

# **“Waiting for the Lord...” Psalms 25:1-10**

**“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.  
O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame;  
let not my enemies exult over me.  
Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;  
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.  
Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.  
Lead me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.  
Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love,  
for they have been from of old.  
Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
according to your steadfast love remember me,  
for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!  
Good and upright is the Lord;  
Therefore, he instructs sinners in the way.  
He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.  
All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Have you ever been in distress? Not just a little bit, but really, really deep. In such distress, in such anxiety, when you are so squeezed, that you don't see the solution. You don't see where the help may come from. The walls, or the world is closing in on you and there is no escape, no way out, no light at the end of the tunnel.

That is the place where the author of this psalm cries out to the Lord. This psalm was written by the king David, and he was way too familiar with situations like that. Even from the little that is recorded in the Scriptures, we know that numerous times he found himself in situations where everything seemed to be stacked against him.

Chased by Saul and his troops, running alone for his life, in grave danger in the midst of his violent accomplices, driven out by his own family, and so on. Sure, that sounds quite dramatic. But this is also true that the way we experience distress will differ from person to person. It will be different for you, and different for me.

How do you read psalms? What is your mindset? I had read this psalm many times as you read a book. Just curious to find out what was there. Just trying to read the Bible as we are privileged to do it. But then... Then came the day when that changed.

It was in the middle of 2020. Yes, that very year when it seemed the whole world had gone crazy. Where I served, almost every day came with something unexpected. Every week we had to change things a few times. We would plan our Divine Service once, and then in the middle of the week some new regulations would come out and you have to redo everything and to get

everyone on board with those changes. On top of that, in the midst of that madness you wonder, how to remain faithful to the Lord. For one thing is required from the stewards of God mysteries, that they would be found faithful. But then there are those lovely Christians who seem to have sworn their allegiance to different authorities. How to please the powers of this land. They would use all means available just to make your life even more miserable.

And who could help? **“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.”** That is not a neat religious phrase. That is someone crying out of the depths of their hearts. Crying out for help! That was the first time, when I was going through the Book of Psalms, looking for words to cry to the Lord. I was looking for His words, for I did not have my left.

That was the first time that instead of reading I prayed this psalm. I prayed! **“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul, let me not be put to shame!”** And I found it so helpful, so comforting. Let's just read it again and reflect on what a wonderful comfort God's Word can bring to us, in every situation of our lives, for He longs to comfort us.

**“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.”**

We can hear distress in the psalmist voice. Desperation, angst... “O Lord, I have nowhere to go, you are my last hope, I throw myself, my soul and everything into your hands. You are the only one left that I can trust. Help me! Please!”

**“Let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.”** What is shame? Think, how would you explain it?

Usually, we know better what guilt is. There is right and there is wrong, there are laws, and rules and norms and when we break them, when we act contrary to them, we feel guilty. “I have done wrong. I feel guilty.” It is different with shame.

If guilt is about doing or not doing, the shame is about being. Those who experience shame feel themselves to be worthless. “I am such a failure, I am such an embarrassment, I am worthless.” That's how we feel shame. Or others can heap up shame upon us by publicly showing their contempt to us.

The psalmist cries out to the Lord for he may be concerned both with how others treat him publicly and also with his one sense of humiliation in his situation. He turns to the Lord with this desperate plea: **“Please, let me not be put to shame...”**

**Indeed, none who wait for You shall be put to shame.”** He pleads with the Lord Yahweh, to be spared of his shameful fate. He waits for the Lord and trusts that his honour will be restored. He trusts with His whole heart, for what else is left to do?

I think this is a very fitting description of the land where many pastors dwell. It's true. We listen to the Lord; we get excited about His mission and our great privilege to participate in it. We pray for His guidance, we pray to bless our ministry, we have so many ideas, we see so much potential in our people, we have such high hopes.

We try, and try, and try... It is like a tug-of-war. Some faithful Christians try to pull one way, but the devil, our own flesh and the world pulls against us. And most of the time very little, if anything of what we hope for comes to be. Failures. Worthless...

It is by the miracle of the Holy Spirit that the Church exists in any form or shape. And that is an incredible gift of our gracious and generous Lord Jesus Christ, if there is any congregation that flourishes. We shall overflow in our gratitude and praise...

**“Make me to know Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day long.”**

What is this? What is he asking for? Is he asking for some wisdom instructions? It is such a difficult situation to be in. Struggling with shame. Feeling worthless and then also... having lost his way. **“Make me to know your ways!”**

It is so much easier to live, if we clearly know where we are going, what we need to do. It gives you strength, motivation, and courage. Sure, it may still be a difficult road to travel, but at least, you know the way. How different it is, when the way is lost. When you don't know where you are supposed to go? What is the right thing to do?

Lately, during the last couple of years I have heard this again and again. Fellow Christians, pastors and laypeople alike feel uncertain, perplexed, lost. What shall we do? Where shall we go? **“O Lord, make me to know your ways!”**

Or perhaps, the psalmist is asking for something slightly different. Yes, he is ashamed, he has lost his way, but... still... he knows God. Intimately. He knows God as his God. He knows God not as the God of judgment, but as the God of his salvation.

He is in pain, but he doesn't question God's promises, he doesn't question God's faithfulness, he keeps trusting his God, he engages with his Lord, he keeps praying, he keeps waiting for his God all the day long. Waiting...

Too often this is our experience as well. We know our God, we know His heart, we see it clearly as He stretches His hands on the cross. But we are still in pain. Ashamed. But where else can he go? He is the God of our salvation; He has the Words of eternal life.

We could rephrase “make me to know your ways” as “show us, how you will bless us through this”? How will you make all of this work for good for us; for we do love you. We try. We do. How will you bless us, O God of our salvations?!

**“Remember Your mercy, O Lord, and Your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to Your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of Your goodness, O Lord!”**

Our old Adam and the devil are not fair players. They don't give us a break when we are down, feeling ashamed, worthless, weak. Not at all. They heap up their offensive. And what can be better than the sins of our youth. Yes!

The longer we live, the more we have sinned. And our sins tend to come back when we are weak. Old memories, old temptations, old addictions, old cravings. We know we have repented of them. We know they are forgiven. “Why do they keep coming back? Am I not a Christian? Am I so worthless that I keep returning to my old sins?”

**“According to Your steadfast love remember me!”** Our Lord knows us, our hearts, our past, all the sins of our youth and yesterday and tomorrow. But He doesn't remember you, He doesn't think about you measuring you according to your sins! No!

He remembers you in His Son Jesus Christ! He remembers you clothed in Christ! When He looks at you, He delights and exclaims: "You, yes! You are my beloved child and with you I am well pleased!" This is how He remembers you. Which means...

That the sins of our youth and all the temptations of the devil... actually work for us. Yes, they do! Whenever the old Adam reminds us of the sins of our youth, whenever the devil brings up something we should be ashamed of and guilty of, we shall do this.

We should say: "Thank you for reminding me of God's grace and forgiveness! Yes, I am unworthy, 1000x so! Yes, I am guilty of whatever you accuse me and more! But, and deal with this, I have Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour! He knows me, He has redeemed me, He has washed me clean, He has adorned me with His holiness, and I will live with Him in new Heavens and Earth! And you will not! Deal with that!"

Let us use every reminder of our unworthiness, every sin that spoils our day to rejoice in God's grace, to turn back to our Lord, and to find comfort in His unshakable promises. Let's make the old Adam and the devil bring us even more comfort!

**"Good and upright is the Lord; Therefore, He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble His way. All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep His covenant and His testimonies."** This is a beautiful confession of faith of trusting heart!

We too can rejoice. Our Lord doesn't instruct the righteous. For there is none. Not here. He doesn't lead the proud, even if there are so many. He instructs sinners! Yes, us! He teaches the humble. Those who recognize that we need Him. And whatever happens in our lives, **"all the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness."**

Intellectually we know this to be true. But too often it doesn't feel that way. Too often situations in our lives look and sound and feel like He has forgotten about us. Thanks be to God for that distress that made King David to compose Psalm 25!

Perhaps, the Holy Spirit gave us Psalm 25 to help us to live in this tension between His promises and our daily reality, between believing that we are chosen and beloved children of God and feeling like failures and worthless. **"O my God, in You I trust; let me not be put to shame!"**

If we look at the lives of so many fellow saints, we may wonder, where is God, or how will God "make all things work together for good to those who love him"? How and when? In one sense, the answer seems to be avoiding us.

In another sense, we already know the answer. It is – resurrection! The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. When that day comes, our Lord Jesus Christ has promised that all our tears will be wiped away and all answers will be given to us.

We know this, we know. We just wait to experience it. We wait for the Lord...

In the meantime, may the words of the Spirit in Psalm 25 invite us to walk with our Lord, speak earnestly to Him of our needs and worries, and enable us to live in hope that one day we will not only believe, but see and experience how good our Lord is.

Amen.