

## The Man Who Will Not Compromise

### Psalm 141

**Introduction:** Prayer is a difficult Christian discipline. It is also an essential Christian discipline for a healthy spiritual life. Jesus gives us a “model” for prayer in the greatest sermon ever preached, His Sermon on the Mount. We find it in Matthew 6:9-13 and its parallel account in Luke 11:2-4. We also find other places in the Bible where we receive instruction in the discipline of prayer. A quartet is found from the pen of King David in Psalms 140-143.

Psalm 141 is, “a Psalm of petition, a prayer for sanctification and protection” (Ross, 853). David asks the Lord for guidance and deliverance as he seeks to live a life without compromise to the glory of God. He knows he needs God’s help. He knows he needs the correction of good friends. He knows all of this is essential if he is to live a life of wisdom and not foolishness (cf. Matt. 7:24-28; James 3:13-18).

The man who will stay true to His Lord, no matter what, needs a consistent prayer life and an intentional prayer life. Five particulars can be identified in Psalm 141, a psalm in which every word in every sentence is a prayer.

## I. Ask the Lord for help      141:1-2

A life without compromise will run to the Lord. It will also ask the Lord to run to Him (v. 1)! This man or woman recognizes their need of the Lord if they are to stand strong and courageous, especially in times of trouble and temptation.

Twice David calls to the Lord in verse 1. This is an example of Hebrew poetic parallelism with line two adding specificity to line one. There is desperation and urgency in his voice as he asks the Lord to “hurry to help me” and “listen to my voice.”

Urgency and desperation are complemented by worship in verse 2. The Lord he runs to is the Lord he worships. “May my prayer be set before you as incense” means let my prayer be a sweet aroma and a pleasing offering. Warren Wiersbe notes, “Incense is a picture of prayer going up to the Lord (Rev. 5:8; 8:4)” [*The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry*, 370].

“The raising of hands” (cf. Ps. 134:2) was a demonstration of worship and adoration (see also Ps 28:2; 63:4; I Tim 2:8). Reference to the “evening offering” may indicate this was a prayer prayed at evening worship or even at night as David prepared to go to bed; a prayer he voiced after a long and difficult day. Patrick Reardon makes a beautiful Christological connection with the evening offering or “sacrifice” (ESV) when he writes, “the Old Testament’s “evening sacrifice” was a type of and preparation for that true oblation rendered

at the evening of the world, when the Lamb of God, nailed to the Cross, lifted His hands to the Father in sacrificial prayer for the salvation of mankind. This was the true lifting up of the hands, the definitive evening sacrifice offered on Golgotha, by which God marked His seal on human destiny” (*Christ in the Psalms*, 281-82).

## **II. Ask the Lord for wisdom            141:3-4**

James 1:5 says, “Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask of God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.”

Wisdom is something we should ask the Lord for daily and specifically. It is the ability to see life as God sees it and then respond as He would.

David highlights several areas where wisdom from above is essential (again cf. James 3:13-18). First, he asks God to give him wisdom with his words (v. 3).

Again, with beautiful Hebrew poetic parallelism David asks God to temper his tongue and muzzle his mouth. “Lord, set up a guard for my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips.”

James 3:1-12 provides an expanded commentary on the trouble with the tongue. It informs us that without the Lord’s help, it is “set on fire by hell” (3:6).

Second, he asks the Lord to give him wisdom in his heart (v. 4). “Do not let my heart turn (ESV, “incline”) to any evil thing.” The Bible repeatedly addresses the importance of the heart. Proverbs 4:23 reminds us, “Guard your heart

[above all else], for it is the source of life.” And, Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?”

David knew, as must we, the deceptive power of the heart; the real you and me on the inside. He knew he could not trust it. He needed the Lord to transform and guard it! He knew we all need a “spiritual heart transplant” which only the gospel of Jesus Christ can give us.

Third, David asks for wisdom in his actions (v. 4). He points out the close connection between what we think and what we do (cf. Jesus words in Mark 7:21-23). If my heart is leaning or turning toward evil, it will eventually do evil.

Thus he prays, “Do not let me perform evil acts with men who commit sin. Do not let me feast on their delicacies.” Protect my heart and direct my actions.

And, keep me away from bad influencers, no matter how enticing and attractive they are! Satan often tempts us through our companions, the people we hang out with. He also makes their sin look fun and harmless. He never shows us the dark side!

David warns us concerning those who are wicked and sinful. He warns us that their evil can be camouflaged with delicacies. These may be men of influence and status, popular and powerful, whose wealth and position allow them to enjoy the “finer things of life” as the world measures things. In our own strength and “will power” we will give in and maybe even sell out. We must

ask the Lord to not allow our heart any inclination in this direction. Proverbs 14:12 is a wise warning!

### **III. Ask the Lord for good friends                      141:5**

One of the great blessings of life is good friends, friends you can trust guarding your back in a foxhole. The longer I live, the more I realize such friends are 1) few in number, 2) valuable beyond words and 3) essential to a consistent walk with God over a lifetime. Friends influence you. No debate. No question about it. Verse five stands in contrast to verse four. The wicked and sinful men of verse four are much different than the righteous men who act in “faithful love” in verse five.

David says seek out friends who love you enough to rebuke you even when it hurts. The image of correction is powerful: “Let the righteous one strike me.” You need friends who will strike you, hit you with hard but healing words. It is actually an act of “hesed” (*NASV*, “kindness”; *CSB*, “faithful love”).

In *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*, such love, whose origin is always God, is said to be, “never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.” We all need the rebukes and correction from friends who love us. Now, that raises a very good question: How do you handle rebuke and correction? It is not easy for any of us to receive it. David was no different. David has to ask the Lord to help him in this.

“Lord, let him strike me. Lord, let him rebuke me.” “Lord, let me see it as *hesed*.” Lord, let me receive it as excellent oil and an act of honor and respect. My brother , my sister loves me enough to tell me the truth and make me better for You! Thank you! Praise the Lord! Don’t let me refuse it. Help me to receive it. Help me remember Proverbs 27:6, “The wounds of a friend are trustworthy.”

**IV. Ask the Lord for vindication.                    141:5-7**

- Once again we encounter what is called an imprecatory psalm where the psalmist prays in very strong language for God to judge his enemies.

Ultimately because of their evil, they are the enemies of God. These are men of power and authority, “judges” or “rulers” (VanGemeran, *Psalms* EBC, vol. 5, 973). David’s words are striking and startle our modern sensibilities. But, do not miss the redemptive note in this stanza tucked away at the end of v. 6.

David will continually pray against evil and those determined to do evil (v. 5). In fact his prayer “anticipates the destruction of the wicked rulers” in verses 6-7. (Ross, *Psalms*, 860). They “will be thrown off the side of the cliff” (v. 6). God will scatter their bones so that they do not even receive a decent burial (v. 7, VanGemeran, 973). In the context the word “Sheol” probably means the grave. All of this would point to their being under God’s

curse and judgment. One can/should hear the tremors of the end time judgments so graphically depicted in the apocalypse of Revelation 6-19, a judgment poured out by none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. However, such harsh words have a redemptive goal: that “the people will listen to my words,” find them pleasing, and come to their spiritual senses (v. 6). Derek Kidner says the verse “reinforces the resolve to strike no bargains with evil, by looking ahead to the time when such a stand will prove its point and win its following” (*Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 472). Alec Motyer adds, “When the stresses and strains are over, then will be the time to speak. Not gloatingly or in a triumphalist fashion, but soothing words that make for peace” (*Psalms by the Day*, 403).

#### **V. Ask the Lord for protection                    141:8-10**

David sees life as a titanic battle between good and evil, right and wrong, godliness and ungodliness. He knows that to engage in this battle is to run a risk and expose himself to danger. Yet as a man who will not compromise, he has no choice and neither do we. He also knows he dare not engage this battle without the help and protection of the Lord. Verses 8-10 begin with a confession but end with a petition.

David will keep his eyes on his king, “Yahweh my Adonai” (CSB, “LORD, my Lord”; *NIV*, “O Sovereign Lord”, v. 8). He will strive in all

circumstances to maintain a Godward, heavenly perspective (cf. Col. 3:1-4). And, he will “seek refuge,” protection and safety in the Lord. This moves him to pray, “do not let me die” (ESV, “leave me not defenseless”). Ross notes that the phrase, “to pour out,” translated in the CSB as “do not let me die,” is used “for physical death in Isaiah 53:12” (p. 861).

David continues his prayer in verse nine asking the Lord to “Protect me from the trap they have set for me and from the snares of evildoers.” He concludes in verse ten asking that Lord would, “Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by safely.”

David prays that those who plot to destroy him will be ensnared by their own evil devices (boomerang judgment), devices which God allows us, in grace, to safely escape. All of this is the Lord’s doing. Romans 12:19 provides a helpful New Testament insight in all of this, “Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God’s wrath, because it is written, vengeance belongs to me, I will repay, says the Lord.”

### **Conclusion:**

The man who will not compromise is a rare and unique individual. I am not sure I have ever met such a man who completely fulfills the portrait we see in Psalm 141. But then I turn to Jesus and I do meet such a man. Here I discover a man who in times of trouble:



- 1) Asked the Lord for help, for as Hebrews 5:7 teaches, “During His earthly life He offered prayers and appeals, with loud cries and tears, to the One who was able to save Him from death and He was heard because of His reverence.”
- 2) Asked the Lord for wisdom, for as Mark 1:35 teaches, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He got up, went out, and made His way to a deserted place. And He was praying there.”
- 3) Asked the Lord for good friends, for as Luke 6:12-13 says, “During those days He went out to the mountain to pray and spent all night in prayer to God. When daylight came He summoned His disciples and He chose 12 of them.”
- 4) Asked the Lord for vindication, for in John 17:1 He prayed, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so the Son may glorify You.”
- 5) Asked the Lord for protection, for as He breathed His last breath he prayed, as Luke 23:46 records, “Father into your hands I entrust My spirit.”

Here is the man who would not compromise! Here is the man we have as Savior and example. Here is the one who enables us to live as we ought. Here is the God we honor and worship and run to that we too may live a life without compromise.