

## Pastor's Corner – 1-4-20 – Praying the Perfect Prayer

This morning I was having my devotional time and I read one of my favorite psalms that, to me, is an example of a perfect prayer. It's not a perfect prayer because of flowery language or noble themes of righteousness. It's not even a particularly God-centric prayer, if you ask me. None of these things are what make a prayer perfect though. Instead, it's a result of honesty, openness, and vulnerability before God. That's what makes this prayer a model prayer that we can follow. So, let's take a look at Psalm 109 and see what we can see.

Psalm 109 is one of the psalms that David wrote with the intention of having it used as part of worship. It has a heading stating that it was "for the director of music" which means it was supposed to be included in the church hymnal. I have a hard time imagining a congregation singing this song in church. The subject matter doesn't quite seem appropriate for praise time and yet, there it is. I guess it just goes to show you how subjective worship music truly is.

The first part of the psalm begins with a brief acknowledgement of God and then immediately dives into what I can only describe as a complaint. David talks about how wicked and deceitful men have lied about him and unfairly attacked him. He offered them friendship and they repaid his kindness with accusations, evil, and hatred. This isn't a God centered hymn. It's all about David and how he is being mistreated.

Next, he begins to make some very specific requests of God. He asks the Lord to "appoint and evil man to oppose" his oppressor. David pleads for God to judge his enemy and find him guilty. He goes on to pray that his enemy becomes penniless, that his children become fatherless, and that his descendants be cut off. Rather than praying for God to forgive his enemies he specifically asks God to remember their sins. "May their sins always remain before the Lord," he says, "that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth." Such Christlike compassion. Do you begin to see why I don't want to sing this one as an opening hymn next Sabbath?

After praying for curses on his enemy, David then begins to outline all the bad things that his enemy has done. Apparently, this guy was not a nice person in general, not just towards David. He wore cursing as his garment and never thought of doing a kindness. Nothing like publicly dragging your enemies through the mud. Is this a prayer or a campaign speech for political office? It's hard to tell.

About half-way through David switches focus and begins to talk about himself. He prays for God to show him mercy and goodness. He prays for deliverance. He acknowledges that he is, "poor and needy," and his "heart is wounded" within him. This is a nice turn in the psalm though there is a distinct note of self-pity or even depression going on here. It's good to see David turn away from the themes of slander and revenge though.

The whole thing ends with David saying, "With my mouth I will greatly extol the Lord; in the great throng I will praise him. For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save his life from those who condemn him." Finally, at the very end we have a true expression of praise.

So why is this the perfect prayer? It includes complaints, pleas for revenge, and depression. How is this a good prayer? I believe it is the perfect prayer because David is being completely open, honest, and raw with God. He holds nothing back. He doesn't try to sanitize his prayer or his feelings. He lays all his cards on the table.

In fact, it seems as if his no-holds-barred honesty is what allows him to process his feelings with God. Notice that the prayer begins with bitterness, anger, and pain. It progresses to sorrow and self-pity. But by the end, David is singing praises to God. He has found comfort and the hope of deliverance by sharing his pain with his God. I think this kind of healing is only truly possible when we have this kind of honesty with God.

The moral of the story is this. Be honest with God when you pray. Don't hold back. If you feel angry, tell God you're angry. If you want him to hurl fire and brimstone down on your enemies, ask him

to hurl down fire and brimstone. If your sad or depressed, let him know. Whatever you are feeling, share it with God. He can take it.

It is only through this kind of honest and open communication that we can truly learn to depend on God and to ultimately receive the comfort we need. So, give it a try sometime. Have a hold-nothing-back prayer session with the Lord one of these days. Let him in to the deepest parts of your soul. Let him see the darkness and the pain. I promise it won't scare him off.

Happy Sabbath  
Pastor Tyler