

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 25 — The Right Road Is Not an Easy Road

“The prayer is that of a person who has made the choice and is walking the road of the righteous; but the dispassionate wisdom has been transformed to passionate petition, for the right road is not an easy one on which to walk. ... The essence of the road of the righteous is this: it is a road too difficult to walk without the companionship and friendship of God. ... Ps 1 is a signpost which directs the wise to the choice of the right road; Ps 25 is a companion for use along the way.”

— Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, Word Biblical Commentary
(Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 222.

1.0 Introducing Psalm 25

- Psalm 25 is an acrostic or alphabetic psalm.
 - ◆ The Hebrew acrostic psalm begins each verse with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet (22 letters).
 - ◆ Psalms 9–10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145 are all acrostic psalms.
 - Psalm 25 is irregular (3 letters are omitted, 3 are repeated).
 - ◆ Function of the acrostic.
 - Provides a framework for the poem.
 - Eye-appeal as a literary work — displays artistic skill.
 - Some think they may have been aids for memorization.
 - Could have been a way to convey completeness (= “A to Z”).
- An account regarding two Scottish Covenanter martyrs: “Twice a day, up the deep channel of the sluggish Blednoch, fringed by steep and sloping mudbanks, sweeps the yellow tide of the sea. Stakes were set in the ooze of the tideway, to which the two women were bound. The elder woman, Margaret Maclachlan, was set lower down the river, that the younger sufferer might see her struggles, and her course

finished, before she herself was reached by the rising sea. Pitying her youth, the executioners tried to save Margaret Wilson. As the water swirled about her body, she was drawn to the edge of the bank, and offered her life, if she would say, 'God save the king,' and take the test. She was ready to say, 'May God save the king, if He will,' for she desired, she said, the salvation of all men: but she would not forswear her faith, or take the test. So she was once more secured to the stake and left to her fate. With her fresh young voice, as the salt waves curled above her breast and all but touched her lips, she sang the 25th Psalm:

'My sins and faults of youth
Do Thou, O Lord, forget;
After Thy mercies, think on me,
And for Thy goodness great';

and so continued singing till her voice was choked in the rising tide.

— Rowland E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life*
(London: John Murray, 1904), 288



2.0 Reading Psalm 25 (NAU)

25:1 A Psalm of David.

⌘ **To Thee, O LORD, I lift up my soul.**

⌘ 25:2 **O my God, in Thee I trust,**
Do not let me be ashamed;
Do not let my enemies exult over me.

⌘ 25:3 Indeed, **none of those who wait for Thee** will be ashamed;
Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed.

⌘ 25:4 **Make me know** Thy ways, O LORD;
Teach me Thy paths.

⌘ 25:5 **Lead me** in Thy truth and teach me,
For Thou art the God of my salvation;
For Thee I wait all the day.

⌘ 25:6 Remember, O LORD, Thy compassion and Thy lovingkindnesses,
For they have been from of old.

⌘ 25:7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
According to Thy lovingkindness remember Thou me,
For Thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

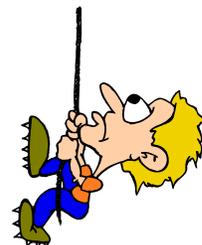
⌘ 25:8 Good and upright is the LORD;
Therefore **He instructs** sinners in the way.

⌘ 25:9 **He leads** the humble in justice,
And **He teaches** the humble His way.

⌘ 25:10 All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth
To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.

⌘ 25:11 For Thy name's sake, O LORD,
Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.

- ד 25:12 Who is the man who fears the LORD?
He will instruct him in the way he should choose.
- נ 25:13 His soul will abide in prosperity,
And his descendants will inherit the land.
- ו 25:14 The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him,
And **He will make them know** His covenant.
- ז 25:15 My eyes are continually toward the LORD,
For He will pluck my feet out of the net.
- ח 25:16 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
For I am lonely and afflicted.
- ט 25:17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged;
Bring me out of my distresses.
- י 25:18 Look upon my affliction and my trouble,
And forgive all my sins.
- יא 25:19 Look upon my enemies, for they are many;
And they hate me with violent hatred.
- יב 25:20 Guard my soul and deliver me;
Do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in Thee.
- יג 25:21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,
For I wait for Thee.
- יד 25:22 Redeem Israel, O God,
Out of all his troubles.



3.0 Understanding Psalm 25

3.1 Outline

- I. Prayer of Confidence (vv. 1-3)
- II. Prayer for Guidance (vv. 4-10)
- III. Petition for Pardon (v. 11)
- IV. Prayer of Reverence (vv. 12-14)
- V. Prayer of Eager Patience (vv. 15-21)
- VI. Prayer of Intercession (v. 22)



3.2 Notes

- v. 2 “Do not let me be ashamed”
 - The phrase forms an inclusio that envelops the psalm.
 - It is not the shame of embarrassment or being made to feel foolish and subject to ridicule.
 - This sense of shame is nearer to that of disappointment — finding someone untrustworthy whom you had trusted.
 - God is always trustworthy. No one trusting Him will be ashamed or disappointed.
 - Romans 5:5
 - Romans 9:33 (quoting Isaiah 28:16)
- v. 3 “wait for You”

- Waiting for God implies acceptance of His timing in His wisdom.
- This is waiting with eager expectation due to trusting God.
- It is not a sullen, helpless resignation to the inevitable.

- **v. 6** “compassion ... lovingkindnesses”
 - Both nouns are plural in the Hebrew — implying their abundance.
 - Could be translated, “mercies ... *deeds of loyal love*.”
 - “Lovingkindness” or “loyal love” is “the kind of loyalty that grows out of a bond of commitment. ... This *is* love, not of an emotional sort but of a settled and accepted decision.” — Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 463.

- **vv. 6-7** “Remember ... Do not remember”
 - The psalmist “cannot honestly be directed on God’s path (vv 4-5) without first dealing with his past wanderings away from that path. But he can confidently pray for forgiveness, for God is no distant judge, but a covenant God who acts in ‘mercy’ (the word may imply the attitude of a mother toward her child) and in ‘lovingkindness’ (... the word designates the fundamental character of the covenant God). His prayer, in effect, separates sin from the sinner; he prays ‘do not remember the sins’ (v 7a), but ‘please remember me’ (the sinner).” — Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 219-20.
 - “The sins of my youth” (v. 7) need not be taken as the words of “a middle-aged man regretting the wild oats he had sown in his adolescent days. He may be looking back with regrets, but he is also conscious of present shortcomings in his life (see vv. 11 and 18). It is not only for the past but also for the present that he needs to be forgiven.” — Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 90.

- **v. 14** “The secret of the LORD”
 - “*The intimacy of Yahweh*], the intimate, secret fellowship granted to those admitted to the inner circle of friendship or alliance.” — Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary (reprinted; Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1987), 1:224.

- **v. 15** “My eyes are continually toward the LORD”
 - This statement refers to continuous prayer.
 - Compare with 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

- **v. 16** “Turn to me”
 - The phrase “means God’s observant and sympathizing turning to any one.” — Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 3 vols., trans. by Francis Bolton, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, by

Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch (reprinted; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 1:346.

- **v. 22**
 - This final verse switches to a prayer of intercession on behalf of the whole community.
 - Verse 22 begins with the 17th letter of the Hebrew alphabet (the same letter begins v. 16). It stands outside the acrostic structure.
 - The same type of verse occurs in Psalm 34. The same word (“redeem”) is the first word in both 25:22 and 34:22.

- **Summary:** What do we learn about God from this psalm?
 - Our God can be trusted—He’s trustworthy.
 - God is faithful (v. 3).
 - God speaks truth (vv. 4-5).
 - God is Savior (v. 5).
 - God is merciful and loving—loyal (v. 6).
 - God is good and upright (v. 8).
 - God is forgiving (v. 11).
 - God is open with us and confides in us (v. 14).
 - God is gracious (v. 16).
 - God is powerful enough to rescue us and provide refuge (vv. 15, 20).

4.0 Singing Psalm 25

Unto thee O Lord, do I lift up my soul. (2x)
Oh my God, I trust in Thee,
Let me not be ashamed, let not my enemies triumph over me.

Let none that wait, on Thee be ashamed. (2x)
Oh my God, I trust in thee,
Let me not be ashamed, let not my enemies triumph over me.

Show me Thy ways, Lord teach me Thy paths. (2x)
Oh my God, I trust in Thee,
Let me not be ashamed, let not my enemies triumph over me.

— Charles Monroe

Lord, I lift my soul to Thee,
O my God, I trust Thy might;
Let not foes exult o’er me,
Shame me not before their sight.
Yea, may none be put to shame,
None who wait for Thee to bless,
But dishonored be their name
Who without a cause transgress.

Lord, to me Thy ways make known,



Guide in truth and teach Thou me;
Thou my Savior art alone,
All the day I wait for Thee.
Lord, remember in Thy love
All Thy mercies manifold,
Tender mercies from above,
Changeless from the days of old.

Sins of youth remember not,
Nor my trespasses record;
Let not mercy be forgot,
For Thy goodness' sake, O Lord.
Just and good the Lord abides,
He His way will sinners show,
He the meek in justice guides,
Making them His way to know.

— Unknown author; Spanish melody arranged by Benjamin Carr, 1824

5.0 Praying Psalm 25

- O God, I trust You and commit my life into Your hands. [vv. 1, 2]
- Preserve me from spiritual shame, of having a life differing from my faith. [vv. 2, 3]
- Father, teach me Your Word. [v. 4, 5]
- Forgive my sins. [v. 11]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 25

- Find your fellowship with a church where the deep things of God are taught.
- In the most difficult circumstances choose to trust God.
- “[T]he bones of our youthful feasting at Satan’s table will stick painfully in our throats when we are old.” — Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 3 vols. (reprinted; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 1/1:393.