our prayer life is this: **remembering His promise to all who fear Him.** Did you notice verse 5? Look what it says there. **"God, You have heard my vows,"** David says. "You have given a heritage." He doesn't say to me only. He broadens it out. He says, "God, You've heard my vows as king of Israel, as Your son. You've given a heritage to those who fear Your name." It's broadened out. It's applicable immediately to the covenant people of God. It expands out beyond the king of Israel to all who trust in Israel's God.

And David says, and models for us here, that as we pray, a priority of our prayer life must be remembering God's promises to all who fear Him. Ephesians 1 actually speaks of this in these terms, that for those of us who trust in Jesus Christ, we have all blessings—every blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We remember God's covenant promises to those who fear Him. When you read in the Old Testament this expression **"fear Him," that is another way of saying have faith in the Lord,** have this reverence in the Lord, following after Him. It means discipleship. That's what it means. So when you see in the Old Testament **"fear Him," fill in there "faithfully following Jesus."** You remember His promises—God's promises to all who fear Him, who are trusting in Him.

The priorities of our prayer life, according to Psalm 61. And then a fifth part of the priorities of our prayers, according to Psalm 61, is this: a priority in our prayer life must be to **constantly focus on exalting the worthy King**. Constantly focus on exalting the worthy King.

Now this is such an amazing part of God's Word that we could probably spend the next five or six hours just unpacking so much of this. But we won't do that. You can thank me later. We will not do that. But in Psalm 61, one of the amazing priorities of our prayer life is this: **David looked forward**. If you look there it says this: ***"Add days to the king's life"***—he's speaking of himself in the third person—***"may his years span many generations. May he sit enthroned before God forever. Appoint faithful love and truth to guard Him. Then I will continually sing of Your name."***

So David is speaking of himself in the third person as this king of Israel, who is asking for longer life. "Extend my life. I'd like to live many years so that I span the generations." But then did you notice this expression, "May he sit enthroned before God forever"? How would that work? How could it work for a mere man, a mortal like David, to be so bold as to say to the God of heaven and earth, "May he sit enthroned before God forever"?

This text, like many others in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalter, only makes sense if there is another King. In 2 Samuel 7:15–16 we read the following words from our Lord to David: ***"But My faithful love will never leave him as it did when I removed it from Saul"***—speaking here of the descendant, the son of David—***"your house and kingdom,"*** the Lord says to David, ***"will endure before Me forever; and your throne will be established forever."***

So David by faith in the Lord's promise of establishing from him a king who would sit and reign forever prayed the promise of God. This is what David's doing. He's praying Scripture. He's praying the Bible. He's praying the promises of God. He's constantly focusing on what God has said—that there will be a king who rules and reigns forever. There's a constant focus on exalting God for this King.

If you flip a few chapters over to Psalm 102, verse 12, you don't have to do that because I'll put it on the screen. Look what we read in Psalm 102:12: ***"But You, Lord, are enthroned forever; Your fame endures to all generations."***

What's amazing about this text is in the New Testament book of Hebrews here's what we read—the exact same text: ***"But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of Your kingdom is a scepter of justice'"*** (**Hebrews 1:8**).

My friends, David knew that the promises that God made extended far beyond him. That the promises God made were irrevocable, that He would be faithful to His word. And here what David is doing is he is not only praying Scripture and reminding himself of the promise of God, he's looking forward in anticipation and longing for that King to come who would be worthy.

Notice what he says: not only ***"add days to the king's life,"*** ***"may he sit enthroned forever before God,"*** it says, ***"appoint faithful love and truth to guard Him."*** David was praying for love and truth to come and to guard his offspring and this future king. And what did God, in His infinite wisdom, do? He sent His own beloved Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, who was full of grace and truth, who was the truth Himself, who is love. It's

incredible. **“Appoint faithful love and truth to guard Him,”** David prays to God, and the God of heaven and earth says, “I will send not just merely a human king who then I can add to My wisdom, My truth. I will send the Truth. I will send righteousness—My beloved Son, your Savior Jesus Christ, who will reign forever and ever.”

My friends, may we not be amateurs in the school of faith. May we not be cadets in the school of prayer. When we go through trials, may we cry out to the Lord and remember we have a King who lives forever to intercede for us, and His name is Jesus. We can and we should rejoice that we come before the Lord boldly and confidently in Jesus Christ. He is full of grace and truth. He is the everlasting King who reigns forever and ever.

Let us pray.

Almighty God and merciful Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we thank You so much for Your word. We thank You so much for the instruction in Psalm 61 for us as we go through trials, as we battle, as we seek to grow in prayer. Thank You for the wisdom, God, we thank You now for an opportunity to partake of the Lord’s Supper. What an honor and blessing we are unworthy of to come and receive this glorious reminder—the shed blood of Jesus Christ and the sacrificial Lamb who took our sin and our shame and paid our penalty in full on the cross. Strengthen our faith now. Renew us, we pray, and be glorified. All this we ask in the precious and powerful name of King Jesus. And everyone who agreed said together, amen.