

To You O Lord I Lift My Soul
Psalm 25

Turn to Psalm 25. This psalm covers a lot of ground. It puts together different things that we don't usually find in the same psalm. That's what makes Psalm 25 important. Let's read it.

*To you O LORD I lift my soul; O my God, I trust in you;
Do not let me be shamed, nor let my enemies triumph over me.
No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame,
but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause.*

*Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.
Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good.*

*Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.
He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. All the ways of the Lord
are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.
For the sake of your name, Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.*

*Who, then, are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.
They will spend their days in prosperity, and their descendants will inherit the land.
The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.
My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare.*

*Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.
Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish.
Look on my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.*

*See how many enemies I have, and how fiercely they hate me!
Guard my soul and rescue me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.
May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in you.*

Deliver Israel, O God, from all their troubles!

1 To You O Lord I Lift my Soul – 25:1–3

The first four lines give us a solid foundation for life, especially when life is frightening. We'll go carefully over the first four lines, and then move more quickly after that.

First line: "To you O Lord I lift my soul." Picture yourself taking your own soul in your hands and reaching your arms up toward Yahveh. Imagine yourself doing this. You lift your soul to God because you want him to take care of it. You have enemies and situations that you are not sure you can survive. So you lift your soul to God to put it in his hands, so that he will guard it and keep it and protect it.

The second line says, "O my God, I trust in you." This is not as graphic as the first line, but it says the same thing in more straightforward language. "My God, I trust in you, I'm counting on you."

Now, let's go to enemies in the fourth line: "Don't let my enemies triumph over me." Later, verse 19 says, "see how many enemies I have, and how fiercely they hate me." Let's widen the word "enemy" to mean any person or situation that feels like it could destroy you. What is it in your life that could be the end of you? Perhaps it is your own weakness. What do you fear?

Paul in Ephesians 6 says: "Stand against the devil's schemes. Our struggles are not against flesh and blood. Our struggles are against the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms." People, we do have enemies, and we are wrestling against these enemies in the situations of our daily life.

Third line: "Do not let me be ashamed." This does not mean "keep me out of all embarrassing situations." That would be nice, but it is not what the psalm is asking. It means, don't let me be ashamed for counting on you to keep me safe from my enemies.

Here's the thing, people: if we can pray these four lines honestly, and make that our response to enemies, we are safe. If we come to God this way, our enemies will *not* have the last word. These two opening verses have immense spiritual power, because God will never turn away from someone who comes to him like this.

We don't have to be stronger than our enemies. We don't have to be cunning and devious just to survive. We have to lift our soul to the King of Kings, put it in his hands. Then we can know for sure that our enemies will not have the last word. At the end, we'll be so glad that we trusted in him.

*To you O LORD I lift my soul;
O my God, I trust in you;
Do not let me be shamed,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.*

2 Show Me Your Ways, Lord, Teach Me Your Paths – 25:4–5

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

When we put our souls into God’s hands, into his care, we agree that we will live in his ways. *Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior.* We are not asking here for help with difficult decisions. We’re asking for help with daily lifestyle. We ask God to show us his ways. We ask him to guide us, because we know very well we are disobedient and rebellious.

I take comfort from lines like this, when we ask God to teach us and guide us. I need that so badly. He tells us to ask for it, and that brings me relief. He is God our Saviour, and our hope is in him all day long, and that means he needs to show us his ways and teach us his paths.

3 Remember your Love, Don’t Remember my Sins – 25:6–7

Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good.

Three separate times this psalm confesses sin and asks forgiveness. Here we ask God to remember some things and not other things. *Do* remember your great mercy and love. *Do not* remember my sins and rebellious ways. *Do* remember me according to your love.

Now we see why we ask God to show us his ways, and teach us, and guide us. We’re sinners, and we’re rebellious. “The sins of my youth.” In this prayer, we remember that we did things that we cannot forget. We still wince when we remember what we have done. Because we remember our failures, we ask God to remember his mercy and love, but not to remember our sins and rebellions. God wants us to pray like this. That’s good news.

4 He Instructs Sinners, He Guides the Humble in What is Right – 25:8–9

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right, and teaches them his way.

These lines are not prayer. These words show solid confidence in God’s mercy. Because of God’s own character, because he is good and upright, he instructs sinners in his ways. “Humble” in verse 9 means people that know they are sinners. *“He instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.”*

This psalm is not for people who think their spiritual lives are going pretty well. This is a psalm for people who are discouraged about themselves. But notice: there is no grovelling before God, no bargaining with God, no promises to do better in the future.

There is also great confidence in God's goodness. God is entirely ready to work with sinners who will talk to him like this. He instructs sinners and he guides the humble in what is right.

5 Those who Keep his Covenant – 25:10–11

All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant. For the sake of your name, Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

First of all, this is a psalm for a covenant child of God. God has said to us, "if you will be my people, I will be your God," and we have said to him, "you will be our God, and we will be your people." That's covenant. We repeat that every Sunday in our Lord's Supper.

This psalm is a good picture of covenant faithfulness, the whole psalm. Listen to these two lines, one right after the other: *All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant. For the sake of your name, Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.*

This is the second confession of sin in this psalm. When we read this psalm, we know we are those who keep the demands of God's covenant, and in the same breath we ask God to forgive our great iniquity. How can those go together? We are those who keep our covenant with God, and we ask forgiveness for great iniquity? The answer: it is all part of keeping the covenant with God. It is a mind-bender, isn't it? These two lines are side by side in this psalm, so let's pay attention.

We feel sorry for these Old Testament believers, living under the law of Moses. That's naïve. This psalm is so certain about God's goodness to sinners. All the ways of the Lord are faithful and loving. Forgiving our iniquities is a part of God's covenant love for us and his covenant faithfulness to us.

6 Those who Fear the Lord – 25:12–15

Who, then, are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose. They will spend their days in prosperity, and their descendants will inherit the land. The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them. My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare.

In these lines we hear about "covenant" for the second time. We should take this psalm, all of it, as showing us how normal healthy covenant life looked. This is how faithful covenant life worked.

These verses also mention the fear of the Lord two times. "*Who, then, are those who fear the Lord?... The Lord confides in those who fear him.*" To find out what it means to fear the Lord, read the sentences before and after the Bible mentions "the fear of the Lord." What are those sentences talking about? That will be the fear of the Lord.

Psalm 25 tells us about the fear of the Lord. Verse 12 and verse 14 tell us that this whole psalm is the prayer of a person who fears the Lord. But there is no actual fear of God in this psalm! Even though three times this psalm confesses sin, even there we don't find any actual fear of God. We see the opposite. There is steady confidence in God's loving and faithful forgiveness.

The fear of the Lord almost always means living faithfully before God. It is not about fear. It is about how we live. Proverbs 1 tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. But Proverbs says nothing about being afraid of God. Proverbs tells us how to live in God's way.

Right now we're in Psalm 25. Psalm 25 gives us different sides of life with God. Take Psalm 25 as a picture of how the fear of the Lord looks in daily life. It is a warm, respectful, confident relationship with God.

In a different direction, listen to verse 15 again: *My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare.* Are you in any kind of situation that threatens to unravel you? And you don't know how to get out? *“My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare.”*

7 Turn to Me, Take Away All My Sins – 25:16–18

Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish. Look on my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.

In the previous section, the psalm told us about the blessings of being in covenant with God. But in these verses we get a different feel entirely: lonely, afflicted, troubles of my heart, anguish, distress. And for the third time: take away all my sins. All of them, Lord. Take away all my sins. It sounds like sins are part of the reason for the other troubles.

Turn to me. Relieve the troubles of my heart. Free me from my anguish. Take away all my sins.

8 See all my Enemies, Guard and Rescue Me – 25:19–22

See how many enemies I have, and how fiercely they hate me! Guard my soul and rescue me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in you. Deliver Israel, O God, from all their troubles!

The psalm ends much like it began. So many enemies, God, so guard my soul, don't let me be put to shame. My hope, Lord, is in you.

Take notice of verse 21: *May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in you.* Three times this psalm includes asking forgiveness. Don't remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways. Forgive my iniquity, though it is great. Take away all my sins.

At the same time, when we pray this we know that we are keeping the demands of God's covenant. And, we know we are those who fear the Lord. And at the end we tell God: *May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in you.* We confess sin three times, and in the same breath we are confidently one of the covenant people in good standing with God. That's where this psalm takes us. This begins with, "to you, O Lord, I lift my soul." Amen.

PRAYER: To you O LORD, we lift our souls; O God, we trust in you;
Do not let us be shamed, do not let any of our enemies triumph over us.
No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame,
but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause.

Show us your ways, Lord. Teach us your paths.
Guide us in your truth and teach us, for you are God our Savior,
and our hope is in you all day long.
Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.
Do not remember our sins and our rebellious ways;
According to your love remember us, for you, Lord, are good.

BENEDICTION: May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.