

SBC – July 14, 2024

Psalm 36 (NKJV)

“Prayer for Deliverance from the Wicked”

Psalm 36 (NKJV)

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David the Servant of the LORD.

David wrote with music in mind. He intended this to be used in the context of worship and so he addresses this Psalm “To the Chief Musician”.

It has been noted that in both Psalm 18 as well as Psalm 36 David addresses himself as “The Servant of the LORD”. And it is further noted that David apparently wrote Psalm 18 in his old age while writing Psalm 36 in his young age. Thus, from youth to old age David saw himself as the Servant of the LORD. David was not here to serve his own purposes but that of YHWH. David did not live for himself but rather for his LORD.

Slide # 1

Psalm 36 “Prayer for Deliverance from the Wicked”

vv. 1-4 - Musings on Human Depravity

vv. 5-9 – Musings on God’s Divine Attributes

vv. 10-12 – Dependence Upon God

1 An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.

The term “oracle” was used by the prophets in the OT to refer to “a divine utterance” given to them by God (cf. Mic. 4:6 – “says the LORD”; also cf. Gen. 22:16; Num. 14:28; 2 Sam. 23:1). Acts 2:30 refers to David as “a prophet” (that is one who receives inspired revelation from God). As such here in Psalm 36 he received divine insight into the depravity of mankind. Here we have revealed the very nature of wickedness. David is shown here how the wicked look at life and consequently how they live. This is an inspired “x-ray” of the wicked heart.

Transgression is the idea of trespass or stepping over the line with God. To transgress is to rebelliously cross God. Note that some translate this as transgression that speaks within the heart of the sinner himself.

Slide # 2

Psalm 36:1 (LSB)

1 Transgression declares to the ungodly within his heart; There is no dread of God before his eyes.

The idea of “wicked” refers to moral rebels who do what is morally wrong before God. It is the idea of being morally bad or depraved. Such a person is ungodly – living contrary to God.

Whether understood as insight revealed to David or the musings of the wicked in his own heart the bottom line is where the wicked fundamentally go wrong is that they have NO FEAR of God. This is the underlying issue and why they transgress. They don’t recognize the boundaries God has put in place. They think they can live anyway they want. They don’t recognize God’s Lordship authority over them. They have no respect or reverence for God and it shows in their thoughts, their words, and their deeds.

Paul very possibly had this verse in view in Romans 3:10-18 where he gives a 14 point indictment of condemnation and gives “no fear of God” as the climactic defining trait.

Slide # 3

Romans 3:18 (NKJV)

18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

This is the ultimate defining reality of human depravity. Such people have persuaded themselves that God has no authority over them. They have SELF at the center of their universe and live accordingly.

They have no dread of the LORD; they sense no terror because of their actions, so they proceed in their wickedness.

– *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

2 For he flatters himself in his own eyes, When he finds out his iniquity and when he hates.

The NASB translates this verse in this way...

Psalm 36:2 (NASB)

2 For it flatters him in his own eyes, Concerning the discovery of his iniquity and the hatred of it.

The sense here is that he deals with the knowledge of his sin in this way.

Instead of hating his sins as is indicative of the true believer as seen in Romans 7 (cf. Rom. 7:15), instead of that he flatters himself in his own eyes. To flatter yourself is to tell yourself things you want to hear but are not true. This person says to himself “I am okay” when he ought to fall on his face in repentance. The essence of self-flattery is the person telling himself that he is better than he actually is.

The depraved heart deals with sin by flattering himself by telling himself he will not be held accountable for it by God. Remember he has no fear of God. Charles Spurgeon said, “He who makes little of God makes much of himself.”

We usually think of “flattery” in terms of coming from others when they tell you things they don’t really mean as a means of manipulation. But self-flattery is really a form of self-deception as it tells self-flattering things that are not true. To tell yourself that your sin is no big deal is a damning thing!

But this is how depravity soothes the conscience – it lies to self in flattery.

“To smooth over one’s own conduct to one’s conscience (which is the meaning of the Hebrew) is to smooth one’s own path to hell.”
(Spurgeon)

The world constantly says, “follow your heart” but the Bible says, “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). Better follow God and His Word and not your own self-flattering deceitful heart. We all like to give ourselves good reviews.

3 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise and to do good.

The character of the wicked is seen in what he says and what he does. His deceitful words and his wicked deeds match. He has ceased to be wise and do good. He has completely turned to his own depraved way.

4 He devises wickedness on his bed; He sets himself in a way that is not good; He does not abhor evil.

His thoughts are continually wicked, devising and plotting wickedness even on his bed. Instead of meditating on God he is plotting evil and he no longer hates his evil ways. This is KEY. A true believer may fall into sin, but when they do they hate it. The depraved rebel no longer hates sin.

Slide # 4**Romans 7:15 (NKJV)**

15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; **but what I hate, that I do.**

The sewer of depravity is a terrible reality to focus on. It is real and it is good to have some awareness and not be naive, but for the believer our edification and encouragement comes from focusing on God. And so that is where David now turns for relief. He now focuses on the attributes of God and what a GREAT CONTRAST it is.

5 Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

The first attribute David deals with is God's mercy which is the Hebrew word "hesed". This word is found three times in this Psalm as seen in verses 5, 7, and 10. This word is often associated with God's covenant faithfulness and is often translated as "loyal love", "steadfast love" or "lovingkindness". It emphasizes God's unchanging faithfulness!

"The most important of the attributes from the perspective of this psalm is *hesed*, usually translated 'unfailing love' or 'lovingkindness.'"

-James Montgomery Boice

Note "mercy" is parallel here to "faithfulness". Consistent with Hebrew poetry that same thing is often stated in two similar ways. And note in both cases God's mercy and faithfulness is to the heavens/clouds.

The idea is that it is very exalted and high. It is immeasurable. It is as high as one can possibly conceive. Speaking of "hesed" A.W. Pink says this:

What a word is this! "Thy faithfulness extends to the clouds." Far above all finite comprehension is the unchanging faithfulness of God. Everything about God is great, vast, incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits His word. To every declaration of promise of prophecy the Lord has exactly adhered, every engagement of covenant or threatening He will make good, for "God is not a man, that He should lie...(Num. 23:19 AV). – **A.W. Pink**

6 Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are a great deep; O LORD, You preserve man and beast.

God's righteousness is like the great mountains He has made – stable, steadfast, immovable, thoroughly dependable. He can always be depended on to do the thing that is right. ... God's judgments are like the great deep. This means that His decrees, decisions, thoughts and plans are wonderfully profound, complex, and wise.

– *William MacDonald*

Slide # 5

Romans 11:33 (NKJV)

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

Mercy...faithfulness...righteousness...judgments: David can only describe these attributes of God with the biggest things he can think of – the heavens, the clouds that fill the sky, the great mountains, and the great deep of the sea. – *David Guzik*

These attributes are so great as to be awesomely immeasurable! And then David applies the truth of God's immeasurable faithfulness to His preservation of man and beast. This is seen in God's providential provision.

Think of all that is involved in caring for so many human beings and so many animals, birds, and fish. As for man, God numbers the very hairs of his head; as for the insignificant sparrow, not a single one falls to the ground without your heavenly Father!

– *William MacDonald*

7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.

On a roll, thinking of God's providential provision David circles back to hesed – God's faithful lovingkindness. He describes it as precious or valuable! And those who know God, who have come to appreciate God for Who He is put their trust in Him because of WHO He is as the faithful God Who takes care of them.

The shadow of His wings is a portrayal of protection (cf. Ps. 17:8; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:3; Ruth 2:12; Matt. 23:37). This descriptive metaphor is often found in the Scriptures. God is trustworthy and He is powerful and therefore people of faith put their trust in His faithful care.

Slide # 6

Ruth 2:12 (NKJV)

12 The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, **under whose wings you have come for refuge.**

This is a picture of TRUST in the OT.

8 They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.

The wicked are never satisfied (cf. Prov. 27:20). But God abundantly satisfies those who trust in Him from the fullness of His house. God is not a poor God. He is able to abundantly supply.

He gives drink to His own from His rivers of pleasures. The word “pleasures” is a form of the Hebrew word for “Eden”. It was in the garden of Eden that mankind enjoyed perfect fellowship with the intimate presence of God. We were created for God and it is in fellowship with Him that we drink from the rivers of His pleasure.

Slide # 7

Psalm 16:11 (NKJV)

11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; **At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

Joyful satisfaction is in store for those who TRUST in God. What a contrast with the wicked who are never fulfilled or happy. They are a miserable lot.

Spurgeon cited a story regarding a man who moved his family to a much larger and better-equipped home. His young son kept running through the house, yelling, “***Is this ours, Father? And is this ours?***” He then observed: “The child did not say [Is this] ‘yours?’

This will be one of our great joys in heaven when we come to our Father's house. With unmeasured satisfaction we will have the right to roam heaven and say, "***Is this ours? And is this ours?***" and say it unto eternity. – **David Guzik**

Slide # 8

Revelation 21:7 (NKJV)

7 He who overcomes **shall inherit all things**, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Indeed, God's children are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of God's house, and He gives them drink from the river of His pleasures. Taking up our cross and following Christ may involve a cup of sorrow but it can't compare with the promised rivers of pleasures found in God for all eternity!

9 For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.

This is a glorious verse rich with meaning! God is the fountain of life – meaning He is the source of life.

It is only in His light that we see light. Many believe that this verse very possibly was special to the apostle John as he highlighted (no pun intended) that idea of LIGHT as found in Jesus.

Slide # 9

John 1:4–5 (ESV)

4 In him was life, and the **life was the light of men.**

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:9 (ESV)

9 The **true light, which gives light to everyone,** was coming into the world.

Jesus is the light of the world (Jn. 8:12). It's only by God's light (Jesus) that we see light (truth). Apart from God's illuminating truth we would never see.

Just as natural light reveals things in their true form, so the light of God enables us to see things as He does. It enables us to form correct estimates of spiritual realities, of the world, of others, and of ourselves. – **William MacDonald**

The story is told about a great landscape painter who said, “When I find myself in one of Nature’s beautiful places, I grow angry with my pictures.”

To really see things as they really are we need God’s light. It is only through the lens of His light that we see light. Real light is found in God. Real insight is found in God’s revelation of truth.

Life, satisfaction, lasting pleasure, insight, meaning and purpose are all found in God as He is the source of life and light. It’s only in sharing in God’s life that we have true light!

10 Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.

In effect, David asks God to continue being Who He is and doing what He does. He asks God to continue being faithful to those who know Him and of course God can’t be anything but faithful. Sometimes we ask for what is a given, but it reinforces in our own hearts to what we already know to be true.

Note the parallelism between “*those who know you*” and “*the upright in heart*”. Again, this is an example of Hebrew poetry in which the same thing is repeated but only in a little different way. Those who truly know God are the upright in heart.

Note that God’s lovingkindness and righteousness applies to the “upright in heart” which is a way of saying those who truly know God in contrast to the described depravity in the first four verses. It is those who truly know God that can claim God’s faithful care and promises.

11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

Verse 11 serves to explain verse 10. The specific way in which David is desiring God to continue His lovingkindness and doing what is right towards His own by restraining the proud and wicked who are trying to drive him away.

And then we have the assurance of answered prayer in verse 12.

12 There the workers of iniquity have fallen; They have been cast down and are not able to rise.

There is some discussion about where “There” is found here. Some think it refers to their pride and wickedness. There in their sinfulness the workers of iniquity have fallen – been cast down will not make a comeback. That is certainly possible.

But another idea that flows nicely with the context and flow of David’s thought is that “There” in this case refers to answered prayer. It is in answer to his prayer as seen in verse 11 that the workers of iniquity have fatally fallen and will not be able to rise again.

Slide # 10

ANSWERED PRAYER....

- v. 10 Continue your lovingkindness...
- v. 11 Deal with the proud/wicked...
- v. 12 THERE [in answered prayer] they have fallen

People are depraved and the chief characteristic of depravity unleashed is “**no fear of God**”. This is true, but life for the believer counters the wickedness of man by focusing on God’s immeasurable attributes of Mercy...faithfulness...righteousness...and judgment.

Those who know God look to Him in His faithfulness to deal with the wicked and in due time He does. In due time the proudful wicked are going down and there is no recovery!

God takes care of His own and He answers prayer!

Focus on God! This is how God’s own cope with life.

It is there that we find life and light.

Psalm 36:7 (NKJV)

7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.

God is worthy of our trust! Come what may let us stay focused on Him!