



Praying Like the Psalmists, Part 10

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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PM Assembly



Praying When the Psalmists Prayed

Introduction:

If I asked for a show of hands of everyone who felt they needed to improve their praying, probably just about everyone would raise their hand. The fact is no matter how much we've grown, we all tend to believe we need to grow more in prayer. That's why we've been looking to the psalmists for the past year to help us grow in our praying. No doubt, their example is an impetus for us in prayer. We want to pray like they did, as deeply, meaningfully, and often as they did. Yes, you read that right, "as often as they did." Not only do we need to get some of the beliefs, meaning, and commitments the way they did, we need to pray when they did. Please do not misunderstand. Though we are going to look at some chronological issues about when the psalmists prayed, this isn't really about a particular prayer schedule. While we will talk about some specific times that they prayed, I don't want us really to focus on those times but rather what praying at those times meant for the psalmists and their relationship with God.

Discussion:

- I. The psalmists prayed in the morning.
 - A. **Psalm 5:3**: "O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice."
 - B. **Psalm 57:8**: "Awake, my glory! / Awake, O harp and lyre! / I will awake the dawn!"
 - C. **Psalm 108:1-3**: "I will sing and make melody with all my being! / Awake, O harp and lyre! / I will awake the dawn! / I will give thanks to you..."
 - D. The issue here is not that if we want to pray like the psalmists we have to pray in the morning. The issue is what morning prayers represent for these psalmists. The psalmists prayed in the morning because they didn't want to face the day without connecting to God. They wanted to awaken the dawn with their praise. They wanted to begin their day by talking to the most important person in their lives.
 - E. Could you imagine waking up with your spouse, showering, brushing your teeth, eating breakfast, taking care of the morning routine and then leaving for the day without saying a word to your spouse? Sadly, I can imagine it. I've done it. But only when something was wrong in our relationship. When we spend the entire morning without acknowledging God in prayer, perhaps something is wrong in that relationship as well.
- II. The psalmists prayed in the evening.
 - A. **Psalm 55:17**: "Evening and morning and at noon / I utter my complaint and moan, / and he hears my voice."
 - B. **Psalm 141:2**: "Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, / and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!"
 - C. Once again, the point is not simply that we need to check off a prayer in the evening. The issue is what this evening prayer represented for the psalmists. At the close of the day, the psalmists wanted to connect to God. Just as the priests offered a morning and evening sacrifice, the psalmists wanted to praise and pray. They wanted to not only begin their day with a God connection, they wanted to wrap it up with one as well. In this way, their day was about God and their relationship with Him.
- III. The psalmists prayed at night.
 - A. **Psalm 119:62**: "At midnight I rise to praise you..."
 - B. **Psalm 119:147**: "I rise before dawn and cry for help..."
 - C. No, we do not have to wake up at midnight every night to say a prayer. Nor do we have to set our alarm clock before the dawn and make sure to dash off a prayer. But we do need to think about what these nighttime prayers meant to the psalmists.
 - D. In the case of **Psalm 119:62**, the psalmist's point is about how amazing he believes God and His will are. God is so great that he awakes at night with God on his mind, wanting to praise Him. In the case of **Psalm 119:147**, the psalmist's point is he was in such desperate need for help that he couldn't sleep but awoke seeking God's help.
 - E. I can't help but think of the times I've been unable to sleep because of some anxiety or some excitement. I count sheep. I read books. I watch tv. Do I ever pray? Where do we turn on those sleepless nights? Is God so great in our lives that we wake up with Him on our minds? When we are anxious are we casting our cares upon Him? As someone once said, "When you can't sleep, don't count sheep; talk to the Shepherd."

IV. The psalmists prayed all day.

- A. **Psalm 55:17**: “Evening and morning and at noon / I utter my complaint...”
- B. **Psalm 119:164**: “Seven times a day I praise you / for your righteous rules.”
- C. No doubt, the “seven times a day” is a figure of speech simply meant to express the continual and repeated nature of the psalmist’s praying throughout the day. These verses are not meant to give us a schedule. We don’t have to set our alarms for seven different times or three different times throughout the day to make sure we check off praying in a legalistic fashion. However, this praying throughout the day meant something that we need to mimic.
- D. The psalmists didn’t simply start their day with prayer and then end it with prayer. They prayed throughout the day. That means they conducted their lives in a continual relationship with God. They relied on Him throughout their work. They depended on God in their relationships. They conducted their business with God in mind. They didn’t leave God in their house or at the temple. They walked with Him everywhere they went. God was part of their entire day. Is He part of ours? Do we walk with God or do we leave Him at home, or worse, do we leave Him at the church building?

V. The psalmists prayed in good times.

- A. **Psalm 9:2, 4-5**: “I will be glad and exult in you; / I will sing praise to your name, O Most High...For you have maintained my just cause; / you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment. / You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish; / you have blotted out their name forever and ever.”
- B. **Psalm 65: 1-4**: “Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, / and to you shall vows be performed. / O you who hears prayer, / to you shall all flesh come. / When iniquities prevail against me, / you atone for our transgressions. / Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, / to dwell in your courts! / We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, / the holiness of your temple!”
- C. This moves into a different concept about when to pray. The other three were chronological and demonstrated principles about the psalmists’ relationships with God. This is more emotional. Too often, when times are good, people forget God. They forget how much they need God. Things are going well and we begin to take the blessing for granted, forgetting that every good gift comes from God.
- D. When life was going great, the psalmists were praying. They prayed in the morning, in the evening, at night, and throughout the day. They did not forget who was responsible for the good times. They did not forget their connection and from whom all blessing comes. We must do the same.

VI. The psalmists prayed in bad times.

- A. **Psalm 71:4**: “Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, / from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.”
- B. **Psalm 88:3-5**: “For my soul is full of troubles, / and my life draws near to Sheol. / I am counted among those who go down to the pit; / I am a man who has no strength, / like one set loose among the dead, / like the slain that lie in the grave, / like those whom you remember no more, / for they are cut off from your hand.”
- C. While some forget God when times are good, others turn their back on God when times are bad. Not the psalmists. The psalmists recognized God is the ruler of the universe. He is in control. If anyone could help them when times are bad, God can. While they were often upset that God had not already done something about their turmoil and their laments are spotted with questions about why God had not already acted, they did not turn their backs on God. Rather, when times got tough, they turned even closer to Him.
- D. We must do the same. When times are bad, we need to recognize that the only real place for help is God. God will see us through. He cares about us, and, in His time, He will deliver us.

VII. The psalmists prayed at all times and in response to every kind of situation.

- A. This survey of when the psalmists prayed is not meant to be earth-shattering or even shocking. I’m sure that what we’ve uncovered is pretty much what you expected.
- B. However, I wanted us to see this real life example of what Paul advised us in **I Thessalonians 5:16-18**: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” This doesn’t mean that we are on our knees in prayer every second of every day. It means that we are like the psalmists. Our days aren’t complete without prayer. Prayer is a repeated and continual part of our lives because our relationship with God is the anchor for our life.

Conclusion:

If we are going to pray like the psalmists, we must learn to pray when they did. Not because we have to have their prayer schedule, but because we need to have the mindset and attitudes that led to those schedules. While our actual schedule may vary, we need the same motivations. Then our schedule will be good.

ⁱ All references are taken from the English Standard Version.