

Day 349 - FRIDAY: January 26th

Psalms 140:1-13 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men, Who plan evil things in their hearts; They continually gather together for war. They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; The poison of asps is under their lips. Selah Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; Preserve me from violent men, Who have purposed to make my steps stumble. The proud have hidden a snare for me, and cords; They have spread a net by the wayside; They have set traps for me. Selah I said to the LORD: "You are my God; Hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle. Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked; Do not further his wicked scheme, Lest they be exalted. Selah "As for the head of those who surround me, Let the evil of their lips cover them; Let burning coals fall upon them; Let them be cast into the fire, Into deep pits, that they rise not up again. Let not a slanderer be established in the earth; Let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow him." I know that the LORD will maintain The cause of the afflicted, And justice for the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; The upright shall dwell in Your presence.

Psalms 141:1-10 NKJV

A Psalm of David. LORD, I cry out to You; Make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice wicked works With men who work iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies. Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let

my head not refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked. Their judges are overthrown by the sides of the cliff, And they hear my words, for they are sweet. Our bones are scattered at the mouth of the grave, As when one plows and breaks up the earth. But my eyes are upon You, O GOD the Lord; In You I take refuge; Do not leave my soul destitute. Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, And from the traps of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, While I escape safely.

Psalms 142:1-7 NKJV

A Contemplation Of David. A Prayer When He Was in the Cave. I cry out to the LORD with my voice; With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication. I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, Then You knew my path. In the way in which I walk They have secretly set a snare for me. Look on my right hand and see, For there is no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul. I cried out to You, O LORD: I said, "You are my refuge, My portion in the land of the living. Attend to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, That I may praise Your name; The righteous shall surround me, For You shall deal bountifully with me."

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 140:

The UCG reading program states: "We now come within the final collection of Davidic psalms (Psalm 138-145) to its central sequence of five prayers in which David seeks deliverance from

wicked enemies (140-144). The first of these, Psalm 140, is a lamenting plea for preservation from the plotting of evil, violent men and a call for divine retribution. The structure of the psalm is easy to discern. There are four stanzas (verses 1-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-11), the first three ending with "Selah" and the last followed by a two-verse conclusion (verses 12-13).

The first two stanzas set up the problem David is faced with. It is interesting to note that the same words are used for the second line in both the first and second stanzas: "Preserve me from violent men" (verses 1, 4). The violent here may intend physical brutality, but their method of attack is verbal—through deceit and slander (see verse 3; compare verses 9, 11). David experienced a number of such incidents in his life.

In the third stanza, David says he has appealed to the Lord in complete trust (verse 6-7). He knows that the One who has "covered" or shielded (NIV) his head in actual physical battles will protect him in this current "battle" (verse 7). With this confidence, he asks that God not grant success to the schemes of his enemies (verse 8). As noted in regard to the previous psalm, Jesus' instruction in the New Testament to bless and pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44) does not mean praying for their success in opposing and harming us.

In the fourth stanza David calls for a curse on the offenders. Whereas God covered or protected David's head in past battles (again, see verse 7), David calls for the head of his enemies to be covered only with the evil of their own lips—that is, for their scheming and slander against him to come back on them. Indeed, this is the decreed penalty in the law for bearing false witness against another (see Deuteronomy 19:16-21). David as God's prophet is pronouncing this judgment. In another psalm, David

foretold that burning coals and fire would rain down on the wicked (Psalm 11:6), as Sodom and Gomorrah experienced (Genesis 19:24). Here that same penalty is called for (Psalm 140:10), though the sense may be figurative of a calamitous divine judgment. As David's enemies tried to trip him up to cause him to fall into traps (verse 5), David calls for *them* to fall into deep pits "that they rise not up again" (verse 10). This too may be figurative—of being sunk into ineffectiveness. If it implies their deaths, then their not rising again would refer to them no longer being alive to cause trouble in the present world—not to them never being in a future resurrection. The next psalm likewise calls for the wicked to fall into their own nets (Psalm 141:9-10).

David ends Psalm 140 in verses 12-13 on a confident note, assured that God will bring justice to the needy and afflicted and that God's people will dwell with Him in perpetual gratitude.”

[END]

Psalm 141:

The UCG reading program states: “Psalm 141 is the second in the sequence of five psalms of David seeking deliverance from the wicked. David also prays here that he be kept from taking part with them in their evildoings.

He begins with an urgent call for God to hear his plea (verse 1) and declares his intention to present his prayer, with hands raised toward heaven, as incense and as the evening sacrifice, desiring that God accept it as such (verse 2).

Incense was burned on the golden altar within the tabernacle—later the temple—every morning and evening to infuse the sanctuary with a sweet smell (see Exodus 30:1-10). Furthermore, frankincense was included with burnt offerings (see Exodus 30:1-10, 34-38; Leviticus 2:2)—adding fragrance to the savor of the

sacrificial meat being cooked. Later in Scripture, the burning of incense is said to represent the prayers of God's people ascending to Him (Revelation 5:8; Revelation 8:3-4).

The evening sacrifice was a regular daily burnt offering "for a sweet aroma" (Numbers 28:3-8), symbolizing, along with the morning sacrifice, regular and ongoing devotion to God. In considering the analogy, realize that "the evening sacrifice took time, it took care, it took preparation, it was extremely costly, every action in it was clearly thought out and performed in logical sequence" (George Knight, *Psalms*, comments on Psalm 141:1-10).

David's specification of the *evening* sacrifice rather than the morning one or both may indicate that he spoke or composed this prayer in the evening—perhaps at the time of the evening sacrifice. It could even be that David routinely gave this or a like prayer as part of his reflection at the end of the day over an extended period of time—that is, it may have become his own personal evening sacrifice. It is worth noting that "both Ezra (Ezra 9) and Daniel (Daniel 9) prayed at the time of the evening offering. After the second temple was built, this psalm was read when the evening sacrifices were offered and the lamps were lit in the holy place" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Exultant: Psalms 90-150*, note on Psalm 141:1-2).

Before praying for God to deal with the wicked and to rescue him from them, David first turns to the issue of his own human proclivities, asking God to help him avoid any deviation toward wickedness in his own character. This includes safeguarding his speech (verse 3)—for control over one's tongue through God's help is a huge part of godly character (compare James 3). It also means not eating of the wicked's "delicacies" (Psalm 141:4) or

"dainties" (KJV). David is likely saying one of two things here. Either he does not want to get drawn into enjoying the "finer things" that come as a product of living the evil lifestyle common among the rich and powerful. Or he does not want to be someone who is welcomed as a guest among such people—dining in their homes and enjoying their hospitality.

If he starts leaning this way at all, David prays that the "righteous"—either a godly person or the righteous *One*, God—will as a kindness "strike" him (knock some sense into him) through rebuke. This will be like fine oil on the head, a gesture of rich hospitality that he *will not* refuse (verse 5)—in contrast to the fineries of the wicked that he *intends to* refuse.

The Hebrew text then becomes somewhat difficult to understand—from the end of verse 5 through verse 7. Translators have rendered this section in various ways over the centuries. The primary controversy centers on to whom these verses are referring.

Many believe the last line of verse 5 refers to the righteous—that David is praying for them "in their calamities" (KJV). However, the plural "their" more likely seems to refer back to the workers of iniquity in verse 4 (since the "righteous...him" in verse 5 is singular). And the KJV "in their calamities" is reinterpreted as "in [the face of] their evils." This is the sense followed in most modern versions.

If that is correct, then verse 6 (which some take to refer to the sufferings of the righteous) would, as seems more likely, also refer to the wicked: "When their judges [the leaders of the wicked] are overthrown in stony places, they [the wicked] shall hear my words; for they [my words] are sweet" (KJV). The word translated "sweet" can also mean "pleasing" or "agreeable." Some take this

to mean that the general populace of the wicked will actually be willing to listen to David after their rulers fall. Others believe the meaning is that the wicked are going to be forced by the fall of their leaders to see that David's words were "well spoken" (NIV)—whether that's agreeable to them or not.

Moving on to verse 7, there is again scholarly disagreement. Whose bones are scattered at the mouth of the grave? David mentions "*our* bones," though many prefer to have him say "*their* bones"—that is, those of the wicked. The NIV adds to the beginning of this statement the words "They will say" and interprets verse 7 as quoting the wicked—the description here seeming to fit the wicked rulers cast down in verse 6. Then again, others see no evidence for any quotation in verse 7 and understand David to be referring figuratively to the devastated state of himself and others of the righteous who are persecuted by the wicked (compare Psalm 143:3, Psalm 143:7)—giving the basis for the stated judgment on the wicked in the previous verse (Psalm 141:6) and the reason for his call for deliverance and justice in the next verses (8-10).

In these concluding verses, David turns his eyes to God, his only refuge from the intrigues of the wicked (verses 8-9). Similar to the previous psalm, he asks that the wicked be caught up in their own plotting (verse 10; compare Psalm 140:5, Psalm 140:9-10)—while he is set free into safety." [END]

Psalm 143:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 143 is the fourth in the sequence of five psalms of David (within the collection of eight) wherein David prays for deliverance from enemies. It is classified as one of the seven penitential psalms (Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). These psalms have in common an acknowledgment of

sin (Psalm 32:5; Psalm 8:18; Psalm 51:2-4; Psalm 130:3) and/or a reference to deserved punishment (Psalm 6:1; Psalm 38:1; Psalm 102:10; Psalm 143:2).

In this psalm, David doesn't acknowledge specific sins but is clearly aware of his own failings, asking to be passed over in judgment. He knows that such judgment would find him guilty, as he, like everyone, has sinned (compare Psalm 143:2; Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23). So he pleads for mercy, basing his appeal on God's faithfulness and righteousness (Psalm 143:1) in dealing with one who is His servant (verse 2; compare verses 11-12).

David further implies that he is unable to withstand judgment given his already-overwhelmed state, crushed to the depths of despair by enemy persecution that brought him seemingly near death (verses 3-4, 7). Although David is probably referring to a human enemy (verse 3) and enemies (verse 12) who have persistently hounded him, he may have in mind as well the spiritual Adversary, Satan the devil, and his demons, who are also associated with darkness and the pit (see Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 20:1-2).

David likens his yearning for God to dry ground that needs rain (verse 6). Interestingly, rain in other passages symbolizes God's Word and teachings (Isaiah 55:6-13; Deuteronomy 32:1-3), the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 44:3-4), righteousness (Hosea 10:12) and the coming of God (Hosea 6:1, Hosea 6:3). David needs all of this. In desperation he cries out for God's immediate intervention. He cannot rely on his own overwhelmed and failing spirit (Psalm 143:4, Psalm 143:7), referring to his weakened strength of mind. He requires the help of God's good Spirit (see verse 10). He needs an understanding of how to go forward (verse 8), rescue

from his enemies (verse 9), instruction in righteousness (verse 10), and relief and empowerment (verse 11).

As in the opening of the psalm (verses 1-2), David again bases his plea for help (including justice on enemies) on the fact that he is God's servant (verses 11-12)—stressing here

God's *hesed*, rendered "mercy" (verse 12, NKJV) but also translatable as "loyal love" or "devotion." The point is that God has made promises of steadfast love and help to those who are His servants—even, as verse 11 implies, staking His name, His reputation, on this." [END]